

Restaurants struggle to be gluten free

By Vanessa Wong, Bloomberg

Cooking a gluten-free meal isn't as simple as plucking out the croutons.

Even if the ingredients are gluten-free, avoiding cross-contamination from other things in the kitchen means having separate utensils and prep areas, not to mention special training of staff—significant undertakings in restaurant environments whose employees must be reminded to wash their hands.

The problem, in other words, is the preparation.

Perhaps that's why some chains that make most of their money from wheat-eaters have stopped short of promising that their "gluten-free" foods are actually, well, gluten-free.

As the Wall Street Journal reported, Domino's and Noodles & Co. offer "gluten-free" options with disclaimers that they can't guarantee a total absence of gluten.

"Even with a strict adherence toward maintaining spotless restaurants, we simply have too much wheat and other gluten-containing food products in our kitchens to be able to eliminate the cross contamination on food prep surfaces and even in the air," warns a message on Noodles' website.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration defines "gluten-free" as containing less than 20 parts per million of gluten.

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