

Feedback on children's menus

NATIONWIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Kids' menus in hospo: essential offer or necessary add-on?

We ran a quick snapshot survey to get a read on how hospitality businesses are approaching kids' menus – and whether they see them as essential, strategic, or just a necessary add-on.

We found:

- **Kids' menus matter.** They're widely seen as essential for attracting family diners, especially on weekends and during school holidays. Respondents commented on creating a more relaxed experience for parents and setting the stage for repeat visits.
- **Two main approaches:** About half offer a dedicated kids' menu with simplified or bundled meals. The other half keep things flexible – encouraging (or adapting) main menu items or in some cases creating off-menu options on request.
- **Quality vs. convenience.** Many operators see the kids' menu as a chance to create "future diners" by introducing children to quality ingredients and thoughtful cooking. Others keep it simple and familiar, prioritising speed and ease of preparation.
- **Pricing:** 50% price kids' meals with the same margin as the wider menu. The other 50% use lower margins or value-driven pricing to support family appeal and repeat trade.
- **The vegetable debate is real.** While many operators highlighted how vegetables are incorporated into dishes, or available as sides, others report these options rarely get ordered, and so they don't offer them as part of the kids menu side options.
- **Menus are mostly stable.** Only 31% have changed their kids' menu recently, suggesting most are working as intended. When changes happen, they're driven by sales performance, labour costs, or improving the family experience.

As one operator put it: *"We see it as an opportunity to create future diners... When kids feel included and empowered, parents relax – and that's when great dining experiences happen."*

Q.1. How do you view kids' menus as part of your overall menu?

For example, you might see it as essential for attracting family diners on weekends, a necessary add-on but not a focus, an opportunity to introduce kids to quality ingredients, a loss leader to get families through the door, or something else entirely.

FEATURED QUOTE:

"As a parent to a 10-year-old, I genuinely understand how important a kids' menu is, it's often the difference between a relaxed family meal and a stressful one. We don't see the kids' menu as an afterthought or a loss leader. We see it as an opportunity to create future diners. We have a separate kids' menu where children can colour in and make their own decisions by choosing their food and drinks by ticking the box themselves – it gives them a sense of independence and ownership. Just as importantly, we give the same level of care to kids' food as we do to the rest of our menu. It's cooked thoughtfully, using quality ingredients, and handled with the same attention to detail. For us, the kids' menu plays a bigger role than just keeping children occupied. It supports family dining, especially on weekends, encourages confident decision-making at the table, and gently introduces kids to good food in an approachable way. When kids feel included and empowered, parents relax and that's when great dining experiences happen."

SELECTED OTHER COMMENTS:

We don't focus on having a separate kids menu. I look at it as, as long as we can cater for the kids with our full menu and the adults feel like they can provide something reasonably healthy then it's all good. I do not look at my menu as attracting the kids so the adults come.

The majority of our customers are mums and dads. The menu offering is suited for sharing; therefore the kids menu is narrow in its offering as typically families order sharing dishes.

We aim to make life easier for fussy eaters.

We don't have a menu specifically for children however we have options to create off the menu - kids fish and chips, cheesy peas risotto, split a protein served simply etc.

It's essential for a rounded offer for families, especially over weekends and school holiday periods. Part of the general requirements for our menu, and a chance to demonstrate that the kids' menu doesn't have to always be fried food.

To us, it's an essential part as we are a family friendly tavern with a large garden and playground.

The kids menu is a necessary add on, but not a focus.

Our menu board caters for kids, toasted sammies, burgers.

Our kids menu attracts families that want a real meal, they are small versions of main menu items. A lot of older people order from the kids menu also, a somewhat vexing issue for our spend per head. We do kids eat free on Tuesdays - that is a loss leader but works well at getting families out early in the week.

Instead of advertising a kids menu, our team will have a chat with the child and parents on the day to make something that suits their preferences.

A bit of both of these attracting family diners on weekends (untapped potential), but in reality, it is more like a necessary add-on.

It's about getting families to stay well, giving them a cost effective meal that they will like that is not just chicken nuggets.

An opportunity to introduce kids to quality ingredients.

Kids menu is high need for us. To go along with the playground in store, and also our cabinet offering.

We see the children's menu as a way of getting customers in the restaurant on early evenings.

Absolutely essential.

Kids are valued customers, too! They must be treated with respect and offered thoughtful, nutritious and delicious fare.

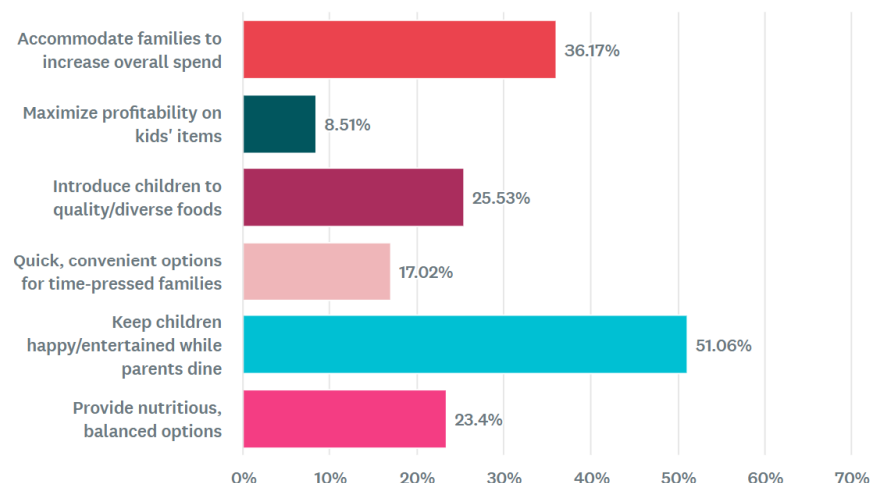
Do not provide a children's menu, but have an eye on being able to simplify existing menu items to help with feeding younger people.

Our kids' offerings are included in our regular menu, as adults also like to eat the same food - pizza, garlic bread, sausages, corn chips, pies; and kids also like to eat some of the more 'adult' items, like quiche, bacon sandwich, nachos.

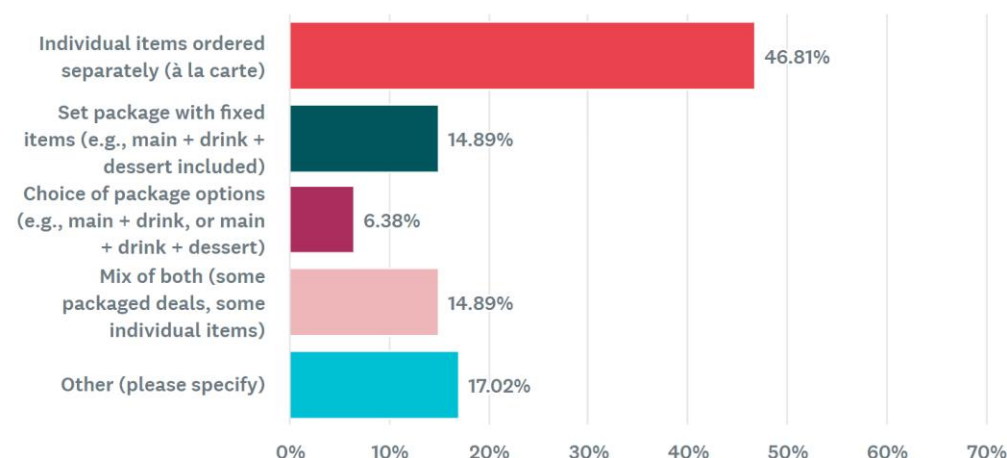
As we aim for a wide appeal we have always offered a children's menu that is healthy and appealing.

Yes it's good to attract families to come and enjoy their meals with their kids

Q.2. What is the main objective for kids' meals for your restaurant?



Q.3. How is your kids' menu structured?



Q.4. Is your pricing approach for kids' meals different from your regular menu?

For example: lower markup to attract families, higher margin on certain items, subsidized/loss leader pricing, same markup as adult meals, etc. Please explain your approach.

The responses were an almost 50/50 split – 50% say pricing strategy is structured no different to their full menu, 50% say they have a slightly lower margin (and price point).

SELECTED COMMENT:

“Yes, our kids' pricing is different from the regular menu. We offer a value-driven bundle rather than a high-margin item. For \$18, kids get rice or naan, butter chicken or paneer makhni, plus ice cream. The focus is on fairness, quality, and making family dining easy not maximising margin.”

Q.5. Have you changed your kids' menu structure in recent years? If so, what changed and why?

69% - NO
31% - YES

- Yes simply based on what items were selling vs time and effort to make the dishes
- Yes, this month we have moved from having no "official" kids menu and only giving verbal options to now offering a 3 course selection menu.
Yes it needs to be update every year I think according to the demand of the market. Yes. We updated our kids' menu to be more engaging and child-led by adding our logo for colouring and simplifying the food to suit flavours kids can comfortably enjoy. The changes were made to improve decision making, enjoyment, and overall family dining experience.
- Just change the options to keep them interested.
- Reduced the number of options our preference is for adult diners spending adult prices.

Q.6. Do you include vegetables/sides with your kids' meals?

Yes, we offer a basic salad and a little fruit. want it to look like a well balanced meal

Mainly 2 options (Fries or Steam Rice). The most popular is steam rice

No, because vegetables are part of the sauce, e.g., pasta pomodoro

We don't include a separate vegetable side with our kids' meals. Indian cuisine doesn't traditionally centre meals around vegetable "sides," and our kids' dishes are designed to be familiar, comforting, and well balanced within the dish itself. We also recognise that most children get their vegetables at home, and when dining out the priority is enjoyment and ease for both kids and parents.

Kids don't like vegetables.

Just the protein and fries unless its the pasta (no fries).

Always, I'm shocked by how many places just offer chips and other fried things and burgers. AND 90% of the time every item contains meat.

We offer fries. We have a kids salad that is not ordered often!

Yes. Salad or veg, and mash or fries or baked potato.

Vegetables/salads

Regular sides can be ordered.

They all have a "healthy" element (little bit of salad or fruit with them)

No, we our menu designed to please kids not necessarily parents

We have had 'healthier alternatives' previously however they were not big movers. The lower spend on children's items also means that they need to be comparatively lower labour.

We were asked and tried many times.. kids and parents never choose those options.. apart from broccolini kids side on evening menu, ordered rarely

Yes, side options are seasonal vegetables, mash potato or chips

Families often choose 2, or 3 items for their children to share - they don't necessarily need to have one menu item each.

Yes simple vegetable and side options without dressings and sauces.

Yes and all dietary options dairy free vegan gluten free..