

David Gabay  
Law Offices of David A. Gabay, PC  
80 Orville Drive, Suite 100  
Bohemia, New York 11716  
631-467-4177  
[david@new-york-business-lawyer.com](mailto:david@new-york-business-lawyer.com)

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### **How The Restaurant Industry Might Be Affected By Plans to Grow Meat In A Lab?**

A recent article posted on [MSNBC's website by Alan Boyle](#) revealed that a scientist working at a university in the Netherlands is working on a project to grow animal meat in a laboratory using funding provided by a private investor. If the scientist, whose name is Mark Post, succeeds, it just might revolutionize the entire restaurant industry. Let's take a look at a few of the legal issues that restaurant owners would have to confront if lab grown meat were to become a reality:

1. Government Regulation: It's a certainty that any lab grown meat product which would be available for sale to the general public in a restaurant will be heavily regulated by the government at the federal and state levels. Much like the regulations affecting beef fed with various hormones and supplements, I expect comprehensive disclosure and use regulations to be in place before the government allows any restaurant owner to serve artificial meat to be served to the public. These rules will probably cover every stage of the food production process, from creation to disposal after the meal is served.
2. Advertising and Marketing: If you are going to serve lab made meat, you are now going to have to deal with the question of how to promote the product to your customers. The legal issues involved will include various consumer truth-in-advertising laws, disclosure laws, and anti-fraud rules. What your advertising and marketing can and cannot say about the lab meat will of course depend on the regulations on the use of the meat imposed by the government, and the products you are going to serve.
3. Menu Labeling: You can also be certain that the government, at every level, will have very specific disclosure rules for how lab beef is described on your menus, both in the restaurant and online. These rules will also probably require disclosure of the use of the meat when it is used in ways other than the main ingredient (hamburger), such as in a sauce, as a minor ingredient in a larger dish, in a stuffing, etc.
4. Liability for Illness: Like any other food you serve your customers, there are going to be cases where a customer becomes ill, or claims to become ill, from eating the lab meat.

There will be claims that the meat is inherently dangerous, that it was prepared improperly, that it was handled improperly, that the required menu disclosures were not made, and that the meat was fraudulently served to the customer against his or her wishes.

5. Patent Protections: Imagine that the lab meat is patented (a very distinct possibility). Well, now the patent owner can restrict or mandate how the meat is used. You may have to pay royalties for each dish served, or agree to use the meat in the manner dictated by the patent holder if you want to be able to buy any of it. There could be claims for patent infringement for failure to abide by the restrictions on its use. And, of course, there is the possibility of legal injunctions and Court orders prohibiting you from serving the meat altogether in the event that you and the patent holder cannot agree on the terms of use of the product.

Wouldn't that be something if lab made meat became commercially available? Restaurants would never be the same again.

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