

Kid-friendly eateries dish up fun for everyone

Most workdays, children and professionals are best kept in separate corners. But not on April 22, when millions of youngsters nationwide will grab a glimpse of their future as part of Ms. Foundation's "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day," now in its 10th year. Here are a few kid-tested lunch spots downtown.

1 Ed Debevic's
640 N. Wells St., (312) 664-1707
Valet parking: \$7
Diner fare: \$3-\$8

Only a grump could dislike Ed Debevic's, and I was that grump when I walked in with my children. They'd be happy with burgers and fries and hot dogs and barking waiters, but what about me? Would the wait staff dole out a salad along with the sass?

Yes: heaps of both. My 5-year-old daughter was wide-eyed at our waiter's antics. First, he shoved me aside and sat down at our table, leaning very close to her. "Is that your mom? She's beautiful!" Then, he turned and berated me for not thanking him, slapped his pad on our table and asked, "Whaddaya want to eat?"

The food was surprisingly good. My 11-year-old son inhaled an oversized bacon cheeseburger—"best ever"—and declared the same about the french fries. My daughter echoed the high praise for her crunchy chicken tenders. Both were really more interested in their thick, creamy, delicious milkshakes. Our "nice and mean" waiter recommended the Chinese chicken salad, which had a terrific mix of vegetables but a too-sweet dressing. We ordered a souvenir "shot glass" ice cream sundae, and our waiter's nice alter ego brought two, one for each child.

2 Big Bowl Asian Kitchen
60 E. Ohio St., (312) 951-1888
Parking: \$10 per hour at nearby lots
Appetizers and entrees: \$3-\$12

My son turned me on to the kid's menu at Big Bowl, which for years has been my ideal for a tasty, moderately priced business lunch. He'd gone with another family, so when we went together, he easily created his own kid's-size stir-fry meal, eating it with "cheater" chopsticks (banded together at the top) and cracking open the takeout container filled with fun kid stuff, like wiki stix (bendable wax) and crayons to use on the kid's menu, which has mazes, a crossword puzzle and space for drawing Chinese word characters. Other kid choices (\$3.95, including rice and a drink): chicken nuggets, macaroni and cheese, chicken noodle soup, buttered noodles, or a "small bite" combo of chicken satay and potstickers.

The food is dependably fresh and promptly served. The Vietnamese shrimp summer rolls are a good start any time of year. Chicken and vegetables in a

green curry is a colorful and crunchy dish.

The restaurant is comfortably noisy and just right for dining with children. The fortune in my cookie was eerily thematic: "Idleness is the holiday of fools."

3 Atwood Cafe
1 W. Washington St., (312) 368-1900
Valet parking: \$10
Appetizers, entrees: \$6-\$21

My "Eloise" and I went to the Atwood Cafe on the advice of a neighborhood dad who works in the Loop. Its huge glass windows, Mad Hatter decor and splendid food made it seem an

obvious choice for a special day.

We arrived five minutes early for our 11:30 reservation but had to wait to be seated, along with other diners, until 11:40. That's only 15 minutes, but for a "starving" 5-year-old—or her mother—it seemed a lifetime. The request for a window seat was ignored, and the kid's menu I'd asked about when I made the reservation was non-existent. Her Shirley Temple came in a super-tall glass, causing my nerves to fray and prompting my constant refrain of "Two hands!" (Tables are very close, and I feared pink soda cascading

ing onto business people beside us.)

Our waiter was friendly and helpful, though, arranging for extra noodles in the soup and a child-size portion of malted-milk ice cream. My meal was mostly outstanding: goat cheese and pistachio salad, a messy crabmeat sandwich and so-so cherry crisp. It certainly was memorable: \$62, lunching with a half-pint.

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