

What to Look for in a Café Catering to Kids

For our "Happy Highchair" contest, we asked readers to vote for their favorite family-friendly restaurants and to share their views on those establishments. As we sifted through the entrants' comments, it became obvious that certain amenities are uppermost in parents' minds as they search for places to dine with kids in tow. They are:

- **A Child-Friendly Atmosphere.** Does the establishment genuinely welcome families? Do the wait staff actually like children? Are they accommodating to kid and parent requests?
- **A Play Area.** Does the restaurant have a safe area for kids to roam and play? Is it inviting, fun and visible from the restaurant tables?
- **Affordability.** Parents expect to pay for privilege of eating out – with no clean-up! – but reasonably priced entrees are important, especially with two or three kids in tow.
- **Food that kids – and parents! – want to eat.** Man (woman and child) does not live on Happy Meals alone. Parents want some variety for themselves and their kids. A corollary amenity here is food that's healthy, organic and locally-grown – a prerequisite for many area parents.
- **Kid-Approval.** Although we mention this last, it might be the most important factor. If your children don't give the place a "thumbs up," you'll probably not be coming back.

P. B. & Ellie's Café Kid-Tested, Parent-Approved!

By Anne Laufe

With their newly remodeled kitchen and expanded menu, P.B. & Ellie's Café (formerly known as Peanut Butter and Ellie's) is more than deserving of the highest "Happy Highchair" award.

From the tables with checkerboards painted on them to the play area smack-dab in the center of the dining room, every aspect of the restaurant sings "child friendly" without scaring off the necessary adult chaperones. It's definitely a place where kids can be kids and parents don't have to worry about getting reprimanded by uptight wait staff or the childless couple at the next table.

Kids can sit on the floor to draw on mini-chalkboards, climb back and forth on the overstuffed benches, play with trains in the play area, or even sit quietly reading a book, giving parents time to chat with each other or steal a moment to themselves.

The menu offers everything from popcorn and smoothies to full dinners, all at prices that families can afford. Kids love the silly names and parents appreciate the healthful ingredients. Stop in for a mid-morning snack of Edible Checkers (cheese, crackers and fruit; \$4.25) or Twigs in a Pond (veggie sticks, crackers and hummus; \$3.75). Lunch includes burritos, salads, ravioli and Miss Mary Mack and Cheese, in both full and junior sizes. And the freshly-ground peanut butter is used to create any kind of sandwich a kid could imagine – pb and banana, pb and bacon, pb and candy corn, pb and raisins – the list goes on. ...

On those evenings when you realize you can't make a home-cooked meal out of the ragged contents of your refrigerator, P.B. & Ellie's new dinner options will make you feel like you're not a bad parent after all. Kids and adults alike will enjoy the ribs in marion berry barbecue sauce (\$12.95 for a half rack, plenty filling) and the hazelnut-stuffed chicken with mashed potatoes (\$13.95). Burgers, soup and hot sandwiches are also available. Weekend brunch features Green Eggs and Ham (!), whole grain waffles, egg and tofu scrambles, and the Monkeycristo Sandwich, ranging in price from \$2.95 to \$7.95.

Desserts brilliantly stay focused on three things that most kids love – brownies, ice cream and cookies, and various combinations thereof. Don't miss the humongous homemade ice cream sandwiches (\$2.95) – one serving could satisfy the entire family.

Even the youngest eaters have their own section of the menu to choose from, including smashed bananas, applesauce, rice, mashed potatoes, noodles and tofu chunks. Nirvana for the high chair set!

Comfortable booths, bottomless cups of Hood River coffee for the grown-ups and plenty of toys for the kids make this the kind of place where families can easily while away the hours. Parents also love P.B. & Ellie's emphasis on locally grown organic ingredients. Given the delicious food, you'll be tempted to stop in for a bite even when you don't have the kids in tow. And you'll have an additional reason soon: P.B. & Ellie's has recently applied for their liquor license. Could be just the place for your next date night!

A favorite with kids and their parents since it first opened five years ago, P.B. & Ellie's is maturing while remaining young at heart.

P.B. & Ellie's Café is located at 4405 SW Vermont. Call 503-282-1783 or visit www.pbcafe.com for more information. Open 9 am to 9 pm daily.



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