Singapore becomes first country to sell lab-grown meat directly to the general public

It was a remarkable moment in the annals of food, perhaps even humanity: A store in Singapore started selling lab-grown meat directly to the general public in May.

On a recent Saturday, visitors to the store, Huber’s Butchery, watched as a chef sautéed filets — 3 percent of which were generated from chicken cells and the rest from plant proteins — and served them in taco shells with avocado, pico de gallo and coriander.

It looked, cooked and tasted like chicken. Sascha Wenninger, 39, put three packs of the meat in his shopping basket. “I like eating meat, and if I can do it without animal cruelty, it’s ideal,” he said. Others were not so enthused about meat cultivated in a lab. “Why eat something artificial when you can get fresh live chicken from nature?” said Philippe Ritoux, 58.

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Singapore became the first country to approve a lab-grown, or “cultivated meat” product for commercial sale in 2020 (the United States followed two years later, but Florida banned it in May) and has since given the green light to other futuristic products like a protein-rich powder synthesized from air and a concoction that does not require animal cells to grow meat in a lab.

Before Singapore, cultivated meat was completely science fiction, said Josh Tetrick, the co-founder of Eat Just, the company behind the cultivated meat being sold at Huber’s.

Consequently, any success Singapore has could have global significance.

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