

The “Happy Meal” has served as a beam of sunshine in the childhoods of millions of kids around the world for nearly forty years. The original idea for the Happy Meal may have been born in the Central American nation of Guatemala when a McDonalds operator named Yolanda Fernandez de Cofiño began offering combinations of products which she called a “Menu Ronald.” She came up with the idea to allow a more efficient way for parents to feed their children. A “Menu Ronald” included a hamburger, french fries, and a sundae. It was, of course, named after the iconic symbol of McDonald’s - Ronald McDonald. De Cofiño’s innovative idea eventually made its way to product developer Bob Bernstein who turned the Happy Meal into a McDonald’s staple and worldwide sensation.

The first Happy Meal was released in 1979. The box was themed after a circus wagon. It came with a cheeseburger or hamburger, french fries, a drink, a bag of cookies, and of course, a surprise toy. The box included jokes, mazes, comics, and word games. McDonald’s quickly learned, however, that it wasn’t the food that drove sales – it was the prize. At first, the prizes were limited to spinning tops, stencils, magic tricks, and other trinkets. In the 1980s, however, McDonald’s began forging strategic partnerships with toy and motion picture companies to include better prizes, and more importantly, prizes that were part of larger collections. In this way, for kids to collect an entire set of prizes, parents would have to repeatedly visit McDonalds and continue to buy Happy Meals so their children could collect them all. Soon, Star Trek, Hot Wheels, and Barbie Doll prizes came with Happy Meals. In the 1990s, McDonald’s began offering Beanie Babies in Happy Meals, which launched a new generation of Happy Meal lovers – both children and adults! Today, such Beanie Babies packaged in McDonald’s Happy Meals enjoy a cult following and can sell for hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Happy Meals began to fall out of favor in the early 2000s as people began demanding healthier food options for their children. No longer would people ignore the fact that the food within Happy Meals was unhealthy just so they could score a precious collectible. McDonald’s responded by offering low-fat milk or apple juice instead of soft drinks, and apple slices instead of cookies. McDonald’s efforts to make healthier food for children seems to have paid off. It recently struck a deal with Disney to include one of eight different action figures from the *Incredibles 2* movie in its Happy Meals.

1. Who was Bob Bernstein?

- A. The first person to think of packaging foods together for kids
- B. The first person to experiment with adding toys to kids’ meals
- C. The person that made the Happy Meal popular
- D. The person who decided that the first Happy Meal box would be themed after a circus wagon

- 2. Why did McDonald's form partnerships with toy and motion picture companies?**
- A. To make Happy Meals include healthier food options
 - B. To make Happy Meals more appealing to adults
 - C. To ensure that parents would come back to McDonald's and buy more Happy Meals
 - D. To make Happy Meals more expensive
- 3. Which of the following is not true?**
- A. The original idea for Happy Meals originated in Central America
 - B. The original Happy Meal was modeled after a circus train
 - C. Some Happy Meals toys have become expensive collectibles for adults
 - D. McDonald's stopped producing Happy Meals after parents demanded healthier food options
- 4. For which of the following questions would "By offering collectibles in Happy Meals" be the answer?**
- A. Why did Disney partner with McDonald's to include toys from *Incredibles 2* in Happy Meals?
 - B. How did Happy Meals change in the early 2000s?
 - C. What are examples of prizes that come in Happy Meals?
 - D. How did McDonald's succeed in getting parents to repeatedly visit restaurants and purchase Happy Meals?
- 5. How did parent demands for healthier food affect the history of Happy Meals?**
- A. McDonald's stopped including toys in Happy Meals
 - B. McDonald's was forced to offer new kinds of foods and drinks in Happy Meals
 - C. McDonald's stopped producing Happy Meals
 - D. McDonald's was forced to include toys of higher quality in Happy Meals
- 6. What word in the first paragraph could be replaced by "productive?"**
- A. efficient
 - B. eventually
 - C. innovative
 - D. included
- 7. What could be a title for the final paragraph?**
- A. McDonald's and the History of Happy Meals
 - B. Happy Meals: Changing for the Better in the New Century
 - C. Happy Meals: Now Offering Apple Juice!
 - D. Happy Meals: A Partnership Between Disney and McDonald's