

KID-FRIENDLY DINING:

Serving Up Tasty Nudges and Smart Marketing to Promote Kids LiveWell Choices

The National Restaurant Association has explored ways to encourage healthier eating choices at restaurants through clever, research backed strategies. Get tactical by adjusting your menu design, lighting, and portion sizes to subtly guide customers towards better options without taking away their choices or drastically changing prices.

Research shows that a combination of choice architecture¹ interventions (like nudges) and marketing mixes (product, place, price, and promotion) can effectively influence decision-making and behaviors related to healthy food choices. To implement these strategies, here are some guest-friendly suggestions:

- 1. Brighter Lights:** Use brighter lights in restaurants to encourage choosing healthier options on menus. Research shows that the use of brighter lighting increases mental alertness and the likelihood of a customer selecting healthier options in restaurants.²
- 2. Fruit and Vegetable Availability:** Ensure fruits and vegetables are readily available and placed close to customers within eyesight. Do your customers check out at the counter? Place whole fruit and cut fruit options by the register in a clearly visible location. Are you a buffet? Consider making cut fruit widely available on your cold bar. Studies show that kids eat more produce when it's cut up because it makes them easier to eat and increases their appeal.²
- 3. Product Reformulation:** Improve the nutritional profile of kid's meals, sides, and beverages to align with the Kids LiveWell criteria that promotes less sugar, salt, and fat and more healthy food groups like fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, lean protein, and whole grains.¹ Check out the [KLW Recipe Booklet](#) or contact our Registered Dietitians at Food Directions for inspiration.

¹ Thaler, Richard H. and Sunstein, Cass R. and Balz, John P., Choice Architecture (April 2, 2010). <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract=1583509>

² Valérie J. V. Broers, Céline De Breucker, Stephan Van den Broucke, Olivier Luminet, A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of nudging to increase fruit and vegetable choice, European Journal of Public Health, Volume 27, Issue 5, October 2017, Pages 912–920, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckx085>

KEY TERMS

CHOICE ARCHITECTURE: The presentation of choices in different ways will impact decision making.

CHOICE ARCHITECT: Someone who frames information and designs the presentation of choices. Many people turn out to be choice architects, without realizing it.

LIBERTARIAN PATERNALISM: The idea that it is both possible and legitimate for institutions to influence behavior while also respecting freedom of choice (i.e. without coercion).

NUDGE: Any aspect of choice architecture that alters behavior in a predictable way, without forbidding options or significantly changing economic incentives.

REINFORCEMENT: Strengthening the likelihood of a future behavior. Positive reinforcement adds a desirable consequence while negative reinforcement removes an undesirable consequence associated with the behavior.

Source: The Decision Lab. (n.d.). Choice architecture. The Decision Lab. <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/psychology/choice-architecture>

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- 4. Portion Size Reduction:** Reduce portion sizes to meet recommended nutrient targets. For example, reducing the portion size of less nutrient-dense options like French fries can lower a child's caloric intake by almost 100 calories.¹ Kid-friendly foods and beverages with some added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium can more easily be incorporated into nutritious meals when they are in small portions.
- 5. Pricing Strategies:** Use pricing to promote smaller portions and refrain from charging customers extra for requesting half portions or smaller-sized meals.

Implementation Tips:

- **Join Kids LiveWell!** Follow [these](#) simple steps to participate in our free program.
- **Establish healthy default options for children's meals.** Our program certifies kid's menus as KLW that have 2 meals, 2 sides, and default beverages and are aligned with current nutrition science. Need inspiration? Check out our fool proof KLW Recipe Booklet [here](#), Sides Inspiration [here](#), and our criteria healthy default beverage policy [here](#).
- **Use pricing strategies to make healthy choices more affordable.**
- **Utilize priming and prompting techniques, such as menu labeling.** If your menu is KLW approved, utilize our KLW carrot icon to help your youngest guests and their parents identify these better-for-you options. Find our best practices for labeling [here](#).

By adopting these methods, steering your guests towards healthier food choices can be achieved. Let's work together for a healthier future!

CHOICE ARCHITECTURE EXAMPLE

An example from The Decision Lab's website:

Before heading to the grocery store, you make a list of the items you need. Eggs, milk, and bread. "I won't buy anything other than these," you tell yourself. As you wander down the aisles of the store, a large sale sign catches your eye: there's a shelf of all your favorite snacks, labelled '2 for \$8.' "What a steal!" you think to yourself, grabbing four packages without realizing that the original price was \$3.99 per item. Once you get home, you realize you spent more than you intended and wonder how this happened yet again. Would you have bought the items if you realized you were saving \$0.02?

This is an example of choice architecture.

Source: The Decision Lab. (n.d.). Choice architecture. The Decision Lab. <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference>

³ Kraak, V. I., Englund, T., Misyak, S., and Serrano, E. L. (2017) A novel marketing mix and choice architecture framework to nudge restaurant customers toward healthy food environments to reduce obesity in the United States. *Obesity Reviews*, 18: 852–868. doi: [10.1111/obr.12553](https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.12553).