

ChatGPT made me a paella!

Yes, that's right, that bleeding ChatGPT everyone is going on about, the AI that can write a book or schedule a nuclear winter, it made me a paella the other day. The "cookbot" version, of course. The end product was a pale slop of mostly overdone rice that reeked of additives. From the bottom of the pan — the original meaning of *paella*, before it was imbued with the meaning of the contents in its homeland of Valencia— a kerosene-like liquid oozed. This was the result of adding the wrong amount of extra virgin olive oil for the sautéed vegetables that form the heart of this ubiquitous Mediterranean marvel. It may well seem anyone could make Spain's signature dish, but cooking an outstanding paella is for the refined few. What the food processor AI made was a ready-meal paella like those sold every day at London's, Southwark markets. In short, chewy rice with chunks.

Making a genuine paella calls for much more than online how-to videos or even a five-star recipe. As in almost everything humans do, feelings bubble up, instinctive pinches of salt are added, measures are "just right", and wine is sipped while the flavours blend. More than a little intuition is needed, something that no AI understands. A good paella starts with the know-how and keen nose of the person who chose the finest orangewood to perfume the rice; with the yearning for our lost loved ones, who taught us the perfect moment to dissolve the saffron threads that fill every grain with zest and colour, like some miraculous elixir; and with the excitement of passing on our parents' and grandparents' secrets to the younger generation. Those are the basics of what an AI would have to feel if it were ever to make me a paella.

Don't get me wrong, I am no Luddite. AI will certainly be very handy, but in the same way as highly processed food: instantaneous automated gratification that satisfies the body, but not the soul.

This flaming ChatGPT thing doesn't know what it means to laugh joyfully and cry longingly at the same time, for the same reason. It hasn't smelled the loamy wet ground after a summer storm. This AI has not learned to ride a bike, fallen off, skinned its knees and against all odds kept going, as stubborn as a mule. It has never had sleepless nights, because it has never loved. It doesn't know anything at all, because it has no beating heart.

May these meandering words suffice to show that they were composed not by an artificial intelligence but by a human one, with all its perfect imperfections.

By Humberto Montero, *El Colombiano*, 16 February 2023