



**George Lazarus**  
On marketing

## What's up, Doc? Tyson's kid meals

Youngsters may have more kitchen clout than ever before.

A spate of specially prepared meals for children is hitting the market, the newest being a microwaveable low-fat frozen line under the umbrella of Looney Tunes, from Tyson Foods.

Whether such cartoon characters, including Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Road Runner, will cut it with kids, and their parents remains to be determined.

But with other recent introductions such as ConAgra's Kids Cousine and Geo. A. Hormel & Co.'s Kid's Kitchen and newcomers about to hit the market, perhaps this is a business worth pursuing.

Industry observers say prepared meals for kids, including frozen and shelf-stable items, have the potential of being a \$500 million annual business. However, volume of brands presently on the market is a good deal less than 10 percent of that figure.

What the contenders are zeroing in on is a market of 27 million kids, ranging in age from 4 to 10. No doubt, many of them have some say in what they want to chunk down.

Tyson's new eight-item line won't be available until April, when its meals hit Chicago and a number of selected markets across the country.

The plus side of Tyson's entry is that kids can identify with the Looney Tunes characters, including Bugs Bunny, whose meal consists of Chicken Chunks, Macaroni & Cheese and Carrot Sticks. The downside possibility is that even kids

may be turned off if the product doesn't measure up to expectations. Chicago ad agency Stern Walters Partners has the assignment on this new line.

There is plenty of variety in Tyson's new line and that's critical, says competitor Mary Ann Jackson, marketer of the My Own Meal shelf-stable line.

"More players in the prepared-meals market will make it more visible, but what's really needed is variety. Kids are so fickle in what they want to eat," says Jackson, whose line is sold in supermarkets as well as in selected Toys "R" Us stores.