

time for fun | EATING OUT

2009  
**Parents**  
**10 BEST**  
FAST-CASUAL  
RESTAURANTS

## 5-Star Family Restaurants

These eateries have everything you want—healthy kids' food, quick service, and great prices. BY KAREN CICERO

**Y**ou like to go out to eat. And you deserve to—after preparing practically every meal, it's nice to let someone else do the cooking now and then. But where to go? Sit-down restaurants can be pricey, fast-food places are pretty limited and not exactly known for healthy fare. An alternative: "fast-casual" restaurants—a hybrid of the two. You order at the counter and get your food quickly, but these places have a more varied menu, higher-quality ingredients, and comfier seating than typical fast-food joints. And they cost just a little more.

*Parents* surveyed 50 of these chains—places like Panera Bread, Chipotle, and Quiznos—to find out which ones rock when it comes to feeding families. We left no crumb unturned on the kids' menu, examining the calories, fat, and sodium of each dish. (We booted out any place that wouldn't fork over the info.) Then we grilled the restaurants about conveniences that are often must-haves for parents, like changing tables in the restrooms, booster seats for toddlers, or stuff for the kids to do if they finish their meal before you do. These chains came out on top for having at least three healthy kids' meals and a family-friendly atmosphere. And did we mention that the food is totally delish?

### RESTAURANT RATINGS

-  Changing Tables in Restrooms
-  Organic Milk Available
-  Activity Sheet and Crayons
-  Nutrition Info Online

### 5 PANERA BREAD



Your little ones will never suspect that the food is so nutritious. All the kids' sandwiches—grilled cheese, PB & J, deli meat—are made on fluffy, light-colored bread that's actually whole grain. It's baked daily on-site and you can buy a loaf to bring home. A fun, organic squeezable yogurt, packed with nearly 15 percent of the calcium 4- to 8-year-olds need for the day, comes on the side.

If you have more adventurous eaters, there's an even better way to go: Get the "you pick two" option on the regular menu and split it between kids. You can choose two items from the list, like soup, salads, and chicken sandwiches, for about the same price as two kids' meals. "A lot of kids like the strawberry salad with poppy-seed dressing that we've had for the last few summers," says Scott Davis, chief concept officer. If you want a treat, Panera is also a great place to pick up a brownie or a chocolate-chip cookie because all of the bakery items are trans fat-free. 1,264 locations in 40 states; [panerabread.com](http://panerabread.com).