CONCEPTIONAL©

AI INSPIRATIONAL CASE: PART 2

BEST PRACTICES & INSIGHTS: HOW AI IS USED WITHIN FOODSERVICE

2026

INTRODUCTION

DEAR *READER,*

For this second part of the AI Inspirational Case, we shift our focus from creative development to the operational heartbeat of foodservice. In Part 1, we explored how AI can act as a creative partner in shaping F&B concepts, helping us define principles, generate moodboards, visualise spaces and test sustainable menu choices. That chapter showed how AI accelerates imagination and supports the early stages of making a concept come to life.

Part 2 looks at what happens once a concept enters the real world. Here, we examine how AI is transforming the day-to-day operations of foodservice companies: from inventory management and kitchen workflows to demand forecasting, guest interaction, food safety and sustainability performance. Through global best practices, we explore how AI strengthens efficiency, consistency and decision-making, while still relying on human expertise to guide and refine its use.

This report documents that journey, showing where AI delivers measurable value, where its limits still require human judgement, and how operational innovation and concept development increasingly reinforce one another.

Please enjoy,
Team Conceptional



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Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.

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1.0 HOW DOES CONCEPTIONAL *VIEW AI?*

Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.

At Conceptional, **AI is not an objective in itself, but a tool and a collaborator** in the creative and strategic work we do. Our foundation is experience and expertise: decades of hands-on knowledge in hospitality, food destinations and sustainable F&B. AI doesn't replace that. **It's specialism, supported by AI tooling.**

AI helps us work smarter. From generating early-stage ideas to identifying emerging consumer trends, it speeds up research and creativity. **It enables our team to explore ideas, visualise environments and optimise strategies with greater speed and clarity**, while the judgement stays with our people. Great concepts don't come from algorithms alone.

Our approach is grounded in ethical and responsible use. We're conscious of data privacy, transparency and fairness. We use AI to support decision-making, not to replace the human insight, empathy or creativity that guides our work.

AI in Foodservice helps operators in five areas:

1. Predictive operations & efficiency
2. Robotisation & automation
3. Planning & forecasting
4. Guest experience & personalisation
5. Marketing & revenue optimisation

We also see AI as a learning partner. As it evolves, we evolve with it. We keep testing, questioning and exploring how it fits into the future of hospitality and sustainable food culture.

In short: **AI may enhance how we work, but it doesn't define who we are.** Our strength lies in expertise and human connection. We understand spaces, stories and shared experiences around food, and no algorithm can replicate that.

WE SEE AI AS OUR LEARNING PARTNER.

AS IT EVOLVES, WE AIM TO EVOLVE WITH IT.

— LUCA SCHOLPP
F&B AI Specialist at Conceptional

WHERE AI WORKS IN F&B OPERATIONS

Five areas, 20 applications: an overview of where AI is used in F&B operations today.

In this report, we provide best practices in the highlighted AI applications.

2.1 OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

- **Demand Forecasting**
- **Kitchen Automation**
- **Employee-facing Chatbots**
- Staff & Order Forecasting
- **Menu Engineering**

2.2 MARKETING & SALES

- **Targeted Promotions**
- **Content Creation**
- Branding & Design
- Customer Feedback Analysis

2.3 FOOD SAFETY & QUALITY

- **BOH Kitchen Camera Vision**
- **Food Supply Traceability**
- Supplier Evaluation

2.4 SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

- **Optimization**
- **Food Waste Reduction**
- Sustainability (ESG) Monitoring

2.5 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- **Personalisation**
- **Immersive Experiences**
- Conversational AI Chatbots
- FOH Camera Vision
- Robotization

Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.

2.1

OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

How AI runs the kitchen and the back office.

CHIPOTLE
KITCHEN AUTOMATION

LOCATION — USA

Chipotle is rolling out a “high-efficiency equipment package” to every restaurant: a dual-sided plancha, a dual-vat fryer and a three-pan rice cooker. Together they automate key cooking steps and keep food consistent. Robots like Autocado and the Hyphen makeline stay in R&D until they're ready. In 2026, Chipotle also added AI demand forecasts to its cook-to-needs tool.[1]

- **2–3 more entrées made in the busiest 15 minutes.**
- **2–4 labour hours saved per restaurant per day.**
- **In 1,000+ restaurants, ±2,000 by the end of 2026.**



Chipotle, 2025

XIAOCAIYUAN
COOKING ROBOTS

LOCATION — CHINA

Xiaocaiyuan serves affordable, home-style Chinese food in 800+ company-operated restaurants. To keep regional recipes consistent at that scale, a central facility prepares ingredients, sauces and seasoning packs. Since 2023, cooking robots have taken over parts of the cooking, while digital systems support daily operations. The promise: every dish within 25 minutes, or it's free.[2]

- **800+ restaurants in 197 cities, all company-operated.**
- **Every dish within 25 minutes, or it's on the house.**
- **Tables turn 3× a day, at RMB 56 per guest.**



Xiaocaiyuan, 2026

KFC
DEMAND FORECASTING

LOCATION — UK & IRELAND

KFC UK & Ireland uses Fourth, a UK software company that helps hospitality businesses plan staff and stock. Its AI demand forecasting predicts how much each restaurant will sell and turns that into ordering, prep and delivery plans. Automated ordering and stock counts take admin off managers. The result is less over-ordering, fewer missed sales and less food waste.[3]

- **Demand forecasts more than 80% accurate.**
- **Less over-ordering and food waste.**
- **Automated counting saves managers time.**



© KFC Greece

2.1 OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

ACCOR

EMPLOYEE-FACING CHATBOTS

LOCATION — GLOBAL

In 2026, Accor launched The Butler, an AI assistant for staff across its 5,800+ hotels. It gives teams instant access to brand standards, procedures and training, and points them to the right expert when needed. It works alongside Accor GPT, a secure in-house assistant for translations, summaries and meeting notes. The goal is less admin and more time with guests.[4]

- **±2.5 hours saved per employee per week.**
- **One secure AI environment for 45 brands.**
- **Launched alongside the guest assistant ALL Concierge.**



Accor, 2026

MCDONALD'S
MENU ENGINEERING

LOCATION — USA

McDonald's uses a machine-learning pricing engine to recommend the “optimal price” for each menu item at each restaurant. It analyses millions of daily transactions, what local guests are willing to pay, and competitors' prices. Franchisees get pricing advice several times a year. This turns menu pricing from a yearly gut call into an ongoing, data-driven process.[5]

- **Item-level pricing across ±14,000 US restaurants.**
- **Pricing advice updated at least 3× a year.**
- **Weighs local demand and competitor prices.**



© Robert Lowdon for McDonald’s

2.2

MARKETING & SALES

How AI helps brands reach and win over guests.

WAGAMAMA
TARGETED PROMOTIONS

LOCATION — UK

Wagamama uses Bloomreach's Loomi AI to analyse guest behaviour, combining online and offline data. Every email is tailored to the guest's own preferences. The highlight: “wagamama wrapped”, a personal year-in-review with each guest's favourite dishes, sent to one million guests.[6]

- **65% open rate for wagamama wrapped.**
- **60%+ open rate on personalised campaigns.**
- **17%+ click-through rate on personalised campaigns.**



Bloomreach, 2024

KRAFT HEINZ
CONTENT CREATION

LOCATION — USA

Kraft Heinz built TasteMaker, a generative-AI engine for product content and design, on Google's Vertex AI. It draws on the company's own brand guidelines and assets, so its imagery and copy stay on-brand. Creative teams can test more ideas, faster, while designers keep control of the final result.[7]

- **Design timelines cut from weeks to hours.**
- **Used across 100+ brands.**
- **Built on Kraft Heinz's own brand data.**



Apply Digital for Kraft Heinz, 2025

2.3

FOOD SAFETY & QUALITY

How AI checks quality and tracks where food comes from.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
FOOD SUPPLY TRACEABILITY

LOCATION — EU

In March 2026, the European Commission launched TraceMap, an AI platform for food authorities in every EU country. It connects EU food safety and trade data, maps links between companies and shipments, and flags suspicious patterns, so fraud is spotted sooner and recalls move faster.[8]

- **Available to authorities in all EU countries.**
- **Links data from the RASFF and TRACES systems.**
- **Built on existing EU data, with no extra resources needed.**



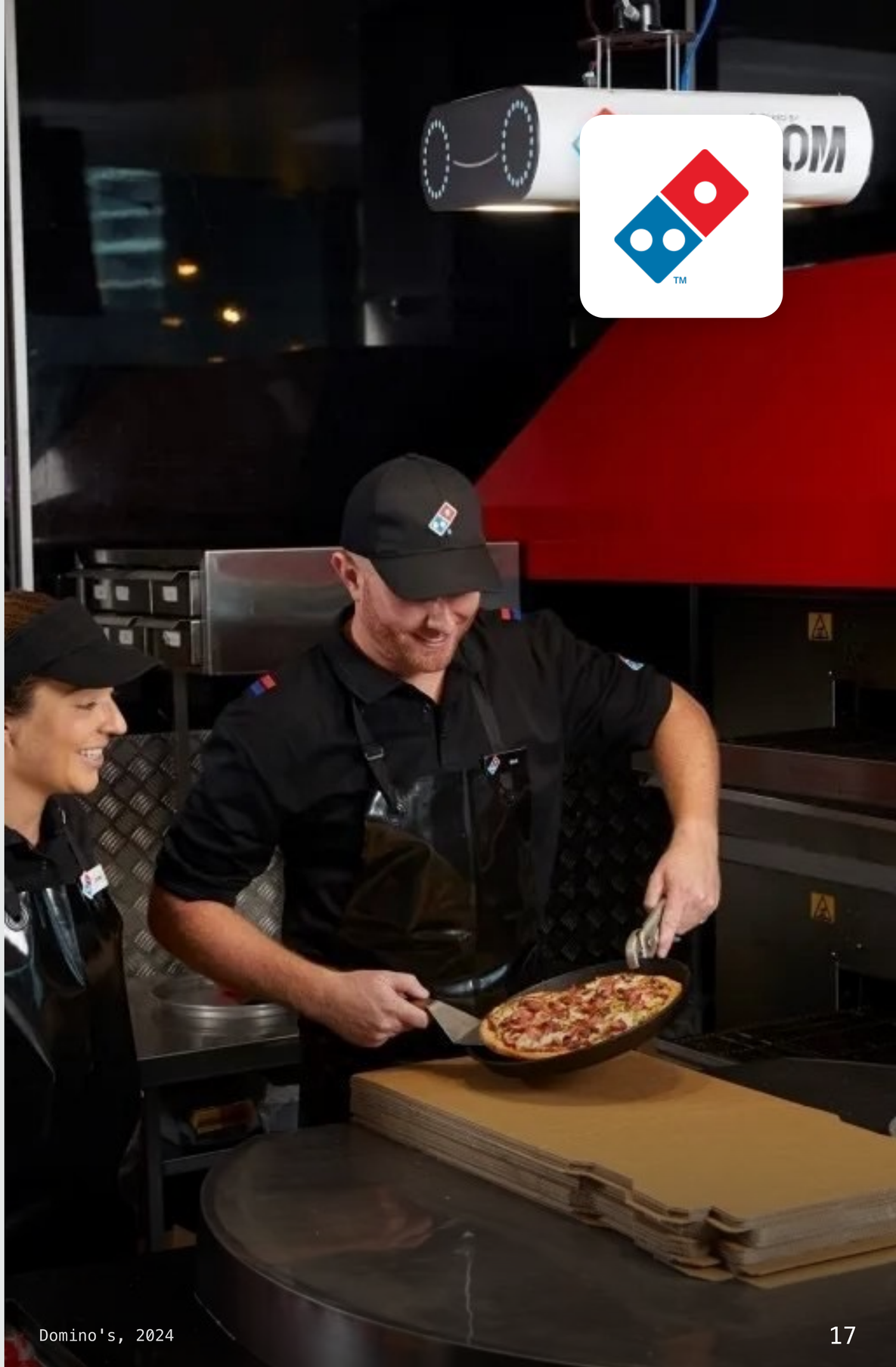
© European Union

DOMINO'S
BOH KITCHEN CAMERA VISION

LOCATION — AUSTRALIA, NZ & USA

Domino's DOM Pizza Checker uses an AI camera to scan every pizza before it leaves the store. It checks the pizza type, how evenly the toppings are spread and the temperature. If a pizza fails, staff remake it, and the data feeds store scorecards and targeted training. In March 2026, Domino's also added a custom AI engine to its Pizza Tracker. It combines live store data, order volume and delivery status to predict ready times more accurately.[9]

- **Customer-rated quality up more than 15%.**
- **Every pizza scanned before it leaves the store.**
- **AI tracker predicts more accurate ready times.**



Domino's, 2024

2.4

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

How AI cuts energy use and food waste.

SPECIALITY RESTAURANTS
ENERGY OPTIMISATION

LOCATION — INDIA

Speciality Restaurants, known for brands like Mainland China and Oh! Calcutta, runs 118 outlets across India, the UAE and Oman. Its “Connected Restaurant Program” links ovens, fryers and other appliances to IoT data from HVAC, lighting and utilities in one dashboard. A command centre spots issues early, lowering energy use, maintenance and downtime. The program runs in 25 restaurants, scaled up from an initial pilot of 6.[10]

- **13% average energy savings across kitchen and dining loads, sustained over several years.**
- **USD 270,000 in total savings across the group.**
- **Thermal compliance up 14% in staff areas and 5% in guest areas.**



Speciality Restaurants Ltd. — speciality.co.in

COMPASS GROUP BENELUX
FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

LOCATION — BENELUX

Compass Group Benelux has worked with Winnow for nine years. Winnow Vision's AI cameras recognise what's thrown away, weigh it and show chefs where waste comes from, from overproduction to portioning. At Foyer Assurances in Luxembourg, the team used these insights to cut waste by 70% in just four months.[11]

- **30% less food waste across the first 50 sites.**
- **270,000 meals saved per year from this first rollout.**
- **Goal: halve food waste across all sites by 2030.**



Winnow, 2026

2.5

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

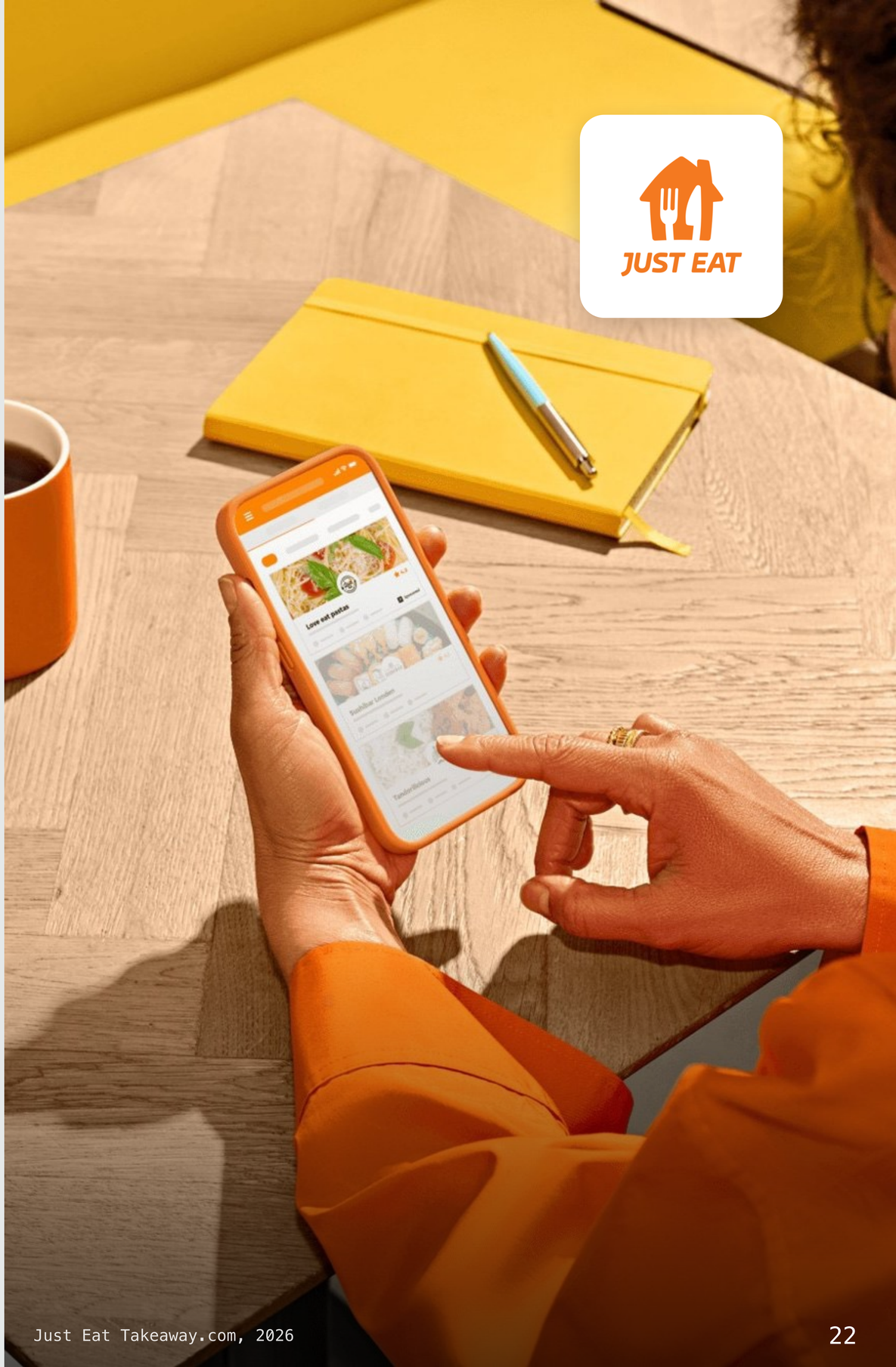
How AI makes the guest experience more personal.

JUST EAT
PERSONALISATION

LOCATION — UK (HQ AMSTERDAM)

In January 2026, Amsterdam-based delivery group Just Eat Takeaway.com launched an AI voice assistant in its UK app, Just Eat. Guests simply say what they feel like, and the assistant gives personal recommendations and places the order. It is built to tackle “choice overload” and works in dozens of languages.[12]

- **Access to 100,000 restaurant and shop partners.**
- **Works in dozens of languages.**
- **Higher conversion rates during trials.**



Just Eat Takeaway.com, 2026

SUBLIMOTION
IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

LOCATION — IBIZA, SPAIN

Sublimotion by two-Michelin-star chef Paco Roncero turns dinner into a multi-sensory show for one table of guests. Its 2026 season at Bless Hotel Ibiza includes an AI-powered scene with animated androids by Swedish artist Fredrik Jonsson. Visuals, sound and food change with every course.[13]

- **Created by two-Michelin-star chef Paco Roncero.**
- **13th season, opened June 2026 in Ibiza.**
- **Expanding to Las Vegas at the end of 2026.**



Sublimotion, 2026

FIVE LESSONS ON AI *IN F&B OPERATIONS*

#1

START WITH OPERATIONAL QUICK WINS

AI delivers the most value when it solves a specific operational problem. Start small with a focused case, so the technology improves a real workflow instead of becoming a solution in search of a problem.

#2

KEEP HUMANS IN THE LOOP

AI should enhance, not replace, human judgement. Operators remain essential for validating insights. AI tools work best when they fit the team culture.

#3

BUILD DATA FOUNDATIONS BEFORE TOOLS

AI is only as strong as the data behind it. Standardising recipes, POS data and inventory inputs makes sure models produce accurate forecasts and meaningful insights.

#4

TREAT IMPLEMENTATION AS CHANGE MANAGEMENT

AI succeeds when people understand and embrace it. Clear communication, training and involvement across teams make adoption smoother and more sustainable.

#5

DESIGN FOR SCALABILITY FROM DAY ONE

Choose flexible, modular systems that grow with your operation, so you don't outgrow the technology the moment your menu, locations or teams expand.

Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.

INFLUENCE OF *THE EU AI ACT*

Approved in 2024, the EU AI Act sets rules for AI based on risk. This is what it means for F&B:

#1

ETHICAL AI

AI must be transparent and respect fundamental rights.

#2

RULES BY RISK

Strict rules for high-risk uses like hiring and staff management. Most F&B uses, such as pricing, forecasting and chatbots, are low risk.

#3

BANNED AI

Manipulative AI and emotion recognition at work are not allowed.

#4

SAME RULES FOR ALL

Non-EU tools must meet the same rules to be used in the EU.

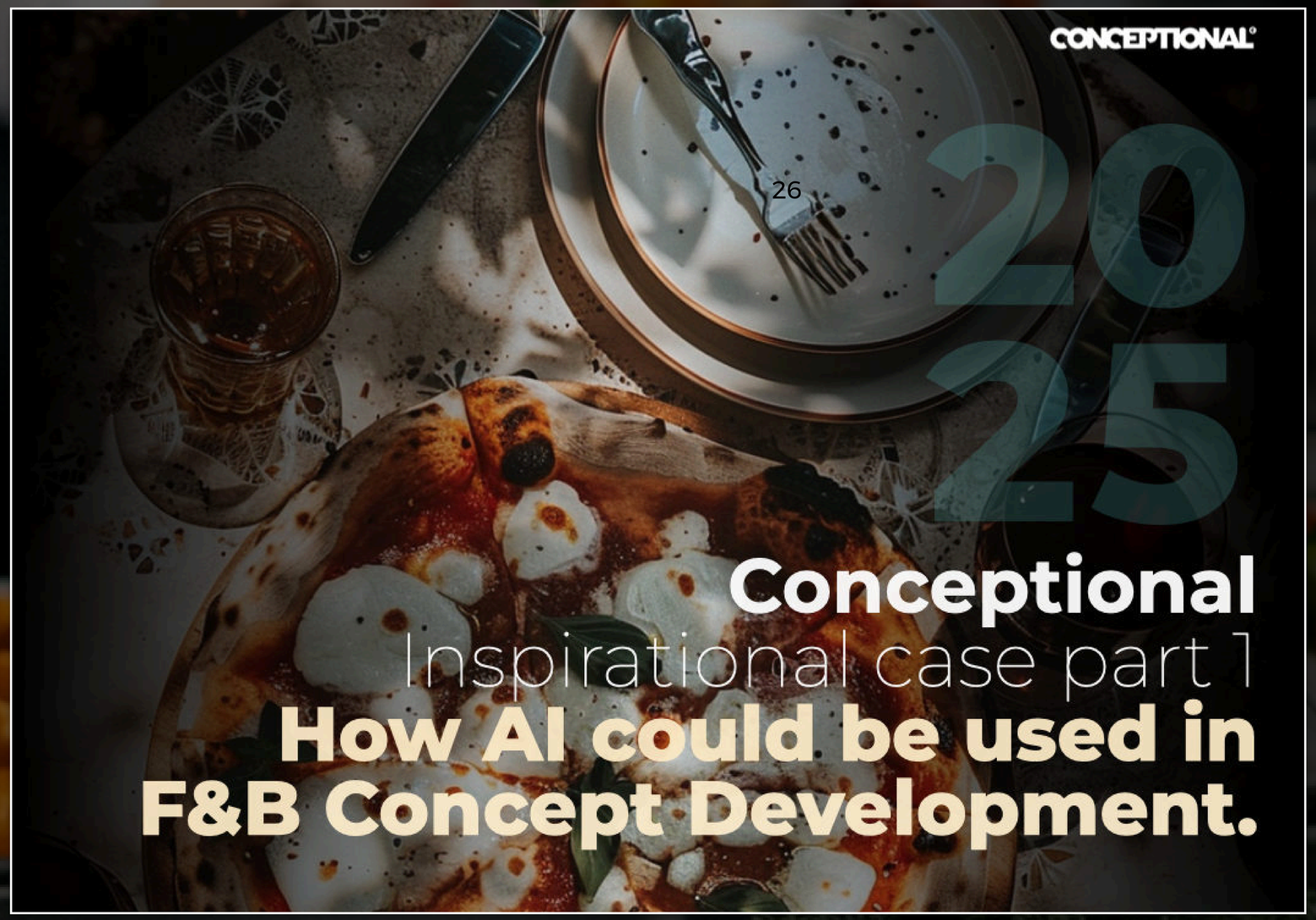
#5

BE OPEN WITH GUESTS

Tell guests when they talk to a chatbot or see AI-generated content.



Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.



Also read part 1

CONCEPTIONAL

In the first part we zoom in on AI's role as a genuine creative partner in foodservice concept development.

In this hands-on report, we co-created a fictional Neapolitan pizza bar with vinyl-listening vibes—using AI to define concept principles, generate moodboards, visualise interiors with clay-style renders, and calculate CO_2 emissions via RIVM data.

Click here to read the report.

WE USE AI TO *CONNECT THE DOTS*

*Over the last three years, we have gained knowledge on how to use **AI** in **F&B concept development**, and on how it can be used in day-to-day **operations**.*

*We use this knowledge to connect the dots between **experience**, **expertise** and our **sensory** perceptions.*

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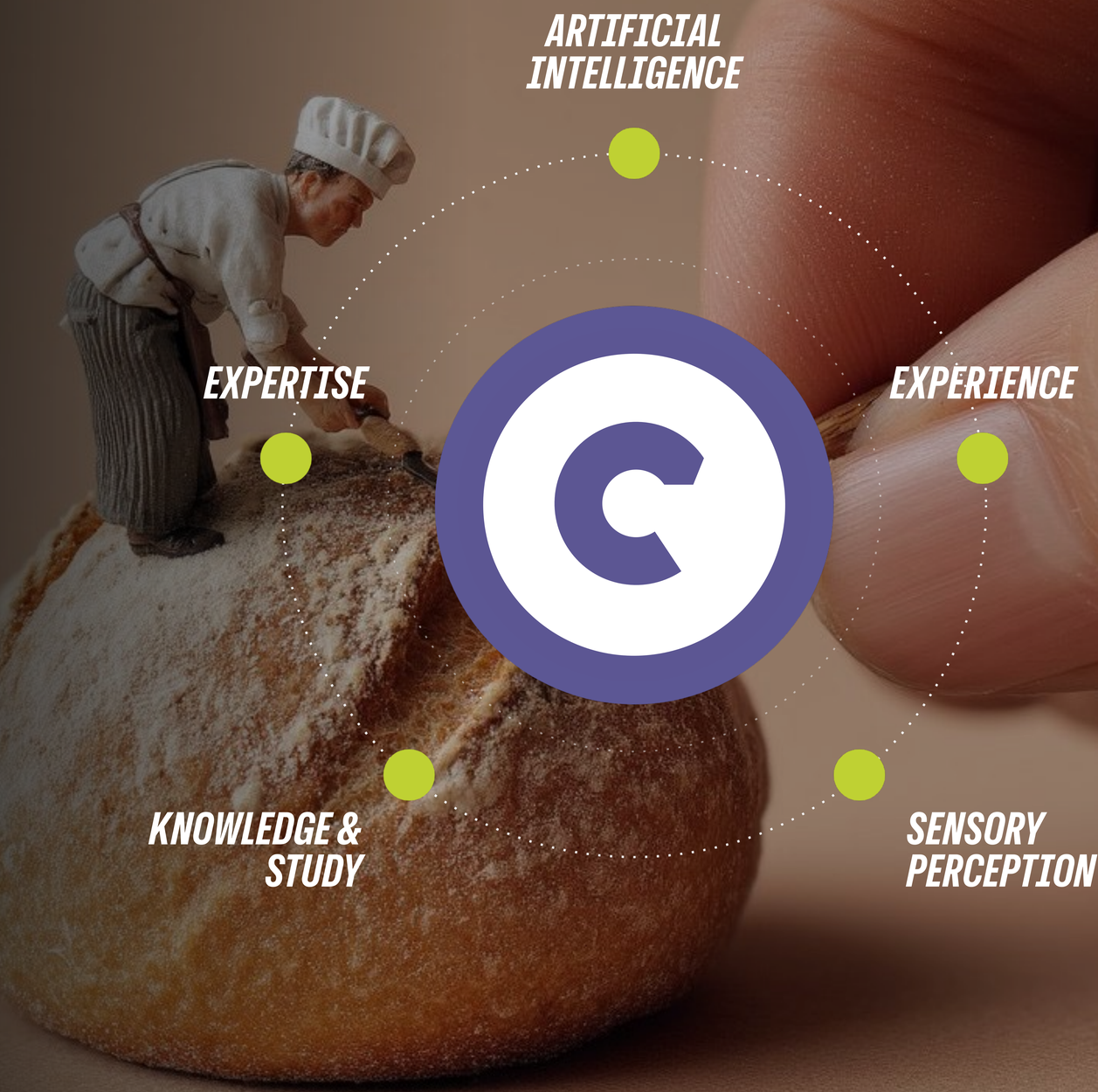

Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.

WHAT *WE DO*

CONCEPTIONAL©

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

WE CREATE RESTAURANT CONCEPTS WITH A HEART.

F&B MASTERPLANNING

WE CRAFT STRATEGIC VISIONS FOR SPACES WITH MULTIPLE F&B VENUES.

STRATEGY & TRANSFORMATION

WE SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATIONS.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD ROUTE

WE IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABILITY INTO YOUR VISION, PROCESS AND F&B OFFERING.

Midjourney reference picture by Conceptional B.V.



ANALYSE.
AMAZE.
ENJOY.

INTERESTED IN INTEGRATING AI WITHIN YOUR COMPANY?

GIVE US A CALL!

Do you also believe food deserves the best attention and care in your foodservice or leisure company? Looking for a reliable, experienced business partner to develop F&B concepts and places that work? We are keen to discuss options in more detail with you. Let us understand and surprise you and your guests!



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