

BLR Intelligence Report: Kids' Menus

1.10.20



Adults sharing their cravings and guilty pleasures from kids' menus drive online conversation

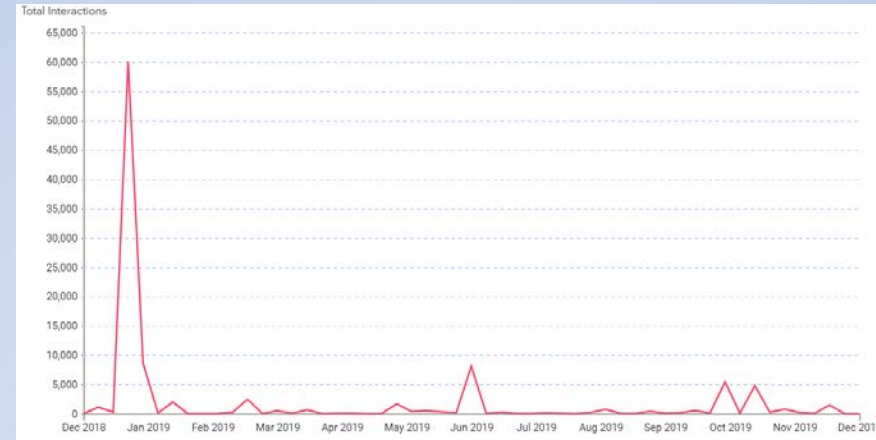
- Total volume of Twitter and blog conversations mentioning kids' menus was 44,307 posts in 2019
- Conversation sentiment was primarily positive (68%)
- Majority of discussion included adults posting nostalgically about their love of kids' menus for the food, low cost and playful experience
 - Consumers often refer to their kids' menu cravings and guilty pleasures
- Top 3 most talked about kids' menu items:
 - 66% mentioned mac n' cheese
 - 28% mentioned grilled cheese
 - 13% mentioned chicken tenders
- Although it was a smaller portion of conversation, there was some negative discussion stemming from parents who sought allergen friendly menus and were frustrated by the lack of options
 - These parents are highly engaged in the topic on social media, so when they experience restaurants that do accommodate, they also voice appreciation











Media predict kids' menus will evolve with mainstream food trends

- Minimal consumer media coverage about kids' menus overall in 2019, following initial spike early in the year after a “pretentious foodie mom” posted that her kids would never eat from a kids' menu
 - Parents responded, prompting a viral discussion of fears of ‘food shaming’ when trying to implement healthy foods into kids' diets, while facing realities of what kids will actually eat
- Heading into 2020, trade and food media included predictions about kids' menus in their annual trend forecasts
- Overall, media expect kids' menus to more closely evolve with mainstream menus and food trends this year:
 - Inclusion of plant-based and whole-grain foods
 - More global flavors including those from Mediterranean and West African cuisines

Picky Eaters? For Parents, Food-Shaming Is All Too Real



 **Lana Cosby-Jones** I can't wait until she has to order, through bitter tears, macaroni and cheese with a side of macaroni and cheese because that's literally the only thing her kid will eat, anywhere. It will be glorious.    947

 **Julie Cocomise** Get ready to join the buttered noodle club Karen.    925



Consumers still focus on conventional kids' menus, while media focus on innovation

- Parents on Twitter and in blogs most frequently name national chains, including Cheesecake Factory, Olive Garden and Red Robin, as go-to restaurants for great kids' menus
- Specific menu item callouts include:
 - 'Baby Buddha's Feast' and sweet and sour chicken at PF Chang's
 - Spaghetti with tomato sauce at Olive Garden
 - Red Robin 'corn doggies'
- Although majority of consumer conversation is still focused on conventional kids' menu items, consumer media coverage favors restaurants, both local and national, that are innovating to evolve with adult consumer preferences
 - Burger King was first national food chain in the U.S. to launch a plant-based kids' menu item

Burger King is adding Impossible Whoppers to its kids meals

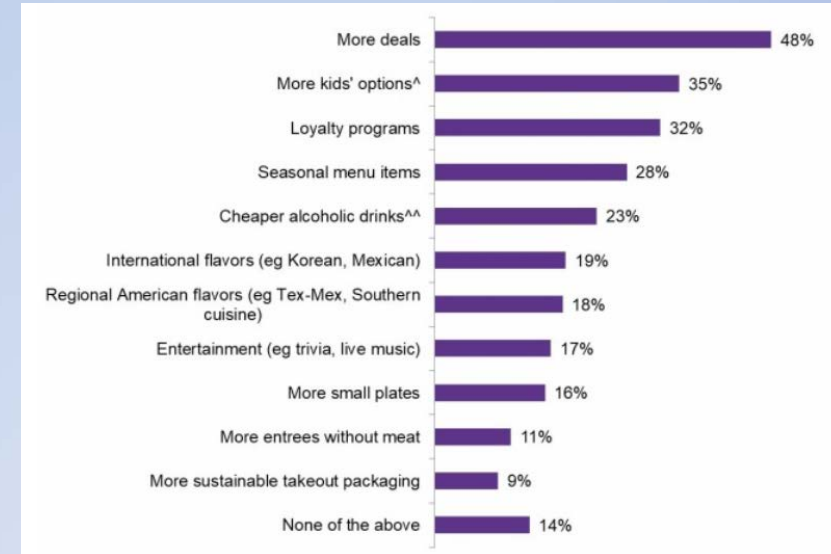
By Hannah Sparks

November 12, 2019 | 11:10am



Millennial parents have heightened expectations for dining out with kids

- Second leading motivator for consumers to visit a restaurant more often is more kids' options (preceded by more deals)
- Millennial parents prioritize both taste and healthfulness for their kids' food:
 - Introducing new flavors (often global flavors)
 - Inspiring their kids to order healthier options
- Have broader definition for “kid-friendly” including:
 - Robust menu options (achieving both taste and healthfulness)
 - Welcoming atmosphere
 - Convenient service
- View dining out as a “special occasion” activity, so desire a stress-free experience when they do
 - Parents share online that they can be deterred from dining out due to stress about managing kids' behavior
 - Participating restaurants in London hosted first-come, first-serve kids' table where kids are supervised for free with crafts and games while parents dine



 **Jennifer Fox**
@harlickjen

Replying to @caora_mck

A severe lack of child-friendly restaurants. And BTW: having a highchair doesnt count. Families, thousands of families are not eating out because they dont have good options that are friendly and comfortable with kids being kids.



Whole-wheat and legume pastas are ripe for opportunity on modern kids' menus

- Currently, top kids' menu pasta dishes mentioned on Twitter and in blogs include:
 - Mac n' cheese
 - Spaghetti and tomato sauce and/or meatballs
 - Buttered linguine
- However, as millennial parents demand healthier options, whole-wheat and legume pastas are ripe opportunity to satisfy both parents and kids with high-protein, plant-based ingredients in familiar dishes



Summary + Key Takeaways

- Given that there is some discussion on social about the lack of allergen friendly kid menus, there may be an opportunity to leverage Barilla's gluten-free pastas and legume pastas to provide classic pasta favorites — e.g., spaghetti, mac and cheese, buttered noodles — that cater to kids' different dietary needs.
- Millennial parents want healthier options when they dine out with their kids and media coverage suggests that kids' menus will mimic larger consumer trends such as plant-based ingredients and global flavors; however, online social conversation indicates that kids still tend to be picky eaters who prefer simple foods and dishes.

Subsequently, kids' menus that fall somewhere in the middle of the two are likely to see the most success. For example, familiar dishes — e.g., spaghetti, mac and cheese, buttered noodles — that use whole-grain and legume pasta and incorporate a vegetable, a lean protein or a healthy plant-based meat could be a way to provide better-for-you options that don't stray too far from popular classics. Examples below:

- Chef Lorenzo's [Spaghetti with Vegetarian Bolognese](#), with the option to use traditional pasta, whole-grain pasta or a legume pasta
- [Light "Italian Mac and Cheese" with Carrot Puree](#), with the option to use traditional pasta, whole-grain pasta or a legume pasta
- Pasta dishes that incorporate simple global flavors, e.g., [Taco Pasta with Chicken](#), [Spaghetti Lo Mein](#), [Pad Thai Spaghetti with Chicken](#), etc.



Grazie!

