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Perspective

The data behind the dish: How food informatics is redefining gastronomy

Raimundo Moral*

Department of Anatomical Pathology, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

E-mail: raimundo.moral@ugr.es

In the rapidly evolving landscape of modern gastronomy, where flavors, ingredients, and culinary techniques are constantly explored and reimagined, a new force is emerging as a game-changer: food informatics. This fusion of technology, data science, and culinary arts is reshaping the way we think about food, from farm to table. Defining food informatics- Food informatics is a multidisciplinary field that harnesses the power of data, technology, and analytics to understand, analyze, and optimize various aspects of the food industry.

From agriculture and supply chain management to culinary creation and consumer experience, food informatics involves the collection, processing, and interpretation of data to drive informed decisions and innovations. From seed to plate: transforming agriculture- At the heart of our food journey lies agriculture, and food informatics is changing the way crops are cultivated (Adafer et al., 2020).

With sensors, drones, and other data-gathering technologies, farmers can monitor soil quality, weather patterns, and pest activity in real time. This data-driven approach enables precise irrigation, targeted pesticide application, and optimal planting times; leading to higher crop yields and reduced environmental impact. Furthermore, the genetic information of crops can be analysed to develop varieties that are more resistant to diseases, have longer shelf lives, or boast enhanced nutritional profiles. By utilizing such insights, farmers can grow produce that meets both consumer demands and sustainability goals. Culinary innovation: where data meets creativity- In the realm of culinary arts, food informatics provides chefs with a new palette of possibilities. By leveraging data on flavor compounds, ingredient pairings, and cultural preferences, chefs can experiment with unconventional combinations, creating dishes that tantalize the taste buds and challenge traditional notions of cuisine.

Analysing customer feedback and consumption patterns also helps restaurants personalize their menus (Bechthold et al., 2019).

Data-driven insights into popular dishes, dietary preferences, and seasonal trends enable chefs to curate offerings that resonate with their diners, enhancing overall dining experiences. Smarter supply chains: reducing waste and improving quality- Food informatics plays a pivotal role in optimizing the complex web of supply chains that deliver ingredients from farms to kitchens. With real-time monitoring, stakeholders can track the temperature, humidity, and transportation conditions of perishable goods, ensuring their quality and safety. This level of transparency minimizes food waste and safeguards consumers from consuming spoiled or contaminated products. Moreover, data-driven supply chains enhance efficiency by predicting demand and streamlining distribution processes. This not only reduces costs but also contributes to a more sustainable food system, where resources are allocated more judiciously (Durazzo & Lucarini 2021).

Personalized nutrition: tailoring diets to individuals- In an era of health-conscious consumers, personalized nutrition is gaining prominence, and food informatics is at the forefront of this movement. By analysing an individual's genetic makeup, dietary preferences, and health goals, experts can craft customized dietary plans that optimize nutrient intake and address specific health concerns. Apps and platforms that track food intake and provide nutritional insights are becoming increasingly sophisticated. These tools use data algorithms to offer recommendations, suggest alternatives, and even predict potential allergens. As a result, consumers

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can make more informed choices about their diets, aligning their food consumption with their well-being objectives (Fadnes et al., 2022).

Challenges and considerations- While the potential of food informatics is vast, there are challenges that must be addressed. Data privacy and security are paramount, particularly when dealing with sensitive health and dietary information. Ensuring that data is accurate and unbiased is also essential, as misinformation can lead to detrimental decisions. Additionally, accessibility and affordability of technology can be limiting factors, particularly for smaller farmers and businesses. Bridging the digital divide and democratizing access to food informatics tools are crucial steps toward creating an inclusive and equitable food ecosystem.

The future of food informatics- As technology continues to advance and our understanding of food science deepens, the role of food informatics is poised to expand even further. Imagine a world where every ingredient's journey is transparent, from its origin to the consumer's plate. This transparency not only builds trust but also reinforces the urgency of sustainable practices throughout the food chain. Artificial intelligence and machine learning will likely play an increasingly significant role in predicting consumer preferences, optimizing crop yields, and minimizing food waste. As these technologies evolve, they will enhance the precision and efficiency of food informatics, making it an indispensable tool for farmers, chefs, nutritionists, and consumers alike (Levy et al., 2021).

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