

# FB

## FOODBYTES

YOUR FREE DATASSENTIAL  
TREND REPORT

### INSIGHTFUL INTERVIEWS

Get behind the scenes of Kellogg's Eggo Eggoji waffles served at K-12 schools, as well as hear from a K-12 foodservice operator on the trends she's seeing.



### ANNOUNCING GEN ALPHA

Dive deep into Gen Alpha's habits and the foods/flavors growing on kids' menus.

## The ABC's of Gen Alpha

DISCOVER HOW TO  
CATER TO TODAY'S  
KIDS' TASTES

# TOP-GROWING FOODS ON KIDS' MENUS

Below are some of the top-growing foods on kids' menus over the past four years in *Menu Trends*. While many of the dishes lean towards comfort food, there are a few that show a move towards more globally-inspired options, like Vietnamese pho.

# TOP-GROWING INGREDIENTS & SAUCES/FLAVORS ON KIDS' MENUS

Below are some of the top-growing ingredients and flavors/sauces on kids' menus over the past four years in *Menu Trends*, which reveal a trend of premiumization.



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Who is Gen Alpha and what are they eating? That's a question we get asked a lot, and this issue of *FoodBytes* is here to give you an answer (although for an even fuller picture of Gen Alpha, stay tuned for our soon-to-be-released report *A Guide to Gen Alpha* in *Report Pro*). For those who are unfamiliar with Gen Alpha, this generation primarily consists of the children of Millennials, and Datassential defines Gen Alpha as anyone born between 2011 and 2023.

As the children of Millennials (who are largely a foodie generation), Gen Alpha's palates will likely be more adventurous compared to previous generations, more tuned into social media food trends, and more open to global flavors, as they're growing up in a more diverse setting. As such, in the years ahead, expect to see more dishes inspired by social media and more sophisticated dishes and flavors/ingredients trending on kids' menus. As the *Menu Trends* data on the left reveals, some trending items on kids' menus currently include plant-based chicken, boneless wings (which could be considered a more sophisticated form of chicken nuggets), and globally-inspired items like Vietnamese pho. The *Menu Trends* data on the left further indicates that sauces are a key opportunity for flavor innovation on kids' menus, as kids in general love to dip foods. Think beyond just the typical ketchup to more trend-forward options like sriracha or honey BBQ, which pairs well with chicken, a fan favorite protein among kids (for even more sauce inspiration, check out *Trend Watch: The Sauce Issue* or *World Bites: Global Sauces & Condiments*).

And don't forget about Gen Alpha infants when planning new products or kids' menu items, as baby-led feeding (also known as baby-led weaning) is trending and parents are skipping purées in favor of just introducing their babies to all types of foods (in fact, introducing babies to 100 foods before they're a year old is a growing trend among Gen Alpha parents).

Jaclyn Marks,  
Senior Publications Manager

DATA DIVE

# THE ABC'S OF GEN ALPHA

With Gen Alpha being the new kids on the block (Gen Z is now in their teen years or moving into adulthood), operators and manufacturers will need to zoom in more on Gen Alpha's habits and preferences in order to better cater to them, both now and in the future when they gain more purchasing power. Technology will be key to reaching them, as we reveal here (more than half of Gen Alpha are already on YouTube with parental supervision), and integrating more global flavors, plant-based items, and trend-forward sauces and condiments could be key to increasing the appeal of kids' menu options. Here we offer up a sneak peek at some of the data and insights found in Datassential's soon-to-be-released report *A Guide to Gen Alpha*.



SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF GEN ALPHA PARENTS TAKE THEIR KIDS OUT TO EAT AT RESTAURANTS (SIT-DOWN, DRIVE-THRU, OR CARRYOUT) ONE TO TWO TIMES PER WEEK



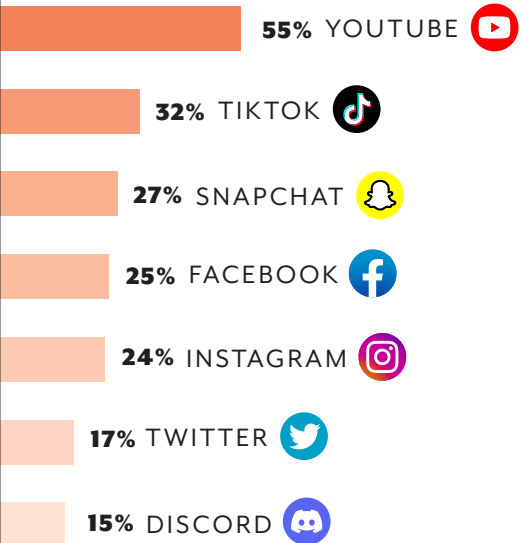
77% OF GEN ALPHA PARENTS SAY THEY PURCHASE THINGS THAT BOTH THE KIDS AND ADULTS WILL LIKE AND EAT WHEN SHOPPING AT THE GROCERY STORE

52% OF GEN ALPHA PARENTS SAY THEY LET THEIR KIDS PICK THEIR OWN MEALS WHEN VISITING A RESTAURANT

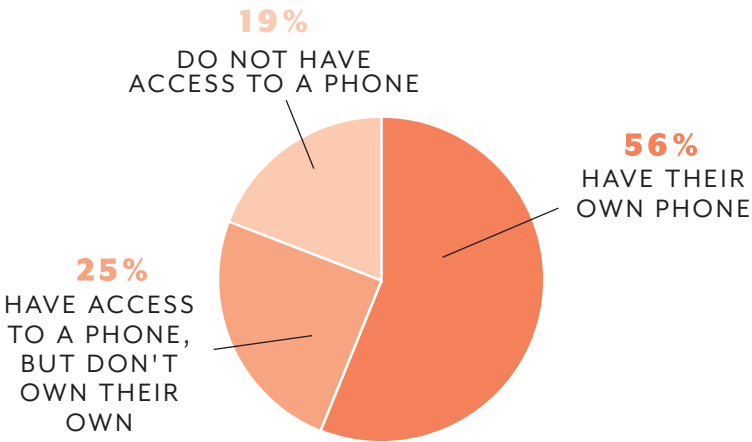


50% OF GEN ALPHA PARENTS SAY THEY'D BE MOTIVATED TO CHOOSE A RESTAURANT TO DINE AT WITH THEIR KIDS IF THERE WERE BUILD-YOUR-OWN KIDS' COMBOS

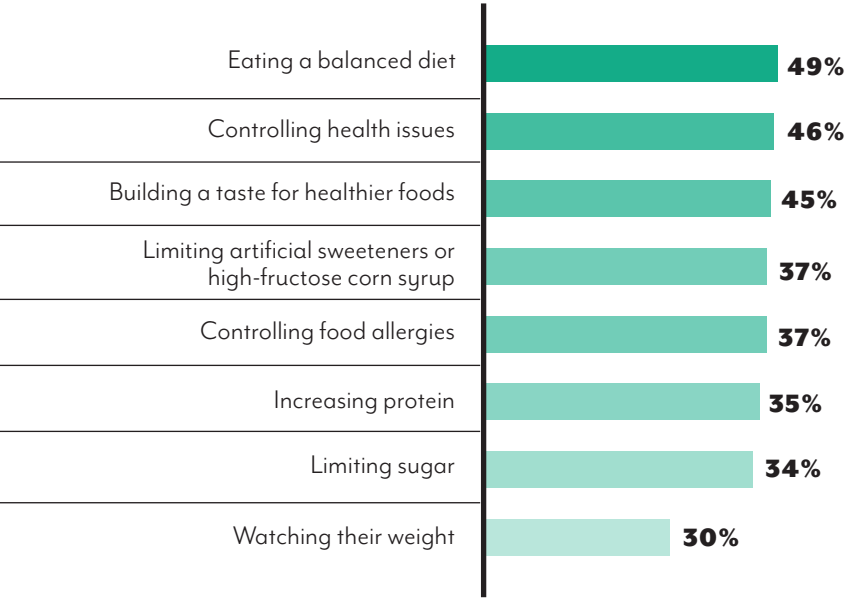
Datassential asked Gen Alpha parents: Which of the following media platforms are your children currently on and allowed to use with parental supervision?



Datassential asked Gen Alpha parents: Do your children have access to a smartphone?



For more Gen Alpha data and insights, stay tuned for Datassential's report *A Guide to Gen Alpha* to release soon in Report Pro, and if you aren't currently a subscriber to Report Pro but want to learn how you can become one, reach out to us at [hello@datassential.com](mailto:hello@datassential.com).



Datassential asked Gen Alpha parents: How important are each of the following in deciding what you feed your kids? At left are the percent of those who chose "very important" to each factor.



# 5 QUICK QUESTIONS FOR DANIELLE BOCK, DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES



**A LITTLE BIT ABOUT DANIELLE BOCK, DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES FOR GREELEY-EVANS WELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 6 IN COLORADO:**

Bock arrived at District 6 in November 2014, where she started as an area supervisor for information technology before advancing to operations coordinator and then taking on her current role in March 2017. She is also a member of the International Food Manufacturers Association’s food leadership council and the School Nutrition Association’s public policy and legislative committee, as well as serving on the equity team for both that association and District 6.

**DATASSENTIAL:** What new foods/flavors are you excited about for the upcoming school year’s foodservice program?  
**BOCK:** Global flavors. We recently had a discussion about how we can serve all of our students equitably and represent all of the cultures that our students represent in the cafeteria. A culturally diverse menu for a district with over 80 different spoken languages is an exciting challenge for a foodie/director to have.

**D:** What are some challenges you’re experiencing currently or anticipating?  
**B:** Old equipment and supply chains for replacements is very slow. We ordered 2 new trucks in 2021. We are still waiting for them to arrive. Meanwhile, our trucks continue to have major outages, making food delivery difficult.

**D:** What are some current food/flavor trends you’re seeing in K-12?  
**B:** Global tastes and spices, as well as more opportunities to include plant-based items as the center-of-plate.

**D:** What do parents and their kids expect from K-12 foodservice today?  
**B:** We operate every reimbursable child nutrition program, which means some students will eat three meals plus a snack with us each day. We are also being called upon to handle more food allergies and special dietary plans than ever before.

**D:** Post-pandemic, how has school foodservice changed?  
**B:** More students eat with us than pre-pandemic. Families see that in-school meal service can save them time and money, so more are taking advantage of the opportunity. For foodservice directors, this means bigger budgets, more staff, and an increase in meals served.

*This interview has been edited for space and content.*



79%  
OF GEN ALPHA  
PARENTS AGREE  
THAT THEY BUY  
NEW FOODS  
THAT WORK WELL  
FOR **SCHOOL  
LUNCHES,**  
SPORTS, OR  
OTHER AFTER-  
SCHOOL AND  
ON-THE-GO  
ACTIVITIES

**73 PERCENT**  
*OF GEN ALPHA PARENTS  
ARE MORE INCLINED TO  
BUY NEW ITEMS FROM A  
BRAND THEY TRUST*

# 3 QUICK QUESTIONS FOR ELIZA COTENG, PORTFOLIO MARKETING DIRECTOR OF FROZEN FOODS AND CRACKERS FOR KELLOGG'S AWAY FROM HOME

**DATASSENTIAL:** We saw Kellogg's launched Eggo Eggoji waffles that resemble emoji faces. Can you tell us about what inspired these?

**COTENG:** The core selling point of the Eggo Eggoji Whole Grain Waffles lies in its uniqueness. The combination of a classic waffle on one side and an emoji-inspired face on the other sets it apart from any other product in the market. This distinctiveness is complemented by a relatively low added sugar content and a clean product label, addressing contemporary dietary concerns.

We created Eggo Eggoji Whole Grain Waffles to jazz up K-12 menus and brighten any part of the day. Whether it's at breakfast, a tasty sandwich, or a quick snack, we've got operators covered. Our six cool Eggoji Waffle characters — Brainy, Booster, Superstar, Chuckles, Zany, and Loveable — are all about spreading positivity and inspiring kids to express themselves. We also have different flavor options for operators to choose from, such as original or chocolate. Plus, they are made without high fructose corn syrup, packed with 32 grams of whole grains per serving, and have a homestyle texture kids love.

**D:** Were there any challenges getting the product into K-12 schools and how did that influence the creation of the product?

**C:** Prior to the launch of Eggoji waffles into the K-12 school environment, all schools across the U.S. were operating through COVID-related challenges. Eggoji launched in July 2021 when the initial thought was that schools would have a normal back-to-school experience; however, that was not the case. What we learned leading into development was

that schools were experiencing high labor shortages, still heavily reliant on individually-wrapped offerings, and they had a desire to shift back to bulk offerings to normalize student feeding.

In addition to the operational challenges schools were faced with, we also found that the COVID environment was placing increasing social and wellness strains on children. Kellogg's had just launched Eggoji into retail markets when the foodservice business unit identified the opportunity to leverage the innovation as a solution-oriented proposition to enable K-12 operators to solve some of their operational needs. The idea was to introduce the Eggoji to bring smiles to kids and drive a supporting positivity program to solve some of the COVID-related challenges. The launch of Eggoji enabled operators to drive normalcy to student feeding, while improving students' social interaction.

Another operator challenge was that standard bulk waffles tend to require syrup, which can cause increased labor for clean-up. The Eggoji waffles were designed to launch with nutmeg as a flavor enhancer so syrup wouldn't be necessary. To support the sell-in of Eggoji, the launch included the Share Positivity program that drove student participation and engagement. Each Eggoji face was named and brought to life using character faces that brought smiles, delivering on the operator's mission.

**D:** How has the product been received by kids at K-12 schools?

**C:** Our Eggoji waffles are a huge hit with kids. Since their 2021 launch, we've seen 20% growth with over 1,000 operators offering them on K-12 menus. We were fueled by the incredible success of the original flavor to release the chocolate variety in January 2023. This innovation has proven to be a favorite with students and operators as well.

*This interview has been edited for space and content.*



## A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ELIZA COTENG, PORTFOLIO MARKETING DIRECTOR OF FROZEN FOODS AND CRACKERS FOR KELLOGG'S AWAY FROM HOME:

Coteng leads strategy, brand development, and innovation for MorningStar Farms, Eggo, and various cracker brands within all of the away from home channels with a priority focus on foodservice. She has more than 25 years of experience as an insights-driven marketer with proven success in bringing innovative solutions that delight both consumers and operators, whether in food, packaging, or process. She's also a life-long foodie and enjoys bringing her passion for food to her work every day.



# KIDS' MEAL ITEMS MAKING MOVES ACROSS THE MENU ADOPTION CYCLE (MAC)



**ORANGE CHICKEN**

**NOW IN...  
ADOPTION**



**FAJITA**

**NOW IN...  
ADOPTION**



**CHICKEN &  
WAFFLES**

**NOW IN...  
ADOPTION**



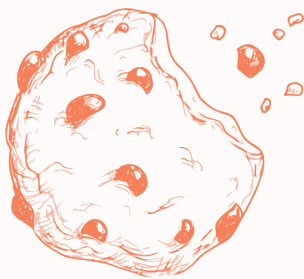
**WALKING TACO**

**NOW IN...  
PROLIFERATION**



**BUTTERED PASTA**

**NOW IN...  
UBIQUITY**



# A FEW FINAL TREND BITES

Everyone is curious about Gen Alpha and how their businesses may need to adapt to better serve this up-and-coming generation of foodies. If you aren't currently subscribed to [Report Pro](#) and would like to learn more about how you can gain access to Datassential's smart library, including the soon-to-be-released report *A Guide to Gen Alpha*, reach out to us at [hello@datassential.com](mailto:hello@datassential.com). Here we leave you with just a few final ways to take action on kids' menu trends.

## 3 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION ON GEN ALPHA TRENDS

- **Think beyond just buttered pasta and chicken nuggets.** While these are indeed kids' menu staples, Gen Alpha is growing up in a more diverse setting compared to previous generations and exposed to more variety when it comes to foods and beverages. As such, consider how globally-inspired concepts like pho, quesadillas, birria, and more could fit into kids' menus and product lines. Also keep the youngest consumers in mind — many babies six months and older are now being raised following baby-led feeding practices, where parents are looking for opportunities to expose them to a wide variety of different foods and flavors (think steamed veggies, fruits, chicken, salmon, and more) and skipping purées.
- **Get creative with condiments.** Lean into globally-inspired condiment options like sriracha or simply get creative with sauces geared towards chicken pairings (chicken appears on 77% of kids' menus, according to [Menu Trends](#)), such as honey BBQ.
- **Take inspiration from K-12 foodservice trends.** K-12 foodservice can offer up a wealth of inspiration for kids' menus beyond just the school segment. School foodservice programs can demonstrate how fun, health, and approachable innovation can all merge to create items that resonate with kids.

### KEY QUOTE:

**Families see that in-school meal service can save them time and money, so more are taking advantage of the opportunity. For foodservice directors, this means bigger budgets, more staff, and an increase in meals served.**

- Danielle Bock, Director of Nutrition Services for Greeley-Evans Weld County School District 6

## RELATED REPORTS



K-12 KEYNOTE REPORT



FIVE IN FOCUS: KIDS' MENUS



CREATIVE CONCEPTS: KIDS' RETAIL FOODS

## WHAT'S COMING UP NEXT MONTH?

Apple picking season is right around the corner, and so is our issue of *FoodBytes* that will cover fall trends to have on the radar. Discover new trending flavors beyond just pumpkin spice, see what flavors appear most commonly in fall LTOs, and more.



## HUNGRY FOR MORE TRENDS? Check out new Report Pro releases!



**Table Stakes: July 2023**  
*Get the latest insights on consumers' and operators' financial health, spending habits, and business expectations.*  
In this issue of the *Table Stakes* tracker report, we answer questions like: Are fewer consumers cutting back on restaurant dining? Are consumers still noticing inflation across all foodservice venues? Read on to find out.



**Inspiration Report: Soup**  
*With cooler weather on the horizon, enter our [Soup Inspiration Report](#).*  
Soup is a comforting classic and especially so as cold weather approaches. This report covers top and growing terms overall, as well as regionality, health-forward and diet-friendly soups, and more.



**IC: Global Seafood**  
*Reel in global seafood trends in this issue of [International Concepts](#).*  
Get insight into how Del Pacifico Seafoods leans into sustainable seafood sourcing and communicates their efforts to customers, discover five spins on fish and chips, and more.



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