

Six Down, Many to Go

Since 2013, six top chain restaurants have committed to keeping kids' menus free from soda and other sugary drinks. They join Panera and Subway in offering healthier choices instead.

However, the majority of chain and independent restaurants continue to push soda on kids. Beverages contribute nearly half of added sugars in the diets of children and adults.¹



Wendy's

Wendy's stated: "In the fall of 2014, we took the additional step of removing carbonated soft drinks from the Kids' Meal listing on our menuboards, both inside our restaurants and at our pick-up windows. The beverage options now listed for Kids' Meals are: 1% white or chocolate milk, bottled water and 100% juice."³

2013

McDonald's

When McDonald's committed to only water, low-fat milk, and 100% juice as the beverages in Happy Meals, Don Thompson, then president and CEO, stated: "This commitment reflects McDonald's progress regarding nutrition and well-being."²



2014



Dairy Queen

Dairy Queen responded to advocacy efforts by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) by removing sugary drinks from its menu. "We share CSPI's concern regarding children's nutrition," said Dean Peters, a spokesman for Dairy Queen. "It is important to all of us in the Dairy Queen system which is why we've been—for some time now—working toward offering healthier options on our menu."⁵

2015

Burger King

Removing soda from the Burger King kids' menu, Alex Macedo, president of Burger King North America, said was "part of our ongoing effort to offer our guests options that match lifestyle needs."⁴





Jack in the Box

In an email to CSPI, Brian Luscomb, a vice president of Jack in the Box stated: "[S]odas are no longer the default beverage for our Kid's Combos. ...[W]e now only promote milk and juice as the beverage option."

2016

IHOP & Applebee's

"Both IHOP and Applebee's have removed the choice of soft drinks from their kid's menus and/or placemats," a rep for DineEquity said in an emailed statement.



Going forward:



While there has been progress, voluntary company policies have not taken care of the problem. Most of the 50 biggest American restaurant chains continue to push sugary drinks on their kids' menus, including Chili's (#17), Arby's (#22), Panda Express (#29), Fridays (#36), and Bojangles' (#48),⁷ as do many regional restaurant chains, and independently owned restaurants.

Policy:

Local and state policies that improve the nutrition quality of restaurant children's meals can help improve children's diet quality and cultivate lifelong healthy eating behaviors, which can help children grow up at a healthy weight.

CSPI and Voices for Healthy Kids Action Center encourage healthy choices for kids' restaurant meals, including healthy beverage defaults. We support the above changes to kids' meals, but do not endorse any specific restaurants. To join us in urging companies and communities to improve their beverage offerings on restaurant children's menus, please contact CSPI at nutritionpolicy@cspinet.org or 202-777-8352.



SOURCES :

- ¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.
- ² <http://news.mcdonalds.com/press-releases/alliance-for-a-healthier-generation-and-mcdonald-s-nyse-mcd-1054519>
- ³ <https://consumerist.com/2015/01/15/wendys-reportedly-dropping-soda-from-kids-meals/>
- ⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2015/03/09/burger-king-fast-food-restaurants-soft-drinks-beverages/24661959/>
- ⁵ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-14/buffett-s-dairy-queen-to-remove-his-favorite-soda-from-kids-menu>
- ⁶ <https://consumerist.com/2015/12/01/ihop-applebees-remove-sugary-drinks-from-childrens-menu/>
- ⁷ Restaurant chains ranked by U.S. systemwide sales according to Nation's Restaurant News. <http://nrn.com/top-100/2015-top-100-restaurant-chain-countdown>.