

Pack it in: Parents Cheesed Off With Packed Lunch Guidelines

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First it was school dinners. And now it is the turn of the packed lunch, as over the past year the Government has put growing pressure on schools to advise parents on what should go into kids' lunchboxes.

But latest research from Mintel finds that Britain's mums and dads are less than happy about this kind of intervention.

Indeed, almost two thirds (64%) of parents are of the view that schools should not dictate what they should put into their child's packed lunch.

"There is a general feeling of resentment towards the "Nanny State" approach to children's packed lunches, as Britain's parents are bombarded with healthy eating initiatives in schools," comments Emmanuelle Bouvier, senior consumer analyst at Mintel.

"Mums and dads may feel insulted at the assumption that they don't know what to put into a simple packed lunch. Many parents choose packed lunches precisely because it gives them greater control over what their child eats - much more so than with school dinners. These new guidelines clearly take this control away and understandably this is putting people's backs up," she adds.

What is more, the nation's kids are doing a pretty good job at eating the right things, as just 10% of parents admit that their children are not eating the healthy lunch they pack for them.

But it does seem that no matter what parents say, these guidelines have in fact had a positive effect on their choices for packed lunches. Back in 2006 before this latest set of initiatives were introduced, just two-thirds (66%) of Mums said that they try to give their children a mixture of healthy food and treats. But in this latest research as many as 86% of parents felt that they were achieving this balance. What is more, it seems parents also accept that school dinners are becoming healthier, with as many as 71% believing that school dinners are healthier than they used to be.

"Although parents may resent Governmental healthy eating guidelines, our research does suggest that they do work and that they have changed people's habits for the better," comments Emmanuelle Bouvier.

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