

Picky eaters overhauling restaurant industry

By Jillian Berman, Huffington Post

In Panera Bread CEO Ron Shaich's vision of the future, every restaurant could have "a different menu for every person."

Shaich's chain and others are bringing his vision closer to reality, making it easier for diners to order exactly to their preferences instead of picking from a rigid set of menu items like they did in the Dark Ages. That could either be a food utopia or a diner's nightmare. It just all depends on what kind of eater you are.

A growing number of diners are walking into restaurants knowing exactly what they want, thanks to an "explosion" of specific diets like vegan and gluten-free, according to David Just, a Cornell University behavioral economist who focuses on food. And for those consumers, many of whom are already flocking to build-a-meal chains like Chipotle, Panera's foray into customization could take some of the stress out of ordering a salad-dressing-on-the-side-no croutons.

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