

Food

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My Own Meals are easy, healthy — and made just for kids

Bonnie Tandy Leblang is a registered dietitian. Carolyn Wyman is a junk-food fanatic. Each week, they critique new food items.

► **My Own Meals.** My Kind of Chicken, Chicken Please, My Favorite Pasta, My Turkey Meatballs, and My Meatballs and Shells. \$1.99 to \$2.49 per 8- to 8.5-ounce shelf-stable pouch.

Bonnie: My Own Meals is the healthiest of the new meals made especially for kids. All the entrees are made without artificial colors or flavors, preservatives or additives. Each shelf-stable entree is moderate in sodium, fat and calories.

The fat ranges from 16 percent of calories (Chicken Please) to 39 percent (My Meatballs and Shells), and each 220-calorie meal contains 600 milligrams or less of sodium. Supplemented with at least a glass of milk, these should provide enough calories and nutrients as a meal for most kids ages 2 to 10.

My Own Meals can be found in Toys "R" Us stores and in some supermarkets. That's because My Own Meals, like many small companies, can't afford to pay the large slotting fees (occasionally thousands of dollars) some supermarkets charge to stock new products. But consumer demand for an item can circumvent these fees. If you want your supermarket to carry My Own Meals, ask the manager.

Carolyn: If you decide to approach your supermarket manager about carrying My Own Meals, make sure to ask specifically for the pasta and the meatballs and shells selections. My Favorite Pasta contains pork and macaroni in a sauce that is so nicely flavored that I was able to overlook the fact that this also contains barley and lentils.

My Own Meals are blessed with easy-open packages and preparation instructions that are simple and consistent from meal to meal.

My Own Meals can be stored on the cupboard shelf because it is prepared in a way similar to canning. That explains the problems with the dishes containing vegetables and/or chicken. The

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SUPERMARKET SAMPLER

Bonnie Tandy Leblang and Carolyn Wyman

vegetables are soft and bland compared with frozen vegetables, and the chicken is chewy and dry. By contrast, frozen dinner chicken usually is tender and delicious. Obviously, the thing to do is to look for your chicken dinners in the freezer case and your beef dinners on the grocery shelves.