

## Kids Change Things

Family households\* have never offered a greater diversity of new food and beverage opportunities. As of mid-May, households with children accounted for 36% of food and beverage product sales and 41% of growth, according to information shared in IRI's "Tracking the Dramatic Pivot of U.S. Consumer and Shopper Behavior" webinar.

One in 10 households has preschoolers, 21% have kids in the primary grades, and 14% have high school students, according to IRI. With three-quarters of children schooling remotely full-time or part-time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of breakfast, morning snack, and lunch occasions have

shifted back home, according to Datassential's *COVID-19 Report No. 33: Life Goes On*.

Family households also are eating together more often: 5.8 dinners per week, 5.4 lunches, and 4.9 breakfasts, according to *U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2020—Home Cooking*, a report from FMI—

*Four in 10 parents say their child's tastes*

*are more sophisticated than their own were at the same age.*

The Food Industry Association. Half of meal preparers make separate meals for their kids at least some of the time when they eat dinner together.

One-third of moms say they're

treating their family more than in the past, according to IRI's "Fresh Foods & Produce" webinar. Four in 10 households with kids are snacking more than before the pandemic, per the International Food Information Council's (IFIC) *2020 Food & Health Survey*.

Family households are among the

most frequent users of restaurant take-out; four in 10 have purchased family meal bundles as well as heat-and-eat and take-and-bake items from restaurants, according to Datassential's *COVID-19 Report No. 31: Staying Power*. While half of parents want more comfort/classic dishes for takeout family meals, over one-third want more ethnic and chef-inspired options, per the Datassential report.

### What's Cooking

Having learned new cooking skills during the pandemic, family meal preparers are now significantly more likely than households without children to explore a variety of preparation methods and flavors when cooking and also more likely to incorporate unique foods, per FMI.

They are most likely to prepare fresh seafood at least once a week, serve a wider variety of meats and poultry cuts, pair wines with dinner, bake cakes and other desserts, grill or barbecue, use a slow cooker, and make their own marinades and stocks, per FMI.

Family households are most likely to own a rice cooker, a deep fryer, an air fryer, a water carbonator, a pasta maker, a bread machine, and a juicer. Six in 10 have a blender; 51%, a slow cooker, *Instant Pot*, or other pressure cooker;

*Flavored to appeal* to young audiences, Iconic Kids Protein Drinks include a serving of vegetables. Photo courtesy of Iconic Protein



45%, a toaster oven; and 31%, a waffle maker, per FMI. Tyson's fresh family-sized *Instant Pot Meals* are right on target for busy moms.

Since the pandemic, family households have increased their use of frozen foods more than other households, according to American Frozen Food Institute data; 81% of family households are purchasing more frozen foods versus 61% of households without children. Sales of multi-serve frozen dinners and entrées continue to skyrocket, up 18% for the 12 weeks ended July 12, 2020, versus the same period a year ago, per IRI.

Family households are the heaviest users of frozen snacks; one-third regularly buy five or more varieties. Over half of households with children use them to replace a meal, per Mintel's *2020 Frozen Snacks—U.S.* report. Nestlé's *Stouffer's Classic Lasagna Bites*, breakfast *Casserole Bites* from Jimmy Dean, and Handy's *Seafood Power Bites* are perfectly positioned for mealtimes.

With 38% of moms planning to feed their remote-learning students a hot lunch, per Datassential's *Life Goes On* report, kid-friendly frozen handhelds should find a wider market. Unit sales of non-breakfast handhelds were up 16% for the 12 weeks ending June 14, 2020, versus a year ago, according to IRI. *Lily's Toaster Grills* grilled cheese sandwiches go from freezer to toaster to plate in four minutes.

Family households were by far the heaviest users of fresh prepared foods prior to the pandemic, per FMI. Fresh family-sized entrées and sides, kid-specific single-serve meals, and smaller appetizer/dessert platters may help bring back sales of fresh prepared foods, which were down 4.9% versus a year ago as of Sept. 6, 2020, per IRI.

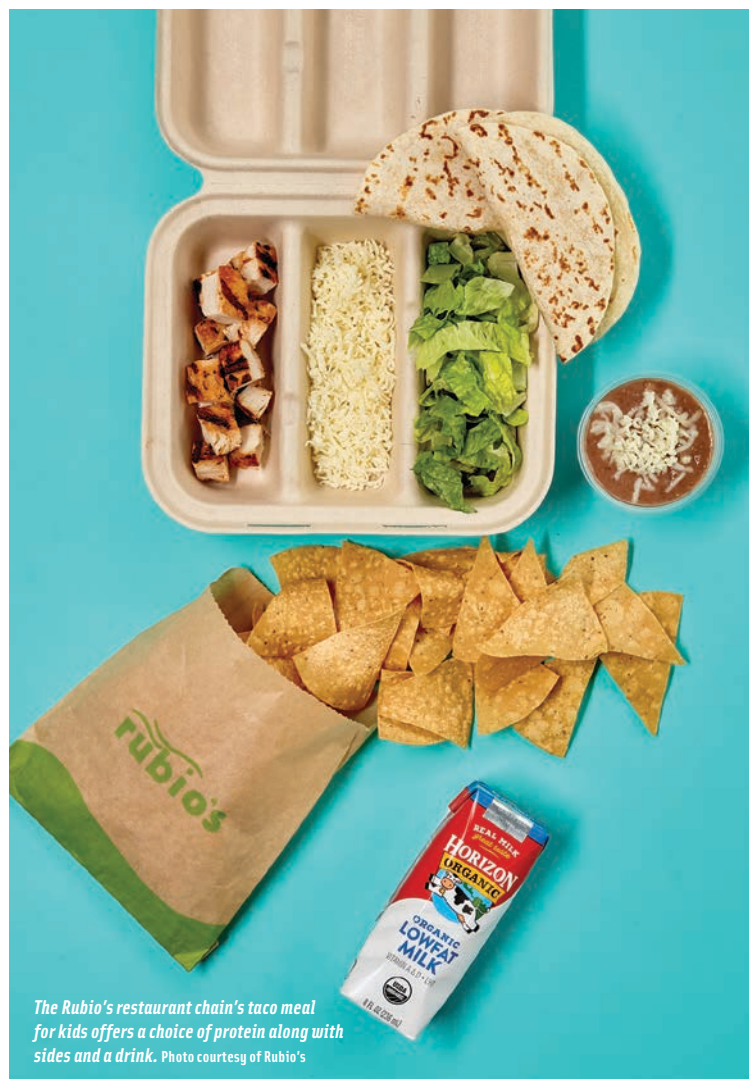
Do-it-yourself shortcuts are increasingly important to family meal preparers. For the 12 weeks ended July 12, 2020,

versus a year ago, unit sales of refrigerated bread/rolls/bun dough jumped 55%, egg roll/wonton wrapper sales were up 76%, and cookie/brownie dough sales were up 45%, per IRI.

Family and kids' meals are overdue for a culinary upgrade. Households with children are the most likely to cook ethnic foods at home, per Mintel's *Cooking in America—U.S.* report. Four in 10 parents say their child's tastes are more sophisticated than their own were at the same age; six in 10 encourage their kids to try new flavors and foods, per Technomic's *2020 Generational Consumer Trend Report*.

Over the past four years, globally inspired sauces, such as Bolognese, queso, hummus, and sesame, have been among the fastest growing on kids' menus along with buttermilk and maple. Red sauces, butter, barbecue, Alfredo, and ranch are the sauces that currently appear most frequently on restaurant menus, per Datassential's *MenuTrends*.

Roasted turkey, pulled pork, grilled salmon, chicken quesadillas, and bowl meals are among the trending kids' restaurant entrées, along with Belgian waffles and buttered noodles with a flavor twist, according to Datassential's *MenuTrends*. Pei Wei's *Kids Wei Better*



The Rubio's restaurant chain's taco meal for kids offers a choice of protein along with sides and a drink. Photo courtesy of Rubio's

*Orange Chicken*, Rubio's *Build Your Own Kids' Taco Meal*, and Red Lobster's *Petite Chilled Lobster and Shrimp Rolls* are among the inventive kids' menu additions.

#### Rx for Family Meals

Eight in 10 family meal preparers say they're trying to get their family to eat healthier since the pandemic, according to Datassential. A majority of moms feel

## [ CONSUMER TRENDS ]

their family's diet could be either a lot healthier (38%) or somewhat healthier (37%), per FMI.

Parents' most important criterion for meal selection is "knowing their kids will eat it." That's followed by freshness, including something from each food group, reasonable portions, and being low in sugar, according to Mintel's *Feeding the Family—U.S.* report.

Family households are much more likely than those without children to choose foods for specific health benefits or foods that they believe are holistically good for them (think organic, clean, local, and natural), per FMI. In addition, parents are much more likely to strongly agree that it's important to eat fortified/enriched foods.

It's clear that parents are focused on trying to ensure that their kids' vitamin and mineral intake is adequate. For the year ended Aug. 2, 2020, sales of kids' multivitamins jumped 25%; for the four

weeks ending Aug. 4, 2020, they were up 43%, per IRI. An immune boost was the top reason for increased use, according to Mintel data.

Natural, followed by high fiber, no sugar/low sugar, no artificial ingredients, lower sodium, non-GMO, low calorie, no hormones/no antibiotics, gluten-free, and organic are the front-of-pack claims most sought after by parents, per FMI; one in 10 purchasers looks for specific allergens.

One-quarter of family households have a self-described vegetarian household member, and 17% include a vegan. One-third are moderating their meat consumption, per FMI. One-third of family households are opting for more dairy alternatives versus the 21% of households without children that are doing so, per IFIC.

Family households are among the most interested in drinkable health products. Iconic Protein's kids' protein drinks

contain grass-fed milk protein, prebiotics, and natural sweeteners. *Nestlé Pure Life Fruity Water* offers electrolytes.

Superfoods such as *Kashi Super Loops* breakfast cereal colored with carrots, radishes, and red cabbage are being showcased in the kids' food category. One-third of family households are concerned about microbiome health, according to HealthFocus. Products like *Noops Oatmilk Pudding* with prebiotics and ancient whole grains target those with such concerns. **FT**

*\*Family households in this article refer to those with children under age 18 living at home with parents, a single parent, or other guardian.*



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