

SERVE KIDS BETTER™.

It's time to serve our kids better.

Remember when eating out was a treat? Many of us went out for special occasions, such as birthdays, where there was something to be celebrated. These days, it's a different reality. When life gets too busy, we often turn to restaurants to feed our families. While eating out on a weekly—even daily—basis is not a bad thing, it does present a new responsibility for restaurants in [STATE] to **serve kids better.**™

But that's a responsibility they're hardly living up to.

It's no secret that restaurant kids' meals aren't exactly healthy. They are often high in calories, saturated fat, and sodium—and low in nutrition. As families like ours and yours turn to restaurants to feed them more often, restaurants should do their part by including menu items that are healthy, especially for our kids. But don't just take our word for it, the facts support a need for change.

We're eating out more than ever:

- Americans now spend more of their food budget on foods prepared away from home than on foods at home.ⁱ
- Children consume roughly 25 percent of their calories from eating out, and about 42 percent of children aged 2–9 eat fast food on a given day.^{ii,iii}

Restaurants have a responsibility to help kids eat healthy, but they're falling short dramatically:

- Approximately 96 percent of entrees in U.S. chain restaurants fail to meet basic USDA nutrition standards, a 2013 report found^{iv}
- A study of the top 50 U.S. chain restaurants found that 86 percent of children's meal combinations are too high in calories, 55 percent are too high in saturated fat, and 66 percent are too high in sodium.^v
- In 2013, an independent study documented that only 11 of 4,695 possible children's meal combinations in fast food chain restaurants met all of the established nutritional criteria for pre-schoolers, and only 19 meals met all nutritional criteria for older children.^{vi}
- Studies link eating out more with obesity, higher amounts of body fat, and higher body mass index. They also show that eating fast food meals often is associated with consuming more calories and saturated fat.^{vii}

In fact, children eat almost twice as many calories when they eat a meal at a restaurant than they do when they eat a meal at home.^{viii} **So, what can we—as parents and citizens—do to protect our children and help restaurants change their unhealthy ways?** We can start by talking to our local restaurant owners about providing healthy options for our children. We should also ask our lawmakers to pass policies that ensure restaurants serve kids better. **Visit [URL PLACEHOLDER] to get involved.**

Since 2008, the percent of restaurant kids' meals that meet the expert nutrition standards has only increased from 1 percent to 3 percent.^{ix} That's not enough. Our children need healthy options today!

SOURCES

- ⁱ *Decoding Consumers in a Challenging Economy*. National Restaurant Association, 2012. Available at: <http://www.restaurant.org/forecast>.
- ⁱⁱ Wootan, Margo G. *Children's Meals in Restaurants: Families Need More Help To Make Healthy Choices*. Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2012. Available at: <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/Kids-meal-article-Lets-Move.pdf>.
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- ^{iv} Sturm R and Wu H. *What's on the Menu? A review of the energy and nutritional content of US chain restaurant menus*. The Rand Corporation, 2013. Available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP201200113.html.
- ^v Batada A, Wootan MG. *Kids' Meals II: Obesity and Poor Nutrition on the Menu*. Center for Science in the Public Interest. Available at: <http://www.cspinet.org/kidsmeals2>.
- ^{vi} Harris JL, Schwartz MB, et al. *Fast Food F.A.C.T.S. 2013: Measuring Progress in Nutrition and Marketing to Children and Teens*. Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, 2013. Available at: http://www.fastfoodmarketing.org/media/FastFoodFACTS_Report.pdf.
- ^{vii} Center for Science in the Public Interest. Research Review: Effects of Eating Out on Nutrition and Body Weight. Center for Science in the Public Interest: Washington, DC, 2008.
- ^{viii} Zoumas-Morse C, Rock CL, Sobo EJ, et al. "Children's Patterns of Macronutrient Intake and Associations with Restaurant and Home Eating." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 101(8): 923-925, 925, 2001.
- ^{ix} Batada A, Wootan MG. *Kids' Meals II: Obesity and Poor Nutrition on the Menu*. Center for Science in the Public Interest. Available at: <http://www.cspinet.org/kidsmeals2>.