

Cupmen to the Rescue!

by Phoebe Man

Your stomach is growling from hunger. After making a tough decision over which soup base to choose, you pour boiling water into a polystyrene cup. Then you put it aside and continue with whatever you were doing, and wait. Ticktock, ticktock. Time flies by and, as you open the lid and inhale with great enjoyment, you realise your noodles are either too al dente or soggy.

If you have ever been frustrated and annoyed to find your noodles overcooked or underdone, Cupmen figures are here to rescue you, banishing the need for special skills to prevent heat from escaping the pot.

Cupmen are silicone shaped men (smaller than the size of your palm) who react to temperature and will gradually change colour to let you know when your noodles are ready.

being cooked. A completely white Cupmen figure, which usually takes a few minutes depending on the type and brand of noodles, indicates that the noodles are ready to be served.

Since Cupmen are made of silicon, they do not transfer heat so you don't have to worry about burning your hand when you remove them from the lid.

The Cupmen collection is the invention of Akira Mabuchi who designed the little men because he found that holding down the lids of instant noodle pots with the stickers provided or random stationery items was cumbersome and dull. "Cupmen were created to entertain while waiting for your noodles," says Mabuchi.

Cupmen, made with detailed facial features, come in two versions. Cupmen 1 (also known as "Hold On"), come in green, orange and pink. According to Mabuchi, they were designed to look as if they are climbing up from the side of the pot and about to dive in.

Cupmen 2 (also known as "Relax"), come in blue, moss green and rose. They look as if they might be sunbathing with their arms stretched back in a very relaxed manner.

Mabuchi says he created two ranges in different colours because he thinks that the enjoyment of collecting them increases the enjoyment of using them. "The different ranges are contrasting and complementary," he says.

Markaina Chow Wing-shan, a student of The Chinese University of Hong Kong,

is one of the users amused by Cupmen. She finds the Cupmen figure particularly helpful and convenient as she no longer needs to calculate the cooking time for instant noodles.

"Cupmen figures are amazing! I don't need to keep reminding myself to wait for three minutes anymore. It is also funny to look at how it changes colour," she says.



They are also designed to cling on to the pot to keep the lid in place so that you don't have to keep checking on the noodles. Just sit back and let Cupmen do the counting for you.

The magic begins once you place a Cupmen figure on the lid of a noodle pot. Its body parts will start turning white gradually as your noodles are

Cupmen are now available in some online shops and Japanese lifestyle stores such as Franc Franc. Although its official price is ¥800 each, *Varsity* has been able to find stores and online retailers who sell it from \$80-\$120. For more information, visit <http://www.plus-d.com/cupmen/>.

Basic facts about Cupmen:

Size (each): 56mm×50mm×46mm

Weight (each): 12g

Material: Silicone

- Wash only in mild detergent
- Keep out of direct sunlight
- Do not place Cupmen near flames