

Kids Snack Market Grows Up

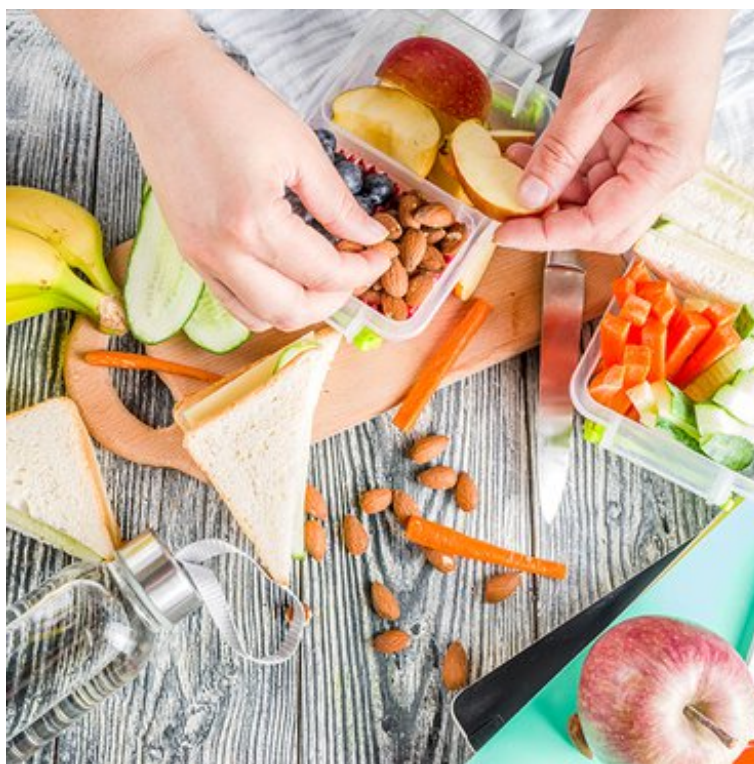
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- Amanda Baltazar

Almost a fifth of children (18.5 percent) in this country are overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but food manufacturers are launching a range of healthy snacks to help curb this trend.

Recent releases include Quevos, high protein, high fiber, low carb and sugar, gluten-free chips made from egg whites; Once Upon a Farm dairy-free yogurts (high in protein) and blends of fruit and vegetables in pouches; Organic Valley's Egg Bites in three flavors; and MOR Snacks nut and cheese snack bags containing nothing but those ingredients.



Parents “need a quick fix, something healthy,” points out Christina Towle, a clinical nutritionist and founder of Hudson Valley Nutrition in New York. It’s important to be aware of the ingredients, she explains, and in her opinion, the smaller, family-owned companies tend to offer kid-friendly products with more integrity, she says, because they “really care about their brand and what’s in their products.”

Shelley Balanko, senior vice president of business development at The Hartman Group in Bellevue, Wash., says parents are relying on snacks that children can help themselves to, while their parents do their own work, especially now that they're working from home.

“They tend to want their kids’ snacks to be whole, real foods that are rich in protein and fiber and attributes like organic and non-GMO are important,” she says.

However, even the most invested parents slip, she admitted. “Even these parents will rely on whatever is available to feed kids quickly and with minimal resistance during our stress-filled COVID-19 lives.”

Some companies are even responding directly to the coronavirus. Slammers Snacks has added Wellmune, a beta-glucan yeast to three of its organic superfood smoothies. Wellmune is said to boost the immune system, so, says founder Jen Carlson, “parents can feel good about the snacks they’re giving their kids.”

Marketing Moves

Marketing kids’ snacks has also taken a turn during the pandemic. Nick Hamburger, co-founder of Quevos, says he’s mostly been doing Amazon advertisements and influencer marketing. “Influencer is new since COVID,” he says. “We knew many people were spending a lot more time on their devices during quarantine so thought influencer would work well — turns out, it did!”

KidsLuv, which offers vitamin-enhanced beverages for kids, has shifted its marketing and advertising efforts more to online, too. It’s started using a crowdfunding site, “to help support our marketing, advertising, and sales efforts, but to also build brand loyalty by engaging potential customers in the business on a whole new level,” says Ashi Jelinek, founder and CEO.

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