

## NEW CHILDREN'S MEALS:

# NOT JUST KID STUFF

**As baby boomers age, companies are beginning to target a new generation of consumers. But will kids—and their parents—settle for good-tasting meals ... or will they demand good nutrition as well?**

BY MIKE DUFF

**Q**uestion: What are only a little bigger than a bread box, love adolescent reptilian martial arts masters and represent perhaps the last major, wide-open growth market for frozen and competing meals?

**Answer: Kids!**

And why not? As they grow older, baby boomers are the focus of more and more products and pitches but have less and less time and energy to indulge in the spending habits that made them the apple of every consumer product maker's eye.

While boomers have retreated to the relative peace of hearth and home, their kids are just venturing out into the world, making them fair game for waiting marketing mavens. Following the lead of diaper and baby food makers, food manufacturers have reacted to the next demographic surge by introducing four new kids' meals lines.

Although baby boomers are having fewer children, on average, than previous generations, they are typically spending more on each child. At the same time, there are growing numbers of longer-lived, increasingly affluent grandparents who are lavishing their affection and their money on fewer grandchildren.

Bohbot Communications, a media company whose core business is buying time for toy advertisers, recently has found itself getting involved in the food business. According to Tom Kinney, vice president and account supervisor, food manufacturers have approached Bohbot for advice on marketing to kids in areas outside tradi-

tional categories such as cereals and soft drinks.

"They realize kids have influence," Kinney explains. "Youth is in a different position today. Kids are smarter, more influential, more vocal. They are making an impact on buying decisions. In fact, we've discovered that they influence food purchases more than toy purchases."

### Majors target minors

Three of the top U.S. food processors have hit the market with their children's lines almost at the same time. The Banquet division of ConAgra Frozen Foods (Ballwin, Mo.), enjoys an early advantage with its Kid Cuisine products because the line already is in national distribution. Tyson Foods, Inc. (Springdale, Ark.), is following with Looney Tunes Meals, which are likely to draw an important benefit during rollout due to a marketing tie-in

with Bugs Bunny's 50th anniversary, which Warner Bros. studios plans to hype heavily this summer.

Geo. A. Hormel & Co. (Austin, Minn.), has entered the children's meals market with a line of shelf-stable products called Kid's Kitchen. And, in this field of Goliaths, a new company is entering the battle with its own shelf-stable line. Like David of old, My Own Meals, Inc. (Deerfield, Ill.), possesses what may prove to be an important advantage in the upcoming combat. According to one public interest group active in children's dietary issues, it is nutritionally superior to the competition.

Of course, marketing products for kids isn't anything new. In certain categories, such as cereal, cookies, snacks, tooth-

In less than a year, four major kids' meals lines have appeared in supermarkets, vying for visibility and acceptance. Tyson's bid includes pulling a rather famous rabbit out of its hat.



paste, candy, and soft drinks, children represent a core market that is directly targeted with specialized advertising and promotion.

But during the '80s, a focus on boomers meant more money was spent on adult products in what were traditionally kid-dominated categories. So oat bran, ultrapremium ice cream, wheat crackers, tooth polish, hot air popcorn and diet soft drinks drew more attention than their traditional counterparts.

Indeed, the marketing debacle of the decade occurred when Coca-Cola tried to reformulate its namesake beverage to boost its appeal among kids and teenagers who were defecting to competitor Pepsi. The subsequent return to the original formula resulted in a serendipitous reversal of fortunes for what now is called Coca-Cola Classic and for The Coca-Cola Company in general.

In frozen and competing shelf-stable food categories, recent high-profile introductions have been directed overwhelmingly to the adult market, mostly by making them amenable to adult demands for lower-calorie, better-balanced meals. ConAgra's Healthy Choice dinners, which were formulated to meet low fat, cholesterol and sodium criteria, have come to epitomize the trend since they were introduced last year. But the trend is generally traced back to The Stouffer Corp.'s Lean Cuisine products, which debuted successfully in 1981.

Dinners for children aren't without precedent. In the latter half of the '60s, Libby's, now a subsidiary of Carnation Co. (Los Angeles), introduced Libby's for Kids meals featuring favorite children's foods such as hamburgers, hot dogs and fried chicken. Although that line was short-lived, other companies have continued catering to the little people.

The Campbell Soup Co. (Camden, N.J.) for years has had its own children's line featuring its "shapes" soups such as alphabet and chicken and stars. In many ways, Campbell's kids' soups are classic examples of how children's food products are marketed. For instance, they are advertised on Saturday morning television, and their labels contain the rosy-cheeked Campbell's kids, who act as a special children's logo.

The line is advertised to mothers as well as children and has certain seasonal marketing prerequisites. "The Campbell

kids play a predominant part of our September back-to-school advertising," says Kevin Lowery, a communication specialist for the company.

As Campbell's and others have taken advantage of improving food technology to produce new kinds of products, kid appeal seems to have played some role in development. Campbell's Souper Combos, a microwaveable soup and sandwich meal aimed primarily at the luncheon market, has obvious appeal to children and busy parents. Oscar Mayer's Lunchables, a chilled lunch of cheese, cold cuts and crackers, is another example of a product

## Kids' meals aren't without precedent. In the latter half of the '60s, Libby's introduced Libby's for Kids, featuring favorites such as hamburgers, hot dogs and fried chicken.

that, while directed broadly at the market, has a natural appeal for children, especially for children who have to fix a quick lunch themselves.

### Fast and easy does it

ConAgra entered the children's market in response to clear opportunities for ready-to-heat dinners that minimize preparation time and maximize convenience, according to the company.

"Our consumer research showed that moms and kids are looking for frozen convenience products," says Susan Hanley, manager of product publicity. "We found through our research

★ **THE FUTURE BELONGS TO KIDS**

**S**upermarkets, as well as food processors, are discovering that they can have a little fun with the kids and improve business as well.

If you aren't sure that baby boomers have an impact on business, just think back a few years to when supermarkets were sponsoring singles' nights for the disproportionately large unwed population. While the determined can still find a few such promotions, supermarkets now are offering new kinds of services because of the mini-baby boom set off by baby boomers reaching the mommy and daddy years. Supermarkets once again are helping parents cope with family shopping, not to mention meeting the needs of this week's customer-representatives of two-wage-earner families—be it mom, dad or one of the kids.

Services vary, but usually involve the smaller children. A number of supermarkets give the kids their own, suitably-scaled shopping carts. Some provide their own form of shoppers' child care, while others have established tasting promotions that amount to a family fare at the supermarket.

But a few supermarkets are getting kids involved in the real business of food: cooking. This year marks the fifth year Wakefern Food Corp./ShopRite (Edison, N.J.) is sponsoring Kids in the Kitchen, a contest open to children seven to 15 in its New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Delaware markets.

Last year, chefs, celebrity judges and local notables lent excitement as a field of nearly 3,000 entries was narrowed to three winners, one each in the categories Afterschool Appetizers, Old World/New Wave and Vital Veggies.

The final of the last year's Kids in the Kitchen cooking contest was a gala event. Finalist Lori Brown works on her recipe while celebrity judges including TV stars Jeremy Miller (l.) and Jeremy Licht taste test the results. Robert Gal, vice president of operations and administration for Wakefern (l.) and Charles Infusino, owner of ShopRite of Little Falls, N.J., check out finished dishes.

This year's contest will come to a boil this month as celebrations accompany another final round of judging. The kids who cop the final in each of the categories win a trip for four to Walt Disney World.

Mary Ellen Gowan, vice president of consumer and public affairs at Wakefern says the contest gets the whole family involved in cooking—and shopping.

"It's a good grass-roots program which involves both the kids and the community with an interest in cooking," she says. And it can even change lives. One customer told Wakefern that her daughter is using a savings bond she won two years ago as a preliminary winner to help pay for culinary school. "It opened the door to a profession for her, maybe one in our industry."

And is Wakefern trying to instill some customer loyalty into a new generation before the competition gets a crack at them? "If nothing else, we're cooking up a new generation of ShopRite chefs," Gowan replies.—M.D.

feed her kid, and she came up with My Own Meals.

While Jackson employed focus groups and the other development techniques used by her competitors, My Own Meals' formal development was as different as had been its inspiration.

"We wanted to find out what parents wanted, what were their feelings about convenient foods for kids," says Martin. With development funds tight, My Own Meals' nascent staff sent out a questionnaire through their local diaper service. The response was strong, totaling about 16 percent of the surveys distributed.

"We got mothers adding pages on to the survey with more about what they were looking for," Martin recalls. "They were very specific about what they wanted to see, in terms of convenience, in terms of quality, in terms of the kind of meats, for example, they wanted us to use."

Armed with this information and 24 meal prototypes, the My Own Meals staff began winnowing down the line with the help of a New Orleans development company called Food Innovations. The development firm's staff of dietitians, nutritionists, technicians and doctors helped Jackson work out the kinks in the program. Only then were the products field-tested.

"The kids told us what they liked and what they didn't like. We went back to the drawing board and came out with only four of the five dinners. The fifth came out of the focus groups. I asked kids, 'What's your favorite meal mom cooks you?' Everybody said, 'Chicken and rice.' Well, you don't have to hit us on the head. We came out with a chicken and rice dinner."

Not coincidentally, chicken and rice is My Own Meals' best seller.

Although originally priced at

something of a premium, the company lowered its prices to range from \$1.99 to \$2.49 for meals that also include Meatballs and Shells with raisin bits and Turkey Meatballs with noodles and vegetables.

My Own Meals' singular approach to product development has paid off, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer watchdog active in nutritional issues.

#### Too much fun?

In a comparison of My Own Meals, Looney Tunes Meals and Kid Cuisine, Bonnie Liebman, CSPI's nutritional director, was critical of the Tyson and ConAgra products for concentrating too much on "fun" and not enough on nutrition. Liebman says it is disappointing that the Looney Tunes and Kid Cuisine meals—which offer parents an alternative to McDonald's, etc.—only are marginally better than restaurant fast food. This is especially unfortunate, says Liebman, given ConAgra's introduction of adult meals such as Healthy Choice, which was developed according to strict nutritional standards.

"It would be nice if some of these meals were better than fast food," she says. "It's not clear that they are. They're not the worst foods you can feed your kids, but they're not much better either. The kids' meal industry seems to be adopting the same double standard the cereal industry uses, which is, essentially: health and nutrition for adults, junk for kids."

CSPI is preparing to wage a major offensive against that standard. The group will shortly issue a report on breakfast cereal marketing that's critical of both the food processing industry and supermarkets.

"Supermarkets are pushing sugary cereals to kids," Victoria Leonard, director of CSPI's Children Nutrition Center, says

bluntly. "It's bad enough that cereal companies bombard kids with thousands of ads for junky products. Supermarkets, which often brag about their nutrition efforts, compound the problem by using tricks to tempt kids to grab sugary cereals."

While criticism of sugary cereals or their lower-shelf placement are nothing new, they take on a significant weight when considered in the light of recent events. For example, when the National Resources Defense Council decided to hype the pesticide residue issue, they chose Alar on apples, and used actress Meryl Streep to blow children's potential risk from the chemical out of any rational proportion. The result: Many parents refused to buy apples for a time, something even NRDC said it didn't want to happen.

More recently, a medical study traced the beginnings of heart disease in white males to adolescence and, in some cases, childhood, especially when members of the test group smoked cigarettes or ate fatty diets.

Thus far, most people are aware only of the efforts doctors are making to change the dietary habits of those most at risk of heart attacks, adult white males. But the medical community is recognizing that heart disease establishes itself earlier in life, and such studies as the above-mentioned will encourage doctors to recommend stricter guidelines for nutrition in childhood.

Liebman says her concerns about the some of Kid's Kitchen meals focus around their high sodium contents, their high percentage of calories from fat, and the balance of food. As regards food selection, she says that there are too many sweets and too few vegetables, and that the nutritional value of those vegetables is diminished by breading

and fatty sauces.

"It's as if these meals were prepared without any knowledge of advice from the Surgeon General, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society," she contends. "The food industry seems to think that advice is for adults only. It's not."

While Liebman admits it is unfair to hold individual foods to the standards set down by the Surgeon General and others, she asserts there is some validity to comparing the nutritional values of a meal. She also says that these meals shouldn't be compared against the standards as one-third of a day's nutrition because they represent less than a third of the calories normally consumed.

#### Conflicting standards

Food manufacturers generally cite standards set by the American Academy of Pediatrics when they address their nutritional content. Those standards set, for example, a limit of 45 percent of calories from fat as a consumption standard as opposed to the 30 percent standard established by the Heart Association. But according to Liebman, many health professionals believe those standards are too loose, especially for children who are beyond infancy. Evidence such as the heart disease study in children tends to back her view.

On the other hand, Liebman expresses qualified praise for My Own Meals. "The My Own Meals are a cut above the standard. They've made an effort to hold the sodium down, and they've managed to throw in a few vegetables," she says.

"That result is no accident," says Martin of My Own Meals. "Our number one priority was giving mothers a nutritious alternative when they couldn't cook."

For their part, both ConAgra and Tyson say that, given the conflicting guidelines being circulated, the best solution for food manufacturers is to develop products that are good tasting, reasonably nutritious, reasonably priced and spell out dietary information on the packaging. By doing so, manufacturers offer their customers an affordable line that comes with information they can use to make purchasing decisions and to fit the meals into a balanced diet plan.

"This is a fun food for variety," says ConAgra's Hanley.

Continued on page 168

## ★ KIDS' MEALS MAY BE JUST AN APPETIZER

Specialized products for kids may be a hot category in the '90s.

We're all used to jeans, 'jammies and jewelry specially designed and marketed for kids. But as in food, GM/HBA may see child-oriented products expanding beyond traditional categories and into new areas.

A recently rolled-out example is Kids William & Clarissa, a line of toiletries for the preteen set. Here is

part of the description in the new product announcement:

"Despite the call for premium kids' 'everything,' there is a glaring gap in the infant/children toiletries category... To fill this void, Kids William & Clarissa, the first complete line of premium quality personal care products specifically formulated for children from birth to 12 years of age, (was) introduced

in drug stores, grocery stores and mass merchandising outlets nationwide this April... The Kids line offers consumers 16 products including hair, skin and sun care as well as specialty items such as girl's and boy's cologne... None of the products contain animal ingredients and they were not tested on animals."

It's a brave new world out there, folks.—M.D.

that 65 percent of working moms have school-age children." According to the federal Census Bureau, that total is higher than at any previous time in the United States.

Like the other children's meals makers, ConAgra's product development staff evaluated the market, conducted focus group studies and did consumer research to determine how its new Kid Cuisine products should be formulated.

Taste and convenience were the principal standards used to evaluate ConAgra's prototype meals during the development process. "Kids and moms are looking for good foods, fun foods," says Hanley. "We found out what kids wanted to eat, and we went from there with the dinners."

Kid Cuisine products were designed to fit a variety of occasions when convenience in meal storage and preparation are important, she points out. "Grandparents can buy the products and stick them in the freezer for when the grandchildren come over. Parents can buy them for the babysitter to prepare."

The line, as introduced, included eight meals, each of which includes an entree, two side dishes and dessert. Entrees include pizza, cheeseburgers, chicken nuggets and fried chicken, while side dishes, according to the company, include "favorite fruits, vegetables and starches." Desserts consist of popular goodies such as cookies or brownies. They are priced to retail at an average of \$1.89.

At the time the line was introduced, John Butorac, director of marketing, noted that the common frozen dinners found in supermarket freezer cases often aren't the kinds of meals children prefer. "The profile of what kids love to eat didn't match the offerings available on the market," he said.

Tyson took a similar tack in developing its Looney Tune line, formulating the product to appeal to children's tastes, then testing to evaluate what was done. "We have information from the focus groups to back up what we did," says a spokesperson.

Focus group studies had a decisive impact on the development of Looney Tunes meals, in terms of both product and packaging, according to Gary Thompson, vice president of the retail sales division. For example, mothers in the group con-

vinced Tyson to alter the product's microwaveable serving bowl so that two small, unobstructed flat surfaces could be included. The dish is thus provided with handles to help prevent scalding burns.

The mothers also convinced Tyson to remove the desserts from some meals because they want to regulate the sweets their children eat, both for health and reward reasons. "We originally thought everyone would have a dessert, but parents told us they wanted a choice," says Tyson.

The resulting line, again consisting initially of eight meals, includes Bugs Bunny Chicken Chunks, Speedy Gonzales Beef Enchiladas, Wile E. Coyote Hamburger Pizza and Daffy Duck Spaghetti and Meatballs. The trademarked cartoon character names are used under license from Warner Bros., and each meal package has a top-to-bottom frontal illustration of the namesake 'toon. Suggested retail price is \$2.49.

Although in terms of selection and child-oriented devel-

opment, Hormel's Kid's Kitchen line is similar to the big name competition, the company hopes its shelf-stable packaging offers enough of an edge to make it the choice of consumer and grocer.

"There are a lot of inherent advantages from both the consumer and trade sides," says Rick Bross, director of marketing. "On the trade side, it's much easier to handle and merchandise shelf-stable products than frozen or refrigerated. It's less costly and enhances the dry goods area. From the consumer side, the matter of convenience is important. It's easier to store product in the cupboard than in the freezer. It takes a little less time to heat because it's not frozen. They're just incremental advantages—but today, everyone's looking for a little bit of an edge."

Kid's Kitchen also employs "child-friendly" packaging, including a disposable serving bowl with handles and a vented cover to prevent spills and dissipate steam. Currently, the seven-product Kid's Kitchen line is in three markets: Indianapolis, Denver and Phoenix. Among the meals offered are Spaghetti and Meatballs in Tomato Sauce, Chicken Chow Mein, Chunky Vegetables and Beef in Sauce and Beef Ravioli in Tomato Sauce. They retail for between \$1.09 and \$1.19.

#### Enter the entrepreneurs

Of the four major new children's meals lines, one emerges from a significantly different background. My Own Meals is not the product of a food manufacturing behemoth, but the brainchild of a group of former Beatrice executives who found their inspiration in the hectic lifestyle of the company's president and founder Mary Anne Jackson.

"She had a one-and-a-half-year-old child when we were fired from Beatrice in 1986 as part of the big bailout," says Elizabeth Martin, vice president of My Own Meals, Inc. "She was looking for another job, and of course had all of these wonderful offers. But in the back of her mind, she was thinking about starting something."

Looking for a job wasn't Jackson's only problem. "She had a child who wanted table food, but she couldn't be there all the time," Martin adds. "So she had to make all the food on Sunday, bag it, freeze it and all. She put the two problems together, that she needed a job and needed to



Kid Cuisine has taken the lead in the race for kids' taste buds and is in national distribution. My Own Meals hopes mom appeal will help it catch up.

Kids Kitchen counts on shelf-stable convenience to boost it over frozen food competition. Looney Tunes Meals packaging should catch kids' eyes in the aisle, cereal-style.

## NEW CHILDREN'S MEALS

Continued from page 95

"Nutrition-wise, its labeled, so consumers know exactly what they are getting."

She adds that their ConAgra's children's meals are convenience foods that—and this is the main point—kids will eat.

"A lot of consumers told us they wanted flavors of dinners that kids would eat because their children are picky at the younger ages," says Hanley. "To those consumers, if they can come home late and fix the child a meal that they've selected and that they know the child will eat, that's a blessing. We've addressed the issue of what kids like to eat. I think its wonderful to do a campaign of feeding your children very, very healthy things—but if they don't eat them, that's another matter."

And a Tyson spokesperson points out that Looney Tune meals are formulated without artificial colors or flavors, so to say that the company doesn't take parental concerns into consideration is misleading.

For the most part, supermarkets carrying children's meals support the positions of ConAgra and Tyson. A spokesperson for The Von's Company, (inc., El Monte, Calif.), which currently offers Kid Cuisine, says the company believes the products respond to nutritional concerns because they include fruits and vegetables. "The adults buying the products do have a choice," says Leanne McKenzie, a spokesperson.

Edward Reed, a frozen food buyer at Red Apple Supermarkets (New York), agrees that taste is the primary engine of food sales, especially for kids. "Whether or not the item is going to sell depends on how good it tastes. If kids don't eat it, it's not going to sell. Is McDonald's good for you? And look at what they do."

### Missing an opportunity?

But by reducing product formulation to the least common denominator—what is easiest to get kids to eat—My Own Meals insists that ConAgra, Tyson and some supermarket operators are lazily creating products for the laziest, least informed consumers in the market. They are missing an opportunity to market products for the growing number of nutritionally conscious parents looking for healthy alternatives.

The other meals out there are geared for the kids, and that's

all well and good once in awhile. But a steady diet of that will kill you," says Martin. "It goes back to how you raise your kids. If your kids are used to fast food, and you're used to giving into them, that sets a pattern. It takes a lot more effort to get your kid to eat any new food."

She notes that all My Own Meals dishes did well with kids in the focus groups, so it's possible to give children good foods that they will want to eat. "The kids love them. If the kids are used to good food, they have no problem with ours."

Dominick's Finer Foods, Inc. (Northlake, Ill.), which carries all the children's meals but Kid's Kitchen, says that My Own Meals positioning has helped it gain acceptance among the supermarket's shoppers. "It is a good, top-quality product. It's gaining acceptance. The company is working hard to overcome its higher price," says Rich Simpson, a spokesman.

And it is fair to assume that My Own Meals' recent price rollback should further enhance its position.

While Kid's Kitchen was not included in the CSPI comparison, the figures listed for sodium and fat compare favorably per meal with My Own Meals. Because its calorie total is a little lower, those figures might be slightly underrepresentative when placing the meal within the context of a full day's eating, but they are considerably lower than Looney Tunes meals and Kid Cuisine. On the other hand, they have far less in the way of fruits and vegetables.

Although some may downplay the significance of nutrition in kids meals, Bohbot's Kinney cautions that products that don't appeal to both child and mothers often find themselves standing between the irresistible force and the immovable object.

"A kid is going to ask for what creates fun," he explains. "But food companies also have to be aware they are selling nutrition to the adults. If you get the kid excited about a product, and it's not what the mom wants the kid to eat, then you have a problem."

He adds that marketing products to kids outside of traditionally accepted categories exposes food companies to increased risk. Parents might permit children nutritionally dubious foods such as snacks, desserts or treats. But they will often draw the line at meals when kids are supposed to be eating "healthy" food. Trad-

Continued on page 170

## ADVERTISER INDEX

### SUPERMARKET BUSINESS

ADVERTISER	PAGE
AMANO	157
AMERICAN TOBACCO	64
ANHEUSER-BUSCH	C2
ANHEUSER-BUSCH	41-56
ARCHWAY COOKIES	8
BALL CORP.	170
BAMA PIES LTD.	22
BASS INC.	168
*BELL ATLANTIC	160
BIRO	168
BORDEN FOODS	32
BRADSHAW	124
BULL INFO SYSTEMS	60-61
BUNN-O-MATIC	84
CAMPBELL	67
CATALINA MKTG	116
CHIQUITA	98
COCA-COLA	24
CONAGRA TURKEY CO	88
CRYOVAC INC.	36-37
DEL MONTE	105
DISPLAYMOR	167
DOLE DRIED FRUIT & NUT	79
DONNELLEY MARKETING	C3
FAMILY MEDIA	158
GENERAL MILLS	74
GEO. M. HORMEL	13, 15
GERBER PRODUCTS	58
GLADSON CO	120
GORRESONS	162
ICL INDUSTRIES	16-17
INT'L BANKING TECH	68-69
KAL KAN	96
LIGGETT & MYERS	94
LOGISTICS DATA SYS	82
LORILLARD	115
MESSE STUTTGART INT'L	166
MILLER BREWING	31
*OHIO BELL	160
PHILIP MORRIS	C4
PHILIP MORRIS	10-11
QUALITY CHEKD DAIRY	92
RJR TOBACCO	28-29
RYDER TRUCK RENTAL	80

SCHEDULE MASTER CORP.	166
SCOTSMAN INDUSTRIES	72
SOUTHERN BELL	110
SPECTRA PHYSICS	5
STRATMAR SYSTEMS	118
SUNKIST GROWERS	101
SUN WORLD INT'L	109
S & W FINE FOODS	165
SYMBOL TECH	20-21
TANIMURA & ANTLE INC.	103
TOLEDO SCALES	38
TROPICANA PROD.	6
TURBANA	87
TURBANA	107
UFFVA	108
VAN DEN BERGH	76-77
VAN MUNCHING CO.	90
VIATA INC.	18
WEIGHT WATCHERS	122
*Regional	

### NONFOODS BUSINESS

ADVERTISER	PAGE
AMBASSADOR CARDS	132-133
CLAIROL INC.	156
DIAMANDIS COMM.	152
DRACKETT	156
FLAWA	157
FUJI	148-149
GENERAL ELECTRIC	129
GIBSON GREETINGS	142
GOLD EAGLE	150
JAMESON	
PHARMACEUTICAL	156
LIBBEY GLASS	134
NORITSU	137
OVER EATERS INC.	145
PEGTALKER	155
PENNEX PROD.	131
PETERSEN PUBLISHING	147
ROYAL APPLIANCES	154
SMITHKLINE BEECHAM	127
SWING AWAY MFG.	155
THREE M	139
THREE M	141

This index is provided as a service. The publisher is not responsible for errors or omissions because of late changes in layout and folio.

## NEW CHILDREN'S MEALS

Continued from page 168

tionally, that means meals prepared at home.

"As more marketers begin focusing on areas outside of traditional product categories, they will be more susceptible to consumer groups if the products don't meet nutritional standards," says Kinney. "They've got to start at number one: Is the product good?"

### Other considerations

While nutrition is an important consideration for supermarkets that want to offer children's meals, other areas are worthy of scrutiny.

One of the most important is the question of preparation. When children's meals were first being designed, some of their manufacturers seemed to be developing products for unassisted microwave preparation by the child. They later backed off, and now all recommend at least parental supervision.

Although some of the manufacturers included safety devices such as built-in handles, they generally agree that parents should decide if and when children are ready to prepare their own meals.

The manufacturers also are in agreement about marketing. They contend that the bulk of marketing efforts will be directed at parents rather than kids. But that doesn't mean the kids are being ignored. With Looney Tunes Meals, for example, Tyson is taking a cereal packaging approach with its box-front cartoons. And all the product lines include games, puzzles or collectibles to encourage repeat purchases.

So for supermarket operators who already are hard pressed to keep up with issues such as pesticides and solid wastes, along comes another challenge, Kids Marketing 101. The syllabus reads: The opportunities are big, but so are the potential problems. Supermarket operators need to be on their toes if they are going to stay on top of this dynamic category. ■