

Investigation: ‘Everything is made by hand’ — Lab grown meat startup Upside Foods presents high-tech facade, but its ‘futuristic factory’ is a lie

“We’re starting to show, from day one, what this whole industry is about,” Upside Foods cofounder and CEO Uma Valeti said in May 2022. “This is the opposite of very closely guarded food innovations.”

But former and current employees say the Emeryville plant tells a misleading story of how Upside’s chicken is made. In fact, sources say, the company’s flagship product—the juicy whole cuts of chicken served at Bar Crenn—are brewed, almost by hand, in tiny bottles. The huge bioreactors, those sources claim, simply aren’t capable of reliably brewing the sheets of tissue needed to form whole cuts of meat such as chicken fillets.

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Insiders say that Upside’s meticulously crafted fillets are instead the result of a process that is more arduous and unwieldy than using bioreactors: Employees grow thin sheets of tissue in small plastic flasks called roller bottles and combine them to create a larger hunk of chicken, an approach that is expensive and requires many hours of labor to produce even a small amount of meat. According to former and current employees at Upside, this process happens in a laboratory that doesn’t feature in the factory tours Upside gives to journalists and members of the public.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)