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Most people know not to get their hopes up if they head to a McDonald's for a McFlurry—it's a running joke that the McDonald's ice cream machine always seems to be broken when you swing by the drive-through. But why can't McDonald's get it together and give its customers what they want? The main reason is that the McDonald's ice cream machines take forever to clean, taking up to four hours to sanitize—and it has to be done every single day. When the machines are in the process of being cleaned, they can't serve ice cream. And, when the staff is handing out Big Macs left and right, no one has the time to tend to the laborious machine. Telling you that the ice cream machine is broken instead of admitting that they are too lazy to clean it is just one of the secrets that fast-food workers won't tell you. In early 2017, McDonald's announced that they were going to be replacing their soft serve machines with ones that are easier to maintain and wouldn't take as long to clean. However, actually installing the new equipment in every restaurant is taking a very long time and customers are still complaining. McDonald's employees stand by the fact that cleaning the machines take forever and they often have to reject customer's ice cream orders. One employee shared on Reddit that in her year and a half working at the chain, the ice cream machine has only legitimately been down one time, but they can't sell ice cream because they're always cleaning it. So for now, you may have to keep your McFlurry cravings to a minimum until all of the new McDonald's ice cream machines are in place. If you really can't control yourself, an extremely fed up customer kindly created an app that lets you check if the ice cream machine is working at the McDonald's closest to you. To satisfy your cravings, try something salty instead. This is the secret ingredient that makes their fries so delicious. Originally Published: August 01, 2019 Most hotel rooms have things like fresh sheets, blackout curtains, a Bible, and free ice machines. Although the last one might seem like a random amenity, ice machines have a special place in hotel history and American culture. Find out some more about the things you've always wondered about hotels. The free ice trend is mostly thanks to Kemmons Wilson, the founder of Holiday Inn, which was the first hotel to offer guests free access to ice machines, according to Slate. Wilson introduced these machines in his hotels after staying at competing hotels that charged high prices for ice—yes, people had to pay for every cube. As the Holiday Inn franchises spread, the free ice trend spread across the country, too. This love of ice, however, didn't really extend across the pond—here's why the British don't like ice. Wilson is just one example of how much Americans love ice. At one point it was an expensive luxury good, but as ice became more plentiful and less costly, more and more people had a hankering for cold drinks, Epicurious reports. Before refrigerators and freezers, people also only had ice boxes requiring a large block of ice to keep food cool and prevent it from spoiling. Keeping up with ice demand is pricey for hotels, so when ice machines came along, hotels were some of the first customers, per Slate. The machines not only make it easy for customers to get their own ice, but they also keep costs down for hotels, too. In a few years, these hotel amenities might not exist. Nowadays, hotel guests still use ice machines for everything from serving cocktails to filling up their coolers. Although you can take ice from your hotel, remember that these are the 6 things you can't take from your hotel room—and 4 more that you can. sakkarin sapu/Shutterstock August 0802/Shutterstock iStock/A330Pilot Originally Published: February 24, 2020 If you are a fan of nugget ice, also known as "Sonic ice" or "that good ice," then I have some fairly exciting news for you. Thanks to the brilliant minds at FirstBuild, you can now get your teeth on some without having to leave your very comfortable home. The counter-top ice maker is called The Opal, and it's pretty sleek. If you've never had nugget ice before and don't quite get what all the fuss is about, the appeal of nugget ice lies in its small size, its soft, crunchy texture, and its "flavor-absorbing" ability. It has a serious, almost cult-like following, with enthusiasts claiming it makes almost any drink better. We'll get to all the boozy (and non-boozy) liquid fun in a moment, but first let's talk specs. The DeetsThe Opal has one job to make that good ice, and it does that job pretty well. It has a single switch—which toggles between the "cleaning" and "ice" settings—and one button. That button not only turns the machine on and off, but also has an indicator light to let you know if the Opal is making ice, going through a cleaning cycle, or if it's in need of an H2O refill. It's easy on the eyes and easy to use. Getting the thing set up—from un-boxing to the that first, glorious, frozen pellet—took a little over an hour. I know you probably have a lot of other questions, so I'll ask them for you: How much does it cost? A lot. The Opal Nugget Ice Maker costs \$499, which is on the high-end of home kitchen appliances. (That's more than a Kitchenaid stand mixer and Anova precision cooker combined, to put that in "fancy kitchen toys.") How much does it weigh? The Opal weighs 44 pounds. How much space does it take up? The Opal is 10.5 inches wide, 15.5 inches deep, 17.25 inches tall. I don't have a very big kitchen, but I was able to find a space for it on top of a built-in. How much noise does it make? A good bit. Usually it's a gentle whirring sound but sometimes it makes a much angrier, growlier noise that wakes me up because I live in a studio apartment with no physical separation between my bedroom and my kitchen. How much good ice does it make and how long does it take to make that much ice? Once on, it takes the Opal about 15 minutes to produce the first nugget. From there, it makes a pound of ice per hour, and can hold 3 pounds at a time. Once it's full it will shut itself off until you take a scoop or two, at which point it will go right back to making your good ice. How much can it make in a day? You could probably extrapolate this yourself from the above information, but the Opal can make 24 pounds of ice in a 24-hour day. Is the ice exactly like Sonic ice? These nuggets are a little longer than the ice you'll get from Sonic—I don't have a Sonic near me to show you a visual side-by-side, but I'd estimate that the Opal nuggets are about 30% longer than the Sonic nugs. They are, however, just as fun to chew on. Does it keep the ice frozen? Left in the bucket, the ice will slowly melt back into the reservoir, and that melted water becomes fresh nugget ice. How often do you have to clean? For the best tasting ice, you should clean the Opal once a week. In typical me fashion, I've only run mine through a rinse cycle once during its month-long stay in my home. I think the ice tastes just fine still. (Don't be like me though.) Can you hook it up to the plumbing? No, it's stand-alone unit, and you have to refill the reservoir by hand. G/O Media may get a commission. Alright, now that we've got all the boring details out of the way, let's talk about some drinks. The CocktailsNugget ice isn't the right ice for every cocktail, but it works well in a lot of boozy beverages. The drinks that play best with nugget ice are those that can stand up to, or are improved by, a bit of dilution. (Anything fruity is an instant winner.) Avoid drinks that are usually served up (i.e. without ice in the glass)—like Manhattans and martinis—and anything that's already fairly dilute, such as spritzers or aperitifs with soda water. As with anything though, personal preference comes into play. Though some may find this horrifying—and I'm breaking my own rule—I think a Negroni over this kind of ice would be downright delightful in the summer months. In terms of entertaining, this thing greatly simplifies the at-home cocktail party, especially if you're a fan of crushed ice cocktails. Not only does nugget ice make super pretty drinks, but it saves you the trouble of having to mess with a mallet, and it produces a much more uniform piece of ice than anything you could crush yourself. It's not an ideal candidate for shaking or stirring—as its small size would cause everything to dilute too quickly—but that's what makes it so great for building cocktails right in the glass. Just pour your ingredients in, add your ice, give it a stir, and you have a perfectly diluted and chilled beverage ready to be enjoyed. I'm lucky enough to live in a town that is densely populated with excellent bartenders, and was able to convince cocktail master and ice enthusiast Nicolas Flower of Teardrop Lounge to help me come up with three fantastic cocktails to share with you. A Most Refreshing Mint JulepIngredients: 2 1/4 ounces of bourbon, 1 teaspoon simple syrup, 12 or so mint leaves. Add mint leaves and simple syrup to julep cup and press gently with a muddler. Add bourbon and pebble ice. Give everything a stir, top with more ice, and garnish with your prettiest mint sprig. A Perfectly Not-Too-Sweet Pina ColadaIngredients: 1 ounce aged rum and 1 ounce light rum, or literally 2 ounces of any rum you like. 3/4 ounces fresh lime juice (1 1/2 ounces pineapple juice (juice your own for extra credit)! 1/2 oz blend of Coco Lopez and cream of coconut (If you like a really sweet pina colada, you can omit the cream of coconut and use straight Coco Lopez; I like around two parts Coco Lopez to one part cream of coconut.) Pour it all in a glass with some pebble ice, give it a stir, and top with more pebble ice. Garnish with a pineapple wedge or whatever makes you happy. Put a fuckin' umbrella in there. (Those last two sentences come are unedited instructions from Mr. Flower.) A Very Beautiful BrambleIngredients: 2 ounces of gin, 3/4 ounces of fresh lemon juice, 3/4 ounces of simple syrup, 3-4 blackberries. Add the first three ingredients to one glass, and muddle blackberries in another glass. Pour a little bit of the cocktail into the glass with blackberries and stir it up with a bar spoon (really, any long spoon will do). Pour the blackberry mixture into a tall glass, top with pebble ice to fill 3/4 of the glass. Pour the rest of the cocktail over the ice and top with more ice. Garnish with a blackberry. The Non-CocktailsEthanol isn't the only liquid that benefits from glorious frozen pellets of water. A tall glass of Mexican Coke is gloriously chilled and refreshing over the nugs and, when you're done enjoying your soda, you have a glass of delicately cola-flavored, crunchy pellets to enjoy. The same applies to iced coffee and tea, particularly creamier, sweeter options like iced mochas or Thai iced tea. Lemonade is a good choice to, or you can take a page from Sonic's book and make a cherry limeade. To be honest, chilling a cherry limeade is the highest purpose nugget ice can serve. In terms of whether all of this justifies the price tag, that all depends. If you don't drink a lot at home, don't entertain, and don't like chewing on soft pellets of ice, this obviously isn't the appliance for you—because it's a \$500 ice maker. I've driven cars that cost less than that. If however, you're very into crushed-ice cocktails, love entertaining, and are obsessed with that good ice, the Opal should probably be on your "dream kitchen" wishlist.

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