

MARKETING

6 things families want from fast casual brands

Families with kids 12 and under bring in checks that are more than twice as high as parties without kids. What are you doing to get your piece of the pie?



Adobe

July 5, 2023 | by Jennifer Loper – President, C3 Brand Marketing

The fast casual restaurant segment has seen tremendous success and growth in recent years, but there's one area in which it can improve: with young families.

Why? Not only is winning over kids important to building a fan base among future guests, but families with kids 12 and under bring in checks that are more than twice as high as parties without kids. How can fast casual restaurants attract this valuable consumer segment to their restaurants? We conducted a study to find out.

Here are the top 6 things parents are looking for in a kid-friendly fast casual restaurant:

1. Kids' meals (85%).
2. Kids' give-aways (like toys/activities) (70%).
3. Food kids like (57%).
4. Kids' beverage included with the kids' meal (52%).
5. Friendly employees (48%).
6. Kids' cups with lids (47%)

As we've seen for other restaurant segments, a fun kids' giveaway (like a toy, activity, or coloring) is a key driver of kid-friendliness for fast casual restaurants, right behind kids' meals. Why kids' give-aways? It improves families' restaurant experience!

Here's what parents told us: kids' giveaways...

- Are fun for kids.
- Are something to entertain the kids while the adults have a conversation.
- Are an exciting surprise for kids.
- Encourage kids' creativity, imagination and pretend play.
- Make kids more excited about going to a non-fast-food restaurant.
- Are something for kids to play with while parents eat.
- Are something to entertain kids in the car on the way home (from drive-thru or take-out).
- Are a small gift for the kids.

The business case

Parents told us that although they prefer to visit fast casual restaurants for better-quality food and atmosphere, their kids often push for fast food in large part due to the toys they know they'll get from most fast-food restaurants. In other words, families want food and fun! The introduction of kid's give-aways would go a long way to help increase families' traffic to fast casual restaurants. Our respondents said the following about fast casuals providing kids' toys or giveaways:

- 90% said it would make that brand seem more fun.
- 87% of their kids would ask to go there more often.
- 80% thought it made the brand seem like a better value for their family.
- 79% said they would take their family there more often.

If you're a fast casual restaurant looking for the next level of growth, consider adding kids' meals to your menu to benefit kids, parents and your traffic.

Editor's note: There were 425 parents of kids ages 3-10 surveyed in March 2023.

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Jennifer Loper is president of C3, a Kansas City-based marketing and design agency that brings brands to life for families with children through experiences and entertainment. C3 uses insights, strategy and expertise to produce award-winning programs and custom products to help major restaurant, hospitality and service industry partners connect with families wherever they are—in person, at home or in the community at large. More information about how C3 creates connections that grow sales and get results can be found at www.c3brandmarketing.com.

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