

Israeli mini-scanner tells what's in food, drink or pills

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An Israeli start-up has launched a pocket device which analyses the composition of food, drink and medication

An Israeli start-up has launched a pocket device which analyses instantly the composition of food, drink, medication or other objects.

Consumer Physics says its SCiO tool sends data on the [chemical makeup](#) of a substance to the user's smartphone, where a variety of applications

will present the results.

It is "the first molecular sensor that fits in the palm of your hand," says Dror Sharon, co-founder of the firm based in Hod Hasharon, near Tel Aviv.

Users will be able to see how many calories are in the burger on their plate, what is in their drink, or if that jacket is really leather.

The SCiO, on the market since last month, does not need [physical contact](#) with the substance being tested because it uses a beam of light in what is known as Near Infrared Spectroscopy.

Each molecule interacts with light to create a unique optical signature, which can reveal an object's chemical properties, such as moisture, fat or sugar content.

By examining, for example, the sugar content of a tomato on the supermarket shelf, the system can determine how ripe it is.

But for the time being it is confounded by a prepared dish such as lasagne, with its layers of pasta, sauce, meat and vegetables.

Collaborative database

Consumer Physics is counting on data gathered by users contributing to a constantly expanding information bank.



A staff member at the Laboratory of the Consumer Physics Society tests cheese using the SCiO pocket device in Hod Hasharon

"The bigger our community gets, the more data SCiO will have about different materials and this goes right back to our community of users," its website says.

The product was launched with the help of crowd funding site Kickstarter, with 13,000 customers so far placing orders for the gadget at \$250 dollars (220 euros) apiece, for delivery from December 2015.

Sharon says his technology has an appeal that reaches beyond the consumer market.

"There is interest from small developers that want to develop something cool for themselves or for their kids, or even teenagers that want to

develop this, up to multinationals and large companies," he says, adding that he is eyeing the industrial sector for the next phase.



The SCiO spectrometre tests medicine tablets the Laboratory of the Consumer Physics Society in Hod Hasharon

"There are people that work in industry that on a daily basis look at stuff and say, 'Is it really the quality that I ordered?'"

And one day your smartphone could come with a SCiO built in.

The prototype already exists but is kept under careful guard at the premises of Consumer Physics.

Its makers believe that within years the giants of the industry will come

to see the gadget as indispensable.

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