



# FAMILY EATING OUT GUIDE





## WHAT WE DID

The Soil Association researched 21 of the biggest and most popular high street restaurants and pubs, and asked whether these chains are providing the standard you should expect when eating out as a family. With the help of an army of 'secret diner' parents, we rated these chains based on what families told us they care about, and what we'd expect from any establishment serving food to children. In the course of our investigation, we uncovered the good, the bad, and the decidedly ugly.

## HOW THIS GUIDE CAN HELP YOU

This guide is for parents who want to take their kids out for a real treat, and who care about the food their family eats. The guide will help you as a parent to choose which restaurant to eat in, and understand what is important to you when making the decision. It also includes tips on how to ensure that your kids eat a healthy, balanced meal once you are in the restaurant, and guidance on how you can become a restaurant critic and influence high street chains to give a better service to your children.

## WHY IT MATTERS

We asked 1,000 parents what they thought of children's food in restaurants and 66% said they didn't think it was good enough. Restaurants should be playing a positive role in influencing what children think good food looks like, but instead many are failing families by offering unimaginative children's menus that don't include enough of the good stuff. We're calling on restaurants and pubs to improve their offering, and serve up a variety of healthy choices, freshly made meals, and a family friendly experience.



# LEAGUE TABLE

RESTAURANTS	TOTAL SCORE	OUT OF... 80
1 JAMIE'S ITALIAN	64	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
2 HARVESTER	45	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
3 GIRAFFE	44	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
4 WETHERSPOONS	43	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
5 WAGAMAMA	40	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
6 PREZZO	38	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
7 CAFE ROUGE	38	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
8 PIZZA EXPRESS	37	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
9 ASK ITALIAN	35	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
10 FRANKIE & BENNY'S	34	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
11 BEEFEATER	32	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
12 ZIZZI	32	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
13 CARLUCCIOS	30	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
14 BREWERS FAYRE	29	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
15 MCDONALD'S	29	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
16 HUNGRY HORSE	29	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
17 NANDO'S	28	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
18 PIZZA HUT	27	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
19 STRADA	25	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
20 KFC	21	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
21 BURGER KING	11	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Each restaurant's score is calculated against a set of criteria, designed to test the provision of:

**A HEALTHY CHOICE:** Are they providing variety and making healthy eating easy? Are their menus laden with sugar? Do they offer a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit as standard?

**FAMILY FRIENDLY:** Are they welcoming children and treating them well? Are they accommodating parent needs?

**FRESH FOOD YOU CAN TRUST:** Can you trust where the meat is from? Are they serving free range eggs or sustainable fish? Are they cooking and preparing meals fresh in the restaurant?

The full results, including a profile of each restaurant's performance, may be found on the Soil Association website: [www.soilassociation.org/outtolunch](http://www.soilassociation.org/outtolunch)



## DECIDING WHERE TO EAT

It can be difficult deciding where to eat when you take the kids out for a meal. With the help of our 'secret diner' parents, we've identified the top picks from the league table in the categories that families have told us are important to them when making the decision.

### WHERE TO GO...

#### ...For child friendly fruit and veg:

1. WAGAMAMA
2. HARVESTER
3. JAMIE'S ITALIAN

Kids can choose from a range of dishes packed with veggies at Wagamama, help themselves to a free salad bar at Harvester, or try Jamie's magic organic seven-veg sauce at Jamie's Italian!

#### ...For a family friendly dining experience:

1. PIZZA EXPRESS
2. CARLUCCIO'S
3. WETHERSPOONS

Kids will love the activities and games at Pizza Express and Carluccio's, and parents can enjoy a family friendly service at Wetherspoon's.

#### ...if you care about your meat:

1. JAMIE'S ITALIAN
2. MCDONALDS
3. BEEFEATER

Jamie's Italian offers organic meat and MSC sustainable fish, and is head and shoulders above the rest when it comes to caring about farm animal welfare. McDonalds (it may surprise you to hear!) offers organic milk, free range eggs, MSC sustainable fish, and farm assured British beef. Beefeater also offers Red Tractor farm assured meat and MSC sustainable fish.

40% of parents eat out with their kids at least once a fortnight.

69% of parents think that children's food in restaurants would be improved if restaurants offer all children the choice of a child's portion of adult meals.

#### ...if you need to cater for both bigger and smaller appetites:

1. HARVESTER
2. PREZZO
3. HUNGRY HORSE

These chains offer a flexible menu that caters for smaller and larger appetites, with Harvester and Hungry Horse also offering baby food.

#### ...if you want a good range of vegetarian options:

1. WAGAMAMA
2. GIRAFFE
3. PREZZO

Families loved the veggie soup, stir fry and curry at Wagamama, and the veggie pizzas, pastas and mini-bites at Prezzo and Giraffe.

## AND WHERE TO AVOID...

#### ...if you are concerned about sugary drinks and sugary puddings:

1. PIZZA HUT
2. FRANKIE & BENNY'S
3. BURGER KING

The 'ice cream factory' at Pizza Hut and the refillable soft drinks at Frankie & Benny's are a calorie catastrophe! Avoid these chains to keep the calorie count down.



## MAKING THE HEALTHY CHOICE EASY

Picking the right restaurant may be half the battle, but once you're there, how do you make sure your kids eat a healthy, balanced meal without turning a lunch out into a major family bust-up?

We asked our friends at Eat Your Veg, a campaign that gives parents easy ways to get the kids to eat their greens [www.eatyourveg.org](http://www.eatyourveg.org) Something so many of us have struggled with!



Eating out with children isn't always the most relaxing experience. So if you want to make it healthy and enjoyable for all, the secret is to arm yourself with a plan and have fun.

## OUR THREE POINT PLAN:

**DODGE THE SUGARY DRINKS.** Order a jug of tap water when you arrive - most kids think it's great fun if it comes with ice, lemon and of course straws! But if it comes to ordering soft drinks, look out for low or no added sugar versions. Unlimited refills of sugary drinks (which some restaurants still offer) will quickly take your children over their recommended sugar intake.

**DON'T NEGOTIATE ON THE VEG.** Whatever else your children choose, try and get some veg on the plate. And it's all in the question! Try asking them which veg they'd like rather than if they'd like any at all. Watch out for the pitfalls of 'build your own' menus. Often these are put together in a way that makes veg a bit of an afterthought and sometimes even allows you two portions of carbs with no veg at all.

**A LITTLE BIT OF PUDDING GOES A LONG WAY.** Why not ask for a single scoop of ice-cream or even some fruit – and get kids excited about choosing the flavour. It's a really tough restaurant moment to negotiate, but a couple of fizzy drinks and a towering desert can bust your child's daily sugar allowance up to a shocking seven times over.

**Lead from the front!** Georgina from Bristol told us how she scuppered her hard-won victory with her own choices "I spent ages negotiating the kids menu with my two and was really chuffed with their choices. It was rather ruined when they pointed out I didn't have any veg at all with my fish and chips!"

## WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

With your help we want restaurants and pubs to give a better service to your children, and provide:

- Water upon arrival, and a menu free of sugary drinks
- Fresh food, made and cooked in restaurants.
- A portion of veg with every meal and fruit-based puddings
- Meals made with high quality ingredients – free range, local, and organic
- Children's cutlery as standard
- The option of children's portions of adult meals
- And make breastfeeding mothers feel welcome



## THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS

The more we ask for what our children deserve, the more restaurants, pubs and café's will listen and make changes. We want you to rate your plate and take photos of your kids' meals to post on restaurant websites. Visit [www.soilassociation.org/outtolunch](http://www.soilassociation.org/outtolunch) for links to each restaurant's social media pages, where you can post your photos and your rating, along with the **#OutToLunchUK**

## STAY IN TOUCH

Follow Soil Association on Twitter [@SoilAssociation](https://twitter.com/SoilAssociation)  
Email us [outtolunch@soilassociation.org](mailto:outtolunch@soilassociation.org)



# THINGS TO KEEP LITTLE ONES ENTERTAINED

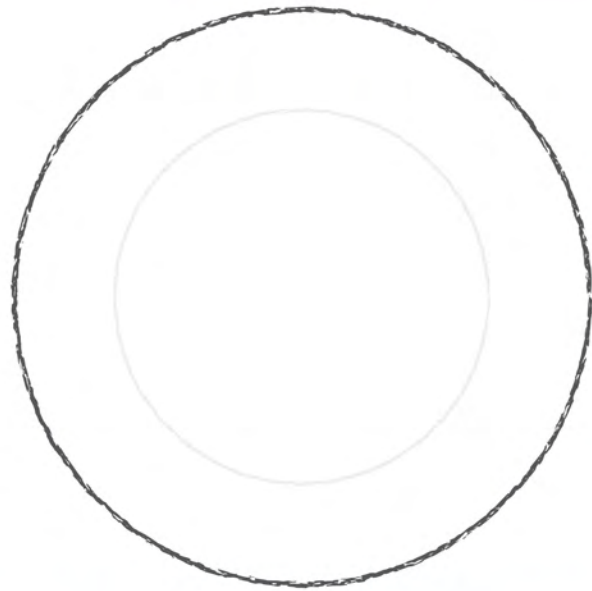
## RATE YOUR PLATE

Rate your meal on a scale of one to five by colouring in stars:



## DRAW YOUR MEAL

Draw your meal in the box, then write what you liked about it:

A series of horizontal lines for drawing a meal. To the left of these lines is a faint purple circular outline, likely a child's drawing of a plate.

The Soil Association is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. Our Food for Life work is about making good food the easy choice for everyone, wherever and wherever they are. [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)



Eat Your Veg is a charitably funded project set up to encourage UK families to add more vegetables to their diet. The project is run by non-profit social enterprise Behaviour Change who tackle major social and environmental challenges by developing ideas that help people to do the right thing. [www.eatyourveg.org](http://www.eatyourveg.org)