

# newsworthy trends

## Dining Out With Kids Is In—And Kids Love It

(NAPSA)—Restaurants will serve more than 54 million meals this year, and many of them will be to families. However, arguments about where to go, when to go and what to order can make the experience more of a food fight than a fun, family night out. For parents who are trying to make it work, there's good news—according to a recent national survey, kids not only enjoy eating out, being with their family is their favorite part about the dining experience.

The survey of 6- to 17-year-olds found that families are eating out together often. More than eight out of 10 children and teens (87 percent) eat out with their families once a month or more, and nearly half (44 percent) eat out with the family at least once a week. According to parenting expert Dr. Mike Riera, eating meals together is important to good communication, but eating meals *out* has added benefits.

“Spending time together out as a family is an important way to build relationships and get to know your kids,” said Riera. “Children and teens will be more willing to open up and talk without the distractions of the telephone, computer or television. Dining out is a simple way for the family to relax and be together, because the kids can't rush away from the table like they could at home and no one has to do the dishes.”

As a parent himself, Riera created a list of tips that he uses when dining out with his own family, such as choosing family-friendly restaurants that offer children's menus for



younger kids, the opportunity dining out offers for teaching manners and social skills and remembering timing so that children's attention spans aren't exhausted just waiting to be seated.

### Their Favorite Place

The survey also discovered that kids are getting a voice in choosing the restaurant, as 46 percent of those surveyed reported that they choose the restaurant with their parents. When they do choose, the top restaurant choice is a family-style restaurant, (26 percent), followed by fast-food restaurants (22 percent).

### The Family Experience

As kids get older, it is harder to find time to spend together as a family, but 41 percent of kids surveyed said that being with their family is the number one reason they enjoy going out to dinner, which is more than double the next most popular choice, trying new foods (18 percent).

### Family Dining Resource

For busy parents who want to make their families' restaurant experiences more enjoyable, a new Web site, [familydiner.com](http://familydiner.com), contains additional tips from Riera, national survey results and links to local restaurant information.