

# Rethinking the logic of kids' menus

By Maura Judkis, Washington Post

All that was left of Julia Washington's seared-scallop entree were the baby artichokes. The 10-year-old speared one with a fork, eyeing it with curiosity and contempt.

"I don't know about new things. I don't know how they taste," the fifth-grader from Upper Marlboro said at the restaurant Equinox. "It looks like a mushroom. I don't like mushrooms."

Julia is a typical child. She loves mac and cheese, fried shrimp, ice cream. But she couldn't order from the kids' menu that night, because Equinox has no kids' menu. The restaurant's chef, Todd Gray, does not believe in kid food.

"With the right encouragement, kids will eat anything," Gray said.

Most restaurants don't give children many choices: chicken fingers. Tater tots. Or bland, cheese-laden pizza, accompanied by a cup of limp fruit salad. And some parents are getting tired of it.

"The idea that there is different food for children drives me nuts," said Lynn Fredericks, founder of Family Cook Productions, an organization that teaches healthful family eating. She recently launched the Kids Food Reboot, a campaign to get restaurants to adapt their kids' menus to rely less on frozen french fries and other beige fried foods and more on healthful, fresh and – most important – interesting choices for young diners. Given the chance to eat, say, spaghetti squash or broccoli rabe, children will rise to the occasion, Fredericks says.

“Children will eat other foods. They will,” she said. “It’s just about how you present it.”

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