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## What's Your Restaurant's Off-Premises Strategy for Kids?

Building loyalty with families could represent a huge market-share opportunity.

OUTSIDE INSIGHTS | AUGUST 2020 | JENNIFER LOPER



UNSPASH/KELLY SIKKEMA

**Off-premises fun for kids is a way restaurants can make a positive impact in the midst of the pandemic.**

One of the many things that have been upended in 2020 is how families experience casual dining and fast-casual restaurants. With the shift toward takeout and delivery, families are bringing restaurant brands into their homes like never before. Even when this year's chaos starts to calm, takeout and delivery will continue to be mainstays for families.

There's a unique opportunity here for restaurants to innovate in the off-premises space—not just for now, but for the long-term. Kids and families should be part of that equation. By delighting kids (and their parents) with special off-premises experiences now and in the future, casual dining and fast casual restaurants can grow orders and build loyalty with families.

### Including Kids in Your Off-Premises Strategy

In June, we surveyed over 500 parents of kids age 4–10 about their thoughts on off-premises solutions for kids. We asked parents whether they wanted casual-dining restaurants to include “kid-friendly items or family-friendly activities with their delivery or to-go kids’ meals or family meals.” All told, a whopping nine out of every 10 parents we surveyed want to-go activities for kids from casual dining and fast-casual restaurants.

The reasons why they loved the idea illuminate exactly why a strategy that includes family and kids would be good for business:

#### 1. It will get casual dining into the consideration set more often for families getting off-premises dining

As one parent shared, to-go activities for kids are a good idea “because my son is a really picky eater and more kid-friendly foods with activities included might make him more interested in eating whenever we order out.” Another added, “It would make my kids more excited to possibly try new things/places.” Quick-service restaurants, equipped with drive-thru windows and built-in off-premises kids solutions, have always been in the consideration set for families dining off-premises. Fast casual and casual-dining restaurants have to shift their mindset—and the mindset of their customers—to also win in this space, and providing a special surprise for kids is a way to do that.

#### 2. Parents tell us their kids would love getting a little special something in take-out orders

“My kids would be so excited to get something special with our take-out meal,” shared one parent. “And it would make not being able to go out to eat a little bit better,” she added. Another parent said, “My child loves getting a goody and giving more opportunities to get them sounds great.” In fact, a majority of parents (60 percent) told us that if restaurants provided these kinds of kid-friendly to-go solutions, their kids would be more excited about getting food from there. It could be something as simple as crayons or an activity sheet.

#### 3. It would be an impactful gesture that sets restaurants apart

Many parents told us how off-premises fun for kids is a way for restaurant brands to make a positive impact in the midst of the pandemic. As one Arizona parent said, “I think kids always have fun with activities from restaurants. Since dining at home is the new norm because of health risks, I think it would be great to make the experience fun and unique for them still.” Another told us, “It's a nice gesture in such a strange time. I think it would set them apart from other restaurants.”

Most importantly, off-premises kids solutions are a way for casual dining restaurants to increase sales with families. 77 percent of the parents we surveyed plan to order more takeout and delivery in the next three months than they did during this time last year—and over 50 percent said they would be more likely to order from restaurants that offered a special item or activity for the kids.

### Get Creative

Take-out and delivery solutions for kids are an investment that can pay off by growing sales and by building perception of your brand among families—a majority of parents agreed that it would make them think a restaurant really understands kids and families. Parents miss giving their kids that fun and exciting “going out to eat” experience and the special family time that goes along with it. How can your brand help fill that gap?

Now is the time to get creative and innovative, and to deliver a kids off-premises solution that not only surprises and delights kids and their parents, but also reflects your brand promise. A branded to-go solution for kids would extend your brand into families’ homes like never before and strengthen your brand's relationship with kids and parents alike.

*Jennifer Loper is the president of C3 Brand Marketing. She started back in 2006 as an account manager and has risen to her presidential role not only through her kind and unwavering leadership of the account management department, but also a talent bordering on super-powerful for building meaningful, lasting relationships with clients that truly see C3 as partners. C3 is known for building fully custom family and kids’ programs for major restaurant and hospitality partners in the U.S. and abroad—from strategy and brand positioning, to experiential design, to designing and producing product and getting it where it needs to go.*

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