



# TREND WATCH

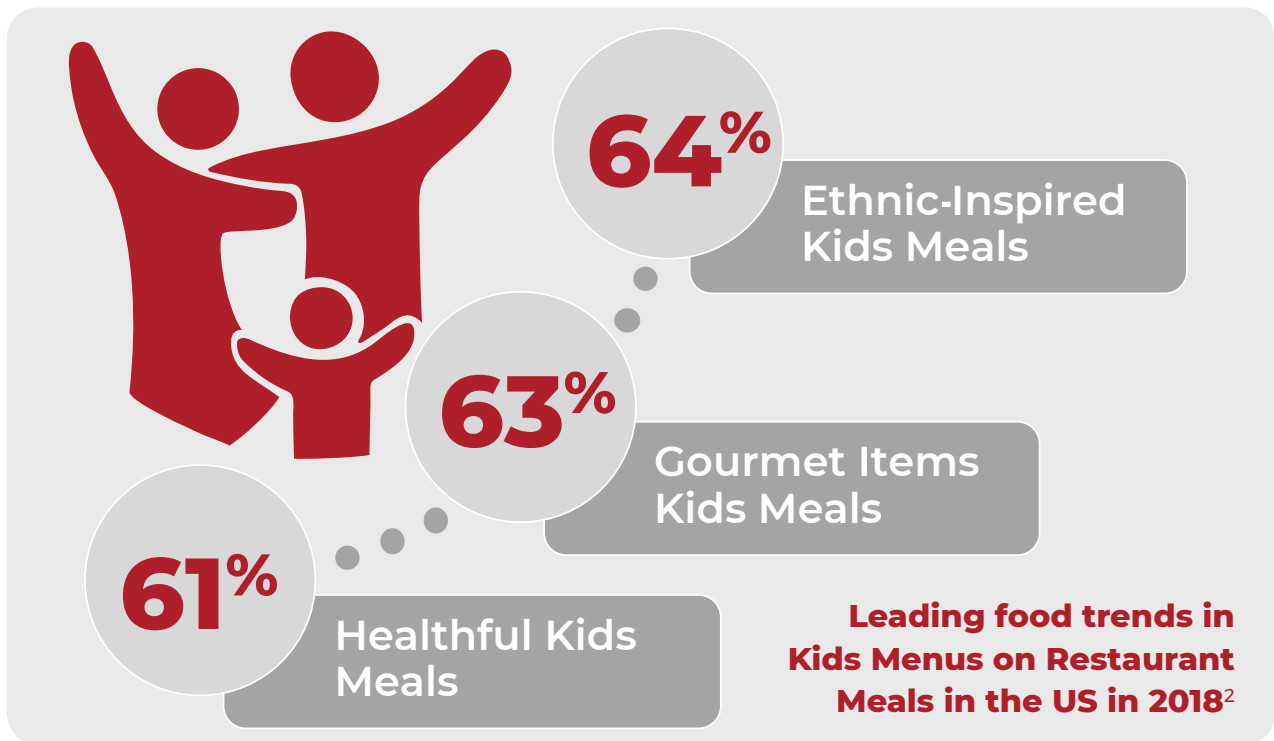
## Today's kids embracing adventurous ethnic eating!

As adult American consumers go, their kids are sure to follow. This is especially true with ever-evolving food tastes. While operators adapt their menus to satisfy guests' desire for more ethnically inspired meals, the trend also includes kid-friendly versions to cater to the entire family.

Consider that almost half of millennials are parents<sup>1</sup> and that among parents living with children ages 12 and under, millennials are more than twice as likely than other generations to say that they would visit restaurants more often if they offered sophisticated menus. In addition, millennials are heavily engaged in the all-natural movement and want the same for their children. Therefore, menus on many restaurants have more kids menu options that are ethnically inspired, down-sized portions of adult menu items, and are more likely to be natural/organic.

*Generation Z is the most ethnically diverse generation, with over 42% identifying as African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian or other.*

*Technomic, Generational Consumer Trend Report, 2018*



The members of this youngest generation (typically born after 2000) are the most diverse in U.S. history and are open to a broader range of cuisines given their exposure to international flavors from a young age at home and in restaurants; 36% of U.S. parents of children under 18 say their kids enjoy international food.<sup>3</sup>



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## General Menuing for Today's Kids

In the 1960s, '70s and '80s, it was pretty easy to figure out a way to get kids interested. It mostly came down to burgers, pizza, hot dogs, chicken nuggets and french fries. It was the typical high-calorie, high-fat food that still constitutes the core of kids menus at restaurants nationwide.

But as the American palate began to get a bit more adventurous, kid-friendly dining began to evolve. Below are tips for developing a menu that appeals to kids today.<sup>4</sup>

**Make it Healthy** - Ok, this may be more to attract parents than kids. Four keys that attract parents' interest in what their child eats include:

- Freshness, offering more fruits and vegetables
- Natural/organic selections
- Use of whole grains
- Offering grilled, roasted and broiled items



**Up the Sophistication** - One of the benefits of a multi-ethnic, multicultural society is the exposure our kids are getting to new and exciting flavors. The idea of offering exotic but approachable foods might have seemed far too esoteric for a fast food menu years ago, but today it's entirely possible to imagine any or all of these treats on a typical American menu:

- Indian samosas
- Venezuelan arepas
- Salvadoran papusas
- Mexican empanadas



**Think Fun, Interactive, Customizable** - "Playing with your food," once verboten, is now sanctioned by many parents. Edible entertainment is, in many ways, the order of the day, and it can help make kid-friendly chains a frequent fixture of parents' dining-out routines. Consider two options already available:

Customizable taco bars, where kids can make personalized tacos with any of several meat, vegetable and condiment options.

"Make your own pizza" program, in which kids get a thin-crust pizza dough, sauce and toppings to do with as they please.



## We Asked the Experts

Who better to judge what kids like than kids themselves? Here is a sampling from our panel of culinary kids in response to what they like most in terms of globally influenced meals.

*"My favorite ethnic food is orange chicken with fried rice. My school also serves quesadillas and build-your-own pizzas." - Christina, age 11*

*"I love going to Italian restaurants because pasta is my favorite. At school, I love the nachos; the nachos are everyone's favorite!" - Zuzanna, age 12*

*"I like spaghetti and meatballs!" - Rosie, age 6*

*"When you go to a Mexican restaurant, I don't understand why they have a burger on the kids menu. What's the point of going to a Mexican restaurant if you're just going to eat normal American food?" - Ava, age 11*



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## Recipe Inspiration for Your KIDS MENU

Adding an ethnic influence to kids menus doesn't have to mean drastic changes that could actually intimidate kids rather than attract them. Following are some simple suggestions for "ethnicizing" your menu just enough to create exciting variations of basic kids foods:

### CHICKEN TENDERS/NUGGETS

- Bread with panko or coconut.
- Include dipping sauces, such as tonkatsu sauce, plum sauce, Sriracha mayo, banana ketchup or sweet chili sauce.



### BURGERS

- Substitute ketchup and mustard with tzatziki, Sriracha mayo, banana ketchup or wasabi mayo.
- Top with mild kimchi, pickled vegetables, pico de gallo, chutney or fried plantains.



### GRILLED CHEESE

- Add fried plantains, chutney or char siu.
- Try varieties like queso fresco, chihuahua cheeses, cojita cheese or paneer.



### MACARONI & CHEESE

- Add crumbles such as panko instead of breadcrumbs.
- Use ethnic cheeses.



## Current Global Menu Items for Kids



**Chipotle's Kids Menu:** Allows kids to pick a protein (chicken, steak, carne asada, carnitas, sofritas, or guacamole), rice, beans, toppings, side and a small drink.



**Big Bowl Kids Menu:** The restaurant gives children a smaller-sized portion of the adult's menu with dishes like grilled chicken satay, teriyaki chicken fried rice, sesame chicken and a create-your-own stir fry.

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