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Cooking robots sound like an expensive luxury, but they are an extremely popular way to tighten family budgets in one of Europe's poorest countries. Yesterday, the WSJ profiled the success of Bimby, also known as Thermomix, in Portugal. Bimby is a German-made kitchen aid that automates cooking. It's a versatile food processor that does all the prep work (cutting, mixing, and kneading) and will also cook (baking or steaming) and season. Actions are carried out in a mixing bowl via programmable instructions, and that includes seasoning meals according to a recipe's specifications.

Its functionality has made it possible for Portuguese to keep with tradition and get together with family and friends for large meals at a time when many are lacking the free time to cook but cannot afford to eat out

Bimby was even more popular than Apple's iPad tablet in 2013, outselling it by a substantial margin. Nearly 10 percent of Portuguese households have one, the manufacturer says.

Bimby's success (it's known as Thermomix in most places) portends a future where robots are assistive, cost-saving technologies in our homes or workplaces. Robotic floor sweepers and gutter cleaners are familiar novelty items (one even being lampooned on *Breaking Bad*), but some scenarios are more practical than those.

For instance, robots could soon assist seniors at a lower cost than nursing care, help disabled people to walk, and are beginning to aid farmers to manage their land better

// Excerpt from The Wall Street Journal, 2013