

Why There Are No Kids' Menus in Italy

We've all been there at some point in time. The family goes out to enjoy a nice dinner at a restaurant. The menus come, the waitress takes orders... and your youngest child orders a grilled cheese sandwich. Off the kids' menu. At a ridiculously high price considering it's just bread, cheese, and a few pickles.

But no matter, right? Kids will be kids. Better they're happy with their cheese sandwich than throwing a tantrum because they don't like the steak the rest of the family is eating.

Not according to the Italians. As Michela Chiappa [explains](#) in *The Telegraph*, Italian kids are expected to eat what the adults eat – and enjoy it too:

“Whatever time of day, you will always be encouraged to bring your children to a restaurant with you; it's not unusual to see children in restaurants with their parents at 10pm – and most waiters love to chat and interact with the kids.

It's important to note that 'kids' menus' do not exist in Italian restaurants – children are treated like adults and are offered plates from the main menu – in smaller portions, if they're young.”

The reason for this? According to Chiappa, Italians believe children learn and mature by being with adults and doing – or eating – the same things they do:

“[I]t's not about dividing the children from the adults, giving them separate meals or putting them to bed early. The kids are part of the social activity of everyday life and they are encouraged to eat, smell, touch and experience new

tastes, day in, day out."

I'll be the first to admit that I was a fan of kids' menus as a child. They offered familiar foods I liked. I didn't have to make a laborious decision and I didn't have to think outside the box.

But are such attitudes really ones we want to be fostering in our children? If we're not teaching our children to try new things, develop diverse tastes, make difficult choices, and in general, learn to act like an adult in a simple thing such as menu selections, then how can we expect them to grow and mature in other areas of life?

Image Credit: Joe Shlabotnik bit.ly/1iowB8m