# Taking our children for a ride

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Soil Association in partnership with Organix





# **Contents Page**

Executive Summary	
Table 1 Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes	
Call for action: Eight steps to a healthier and happier day out	
Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes	
Table 2 Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes	6
New MetroLand	
What we did	
Figure 3 Tourist Attractions visited	
Appendix 1	11
Top of the class	
Top of the class 1: The National Trust	11
Top of the Class 2: Center Parcs	11
Appendix 2	
North East	
New MetroLand	
Yorkshire and the Humber	14
Flamingo Land	
London	
The Tower of London	
London	
Madame Tussauds	
London	
London Zoo	17
North West	
Camelot Theme Park	
North West	19
Blackpool Pleasure Beach	
West Midlands	20
Alton Towers	20
East of England	21
Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach	21
South East	
Legoland, Windsor	
Chessington World of Adventures, Surrey	22
Wales	
Oakwood Theme Park	
Appendix 4 - Ranking	
Appendix 4 Tourist Attractions Contacts:	25
Appendix F: Vicitor Numbers	27

# **Executive Summary**

When it comes to healthy food and drink at the country's top family tourist attractions, our children are being taken for a ride. A snap shot survey of the food and drink available at 14 major tourist attractions across England and Wales, carried out by the Soil Association and Organix, found that junk food is king and there is a depressing lack of healthy food and drink choices available.

Coming bottom of our 'Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes' rankings are Camelot Theme Park and New MetroLand, which each scored a miserable 1 point out of a possible 25 on the days we visited. Our secret mum found no fruit at these locations and a woeful lack of healthy food or drink.

In Camelot Theme Park, there were no healthy drinks other than water to be found, and children's food choices were limited to burgers, nuggets, sausages and other processed foods. At New MetroLand she was bowled over by the junk-food-deals and lack of healthy alternatives as well as the 'Eat As Much As You Can' buffets and 'All You Can Fizzibly Drink' promotions, which surround the attraction.

Scoring just one point more were the pleasure beaches of Blackpool and Great Yarmouth. After a record-breaking 3 hours 45 minutes at Blackpool the only fruit our mystery mum found here was some melon served with champagne and prawns in a bar. Unfortunately, the one fruit bar on site was closed and the only café, out of 35 possible outlets, that sells fruit, had run out the day we visited. Great Yarmouth stunned our mum when the only pure juices she found were hidden at one burger outlet and in the pub.

It does not have to be like this. Our top ranking 'Good Food Hero' is Cornwall's Eden Project. Here as many as 1.2 million people a year enjoy a choice of good quality food where many products are fair trade or local and some are organic. However, even at the Eden Project our mum said the children's lunch box could be improved by including some fresh fruit and vegetables and removing some of the processed foods. Beyond this survey, the National Trust and Center Parcs also show that it is possible to make fresh, well-sourced, healthy food available for families in double-quick time and at an affordable price. and that families will choose and enjoy good food.

Although things may have changed at each venue since the day our mystery mum visited, only 2 out of the 14 tourist attractions notched up more that half marks. In general, we found that hot dogs, burgers and chips still dominate the choice on offer. It is also difficult to find a portion of vegetables if you don't care for mushy peas. It took our researcher at least an hour to find any fresh fruit at eight venues. Based on our experience, parents visiting Flamingo Land, New MetroLand, Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach or Camelot Theme Park need not bother looking: there is no fruit to be found.

Poor quality junk food dominates the food at these family-day-out venues, which are visited by 16 million people each year. If you are spending the last day of your summer break at Alton Towers, Chessington or Thorpe Park, expect to be bombarded with advertising which promotes the consumption of large quantities of junk food and fizzy drinks. We suggest, therefore, that you take a packed lunch.

All this at a time when record levels of obesity threaten to cripple the NHS, and reduce the life expectancy of some children to less than their parents. Now that school meals are back on track serving and promoting healthy, nutritious food, other child-centred venues must stop encouraging the over-consumption of junk food, and at least offer parents and children a healthy choice.

We don't want to be spoil sports and stop families having fun and eating treats when out and about. But now the nation is eating out more than ever before, our top tourist attractions and their caterers have a responsibility to offer parents a healthy alternative to junk food and drinks, and to ensure that they help develop a food culture which is not dominated by burgers, chips and sugary fizzy drinks. At a minimum, free fresh water should be readily available

from water fountains (as it is in many public parks, and now has to be by law in all schools). In addition, tourist attractions should ensure that healthy options are always available and promoted, and that the quality of ingredients and cooking methods improve.

As the market for organic food in the UK grows, at some 30% per year, attractions such as the National History Museum, Center Parcs, Eden Project and London Zoo, have begun sourcing organic food as well as improving the quality of their meals. Others should follow their lead and keep up with the expectations of their visitors.

Table 1 Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes

Rank	Venues	Total Score out of 25
1	Eden Project	17
2	Tower of London	14/21*
3	Legoland	12
3	London Zoo	12
4	Thorpe Park	7
5	Chessington World of Adventures	6
6	Alton Towers	5
6	Madame Tussauds	5
7	Flamingo Land	3
7	Oakwood Theme Park	3
8	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	2
8	Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach	2
9	Camelot Theme Park	1
9	New MetroLand	1

# Call for action: Eight steps to a healthier and happier day out

- 1. Provide free chilled water at all outlets.
- 2. Make healthy snacks and pure fruit juice cartons available in all vending machines.
- 3. Stop fizzy drink promotions via meal deals and bottomless refills.
- 4. Include fresh or dried fruit-no added sugar, salad and juice cartons in children's menus and lunch boxes.
- 5. Ensure healthy options like salads or fresh savoury foods are readily available at all attractions.
- 6. Improve ingredient quality and cooking method of popular food such as burgers and sausages.
- 7. Introduce organic and locally sourced items into restaurants and lunchboxes.
- 8. Keep portion sizes healthy: cutting out king size portions of fizzy drinks and chocolate bars and unhealthy eat-as-much-as-you-can food deals in restaurants.

<sup>\*</sup> No vending machines seen at the Tower of London. The points available have been reduced accordingly.

#### Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes

For the most part, eating out at the tourist attractions we surveyed is a case of stopping to refuel at vending machines and kiosks. Two years on from the damning *Which?* report *Day Chipper*<sup>7</sup>, hot dogs, burgers, chips and fizzy drinks are still the staple fare. Camelot Theme Park shares the bottom place in our ranking with New MetroLand and the pleasure beaches at Blackpool and Great Yarmouth trail not far behind with just one extra point.

Camelot Theme Park came bottom of the *Which?* rankings in 2004. It remains a health-conscious parent's nightmare. Far from following the advice of the 2004 survey Camelot seems to have doubled the number of hot dog stands. This ensured its ranking as a 'Junk Food Villain'.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Eden Project is the clear leader in terms of healthy, local and organic food provision. Legoland has also improved, having introduced a 'Choose the Healthy Option' choice on children's menus, and suggesting milk or water as alternatives to fizzy drinks.

In general the picture is still poor, and the majority of outlets have a long way to go. Branding and promotions by the big processed food giants are a key feature of most venues. Families are bombarded by Coca-Cola, Pepsi or Walls promotions at all the attractions we visited except the Eden Project, where vending machines are unbranded. Elsewhere, sandwich boards promote novelty fizzy drink containers, like the 'Pepsi super tube' or the 'Coca Cola capsule', which encourage children to consume large quantities of sugary drinks very cheaply: "refill for free all day long" they promise and meal deals further subsidise the consumption of fizzy drinks.

The ranking is based on a snap shot survey conducted over one day at each venue during early summer 2006. Things may have changed since the day we visited. However, the ranking does provide an overall feel for the healthy food and drink choices on offer and the type of food promoted at each attraction.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Day Chipper (2004) Which Campaign Report

**Table 2 Junk Food Villains versus Good Food Heroes** 

Rank	Venues	Free fresh drinking water	Healthy drinks in vending machines	Healthy cold drinks *ex' water	Fresh fruit on site	Children's meals	Food promotion	Time taken to find fruit	Total Score
		( /3)	( /4)	(/5)	(/4)	( / 4)	( /5)		(/25)
1	Eden Project	1	0	5	4	2	5	2 mins	17
2	Tower of London	1	No vending machines	3	4	3	3	1 hr	14/21*
3	Legoland	3	0	2	2	2	3	35 mins	12
3	London Zoo	1	0	3	2	3	3	1 hr 15 mins	12
4	Thorpe Park	3	1	1	1	1	0	1 hr 20 mins	7
5	Chessington World of Adventures	1	1	2	1	1	0	1 hr	6
6	Alton Towers	0	1	2	1	1	0	1 hr 5 mins	5
6	Madame Tussaud's	0	2	2	1	0	0	1 hr 5 mins	5
7	Flamingo Land	0	1	1	0	1	0	None! ⊗	3
7	Oakwood Theme Park	0	1	1	1	0	0	1 hr 10 mins	3
8	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	0	0	1	0	1	0	3 hrs 45 mins	2
8	Great Yarmouth Pleasure	0	0	1	0	1	0	None! ⊗	2
9	Camelot Theme Park	0	1	0	0	0	0	None! ⊗	1
9 * No ve	New MetroLand	0	0	1	0	0	0	None! ⊗	1

<sup>\*</sup> No vending machines seen at the Tower of London. The points available have been reduced accordingly.

Rank: 9

Time taken to find fruit: None found

"Europe's largest indoor funfair" is situated within Gateshead's MetroCentre. Fast food outlets in the large Food Court call on children to 'eat as much as you can' or consume 'all you can fizzibly drink'.

Rather giddy from a ride on the Wonderful Waveswinger and the Terrific Train whizzing by, I am soon ready for a steadying sit-down drink. The search begins. Not wanting a fizzy drink or an additive-laden Fruit Shoot, I am delighted to spot signs for orange juice, and upset when this turns out to be concentrated orange squash at two separate outlets.

Friendliness is not the missing ingredient at MetroLand. My request for fruit at Barnaby's Deli Diner wins me a sympathetic ally. There is no fruit at MetroLand, he confides, and advises me to detour via the nearest Marks & Spencer. Later in the day, however, I am sent back in the direction of the Diner having hazarded a request for salad at another outlet. My friend greets me armed with two satsumas he has borrowed from his Dad's shopping bag, and offers me the lettuce they keep for garnish.

And this is what keeps me going. I do spot salad on a menu once, but it turns out not to be available. Healthy eating at MetroLand is restricted to a limited range of low-fat jacket potato fillings. Most food counters are characterised by chocolate bars, Nachos cabinets, ice cream and iced slush machines. The main component of all kid's meals is a reconstituted meat or fish product, routinely served with chips and a fizzy drink or 'day-glo' slush. Overeating is promoted on posters that advertise outsized 'big foot' sausages: "Big enough for two but too good to share."

Vending machines joint-owned by Lucozade and Ribena promote fruit-flavoured Lucozade products while water is unavailable either vended or for free. It is only when a fruit juice sign finally speaks the truth late in the day, and a lady pours some welcome Asda apple juice into my Coca Cola cup, that New MetroLand scores its single point in our survey.

**Water and healthy drinks:** Although water was available to buy at all sites, it was secondary to fizzy drinks, which were heavily promoted via meal deals and bottomless refills at almost every attraction. Fruit drinks seem increasingly big business for child-focused marketing, as evidenced by branded rides like the Blackpool Fruit Shoot and Chessington's Ribena Berry Bouncers. Many fruit drinks are marketed as 'healthy', on the basis of added vitamins or sugar-free status. Sugar-free options by Ribena, 5-Alive and Capri Sun include artificial sweeteners like aspartame, which have no nutritional benefit and may well habituate a child's sweet tooth<sup>2</sup>. The increasingly popular Minute Maid 'Froot Refresh' drinks are a slightly better bet, with 50% fruit juice content.

Dedication is needed to find healthier drinks, like pure fruit juice or milk, unless you're at the Eden Project. Camelot Theme Park seemed to offer no healthy alternatives except bottled water, while Thorpe Park, Oakwood Theme Park and New MetroLand offer a healthy drink at only one of their outlets. In general, water was scarcer and pricier than fizzy drinks, with the exceptions of Thorpe Park and Legoland where water fountains were widely available.

**Fresh fruit**: Was unavailable at Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach, Flamingo Land, New MetroLand and Camelot Theme Park on the days we visited. Not one attraction promoted fresh fruit as a healthy snack alternative to the normal donuts, candy-floss and chocolate bars. The only fruit our mystery Mum found at Blackpool Pleasure Beach was some melon, served with champagne and prawns, in a bar. Not the first choice of a healthy snack for a young child.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.healthedtrust.com/pages/realchoice.html

**Children's menus and lunchboxes:** Here we looked to see if the children's meals included fruit, vegetables and a healthy drink and how reliant the meals were on processed meats. Oakwood Theme Park, New MetroLand, Camelot Theme Park not only denied children healthy drinks, but also failed to offer a single portion of fruit or vegetables in children's menus. In the same attractions all the children's meal deals were made up of processed meat and fish, chips and fizzy drinks.

Legoland helpfully suggest milk and water as alternatives to fizzy drinks and they also offer carrot sticks instead of fries. But meals remain mainly processed and probably fried.

The Tower of London is an exception to this dismal picture, thanks to their lunchboxes, which contained optional portions of fresh fruit and vegetable and along with pure juice. However, their children's hot meal could be improved. In London Zoo's Oasis Café you can buy half portions of adult's main meals. These include fresh pasta, organic roast and the option of steamed vegetables, all prepared on site and washed down with a healthy drink. But their children's lunch box lacks fresh fruit and vegetables.

**Local food and healthy food promotion:** The Madame Tussauds group of attractions, which includes Madame Tussauds, Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, and Chessington World of Adventures, is dominated by the branding of its official food partners: Coca Cola, Nestle, Bird's Eye Walls, Ribena, United Biscuits and Cadbury Trebor Bassett. Catering appears highly centralised across the group. The outlets and their menus, meal deals and promotions are all standardised. This leaves little scope for the integration of the economy by means of local produce. By contrast, Oakwood Theme Park in Wales, while not a strong performer on healthy food, is sufficiently independent to be able to source ice cream from a local Pembrokeshire dairy farm.

The Eden Project is a clear leader on local food provision, stocking Cornish spring water, milk and apple juice, Cheddar cheese, ham, chutney, cream and ice cream. London Zoo also does well with its Marine Stewardship certified hoki — a more sustainable version of cod and chips.

Some organic items could be found, and these were confined to the top scoring attractions, with the surprising exceptions of organic semi-skimmed milk at Alton Towers and Chessington World of Adventures, and organic baby food at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. There is also an increasing amount of fair trade and organic products in London Zoo, though the venue is let down by its less than health vending.

#### **Box 2: The Eden Project**

Ranked Top

The Eden Project is celebrating its fifth birthday this year, and is certainly the most modern and progressive of the attractions in terms of its approach to food culture. The marketing promises: "You are what you eat, as someone once famously said, and at Eden you have a huge amount of tasty, organic, local, healthy food and drink to choose from." On the whole the Eden Project lives up to its word.

A positive food culture is central to the ethos of Eden. At two new restaurants, the Med Kitchen and The Pasty, visitors can see the food being freshly prepared by the chefs on-site. To maximise freshness, and returns to the local economy, 87% of the food sold is produced or processed in Cornwall, and 94% is from the Southwest region. Cafes serve a wide range of 'Eden Made Sandwiches', wraps and salad boxes, several of which include oily fish like mackerel and non-meat protein like red kidney beans. These were well labelled for their suitability for vegetarians and vegans and there were also gluten free options. It only took a record 2 minutes of searching for our researcher to find a piece of fresh fruit at Eden. It was, in a bowl on the counter of the Apple Café. Similar fresh fruit bowls were then found in most cafés and restaurant on site.

All Eden's baby food is organic. Children's lunch boxes include raisins and a carton of Mr Juicy orange or apple juice, crisps, a giant cookie and a packet of cress seeds to sow and grow. Including some fresh fruit and salad or vegetable sticks to balance the meal will be an important next step as would using more organic produce in children's meals.

Eden takes its educational role on food seriously. This year's Food Week, running from May 27 to June 3, involved families in cookery demonstrations, tasting sessions and talks on the health and environmental implications of conventional UK food culture.

#### What we did

Between June and July 2006 we sent our secret mum to fourteen of the top family attractions in England and Wales<sup>3</sup> to see how easy it is for families to track down fresh, healthy food and drink. Making sure we visited an attraction in all but one of the English regions, we also included the two attractions rated lowest by the 2004 *Which?* Report 'Day Chipper'<sup>4</sup> - Camelot Theme Park and Flamingo Land - to see what had improved.

Spending one day at each attraction, our secret mum looked for fresh fruit, healthy drinks, snacks and meal options, particularly for children. She kept an eye out for water fountains and the availability of free drinking water. Our 'food promotion' category was assessed from a combination of factors including the availability of healthy food and drink on offer but also the nature of food and drink related advertising. Attractions were positively rewarded for promoting healthy eating, for sourcing local or organic food, and engaging in any other form of food education.

**Figure 3 Tourist Attractions visited** 

North East	1	New MetroLand
Yorkshire and the Humber	2	Flamingo Land Theme Park and Zoo
London	3	Madame Tussauds
	4	London Zoo
	5	Tower of London
North West	6	Camelot Theme Park
	7	Blackpool Pleasure Beach
West Midlands	8	Alton Towers
East of England	9	Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach
South East	10	Legoland
	11	Chessington World of Adventures
	12	Thorpe Park
South West	13	Eden Project
Wales	14	Oakwood Theme Park

http://www.handbag.com/galleries/gallery/Lifestyle/Travel\_inspiration/travel\_familyuk/MemberID=2/Source for Top Ten London Attractions: http://www.viewlondon.co.uk/home\_feat\_10things\_touristattracs.asphttp://www.aboutbritain.com/RegionChooser.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Source for Top ten UK Family Attractions:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Day Chipper (2004) Which Campaign Report

# Appendix 1

## Top of the class

It is easy to reject healthy food and drinks by saying that people either won't buy them or children won't eat them. However, both the National Trust and Center Parcs have worked hard to improve the quality of their meals in recent years, introducing better quality ingredients, improved children's meals and sourcing policies which include some local and organic ingredients. And the success of Eden's new outlet, Jo's Café', which has a focus on super foods demonstrates children and parents alike do want good quality food.

#### Top of the class 1: The National Trust

With 145 restaurants nationwide, the National Trust provides lunches to the millions of children who visit their properties on family days out each year. Chips have never been included on their children's menu. Their policy is to treat children like mini adults, with half portions available of any dish off the adult menu.

All meals are home-made, and freshly prepared on site, rather than with bought in, processed ingredients. This guarantees that their food is free of troublesome additives. Long before Jamie Oliver turned the spotlight on chicken nuggets, the Trust had taken reconstituted chicken meat off the menu, and now, wherever possible, serves meat certified Freedom Food by the RSPCA. All beef is from the UK.

In line with their overall food sourcing policy, the fresh fruit and vegetables on offer is varied through the year to reflect the seasons. All properties will source as locally as possible to maximise freshness, help the local economy and reflect the distinctive character of the region as part of the visitor experience. The Trust also stocks a range of organic drinks and snacks for children's 'grazing boxes'.

Our expert nutritionist rated the Trust's menus highly for offering small portions from the adult menu; preparing food freshly on site with lower salt levels than processed food; being free of chips, low quality meat and additives; and being rich in fruit and vegetables, beneficial dairy products, vitamin A-rich eggs and filling starchy carbohydrates. To further improve these menus our nutritionist recommended supplying juice instead of squash, and breadsticks or vegetable sticks as a healthier alternative to crisps. Every opportunity should also be taken to include fruit with ice cream puddings, as this is a great way to get children appreciating fresh fruit.

### **Top of the Class 2: Center Parcs**

Center Parcs operates four village resorts in the UK, which can accommodate up to 17,000 guests at any one time for short break holidays. Each village has 11 or 12 themed restaurants, which all make half portions of main meals available to children.

Their dedicated children's menu operates a reduced salt and sugar policy. There are only two deep fried items on the standard junior meals menu (chicken nuggets and scampi), with chips as a side option alongside baked potato, rice and salad. Vegetables have been incorporated into the cottage pie, and are included in all main meals except the fish pie. All meals are served with garden peas. A selection of organic meals — meat-based, fish-based and vegetarian are available. Only British meat is served. A meal deal option, including a drink and dessert, is available with all the meals, including organic. Three out of the five desserts on offer are based around fruit.

Bottled water, milk and smoothies are available on the drinks menu, alongside organic high juice squashes and flavoured milks.

To further improve these menus, our nutritionist recommended a greater use of fresh and seasonal produce - junior meals could be served with a diverse range of fresh seasonal vegetables, and coleslaw could replace salad leaves in winter.

# Top of the class 3: Lunch boxes

London Zoo, the National History Museum, the Tower of London and the Eden Project are now offering lunch boxes for children, some of which are organic. Top prize goes to the Tower of London with its vegetable, fruit portions and pure juice to drink. An important next step for these lunch boxes will be to include more organic fresh fruit and vegetables and pure juice.

# **Appendix 2**

Narratives written by Joanna Collins and Larissa Chambers and are based on one visit to each attraction between June and July 2006

**North East** 

#### **New MetroLand**

#### Rank: 9

#### Time taken to find fruit: None found

"Europe's largest indoor funfair" is situated within Gateshead's MetroCentre. Fast food outlets in the large Food Court call on children to 'eat as much as you can' or consume 'all you can fizzibly drink'.

Rather giddy from a ride on the Wonderful Waveswinger and the proximity of the Terrific Train whizzing by, I am soon ready for a steadying sit-down drink. The search begins. Not wanting a fizzy drink or an additive-laden Fruit Shoot, I am delighted to spot signs for orange juice, and disgusted when this turns out to be concentrated orange squash at two separate outlets.

Friendliness is not the missing ingredient at MetroLand. My request for fruit at Barnaby's Deli Diner wins me a sympathetic ally. There is no fruit at MetroLand, he confides, and advises me to detour via the nearest Marks & Spencer. Later in the day, however, I am sent back in the direction of the Diner having hazarded a request for salad at another outlet. My friend greets me armed with two satsumas he has borrowed from his Dad's shopping bag, and offers me the lettuce they keep for garnish.

And this is what keeps me going. I do spot salad on a menu once, but it turns out not to be available. Healthy eating at MetroLand is restricted to a limited range of low-fat jacket potato fillings. Most food counters are characterised by chocolate bars, Nachos cabinets, ice cream and iced slush machines. The main component of all kid's meals is a reconstituted meat or fish product, routinely served with chips and a fizzy drink or 'day-glo' slush. Overeating is promoted on posters that advertise outsized 'big foot' sausages: "Big enough for two but too good to share."

Vending machines joint-owned by Lucozade and Ribena promote fruit-flavoured Lucozade products while water is unavailable either vended or for free. It is only when a fruit juice sign finally speaks the truth late in the day, and a lady pours some welcome Asda apple juice into my Coca Cola cup, that New MetroLand scores its single point in our survey.

#### Yorkshire and the Humber

#### Flamingo Land

Rank: 9

Time taken to find fruit: None found

Flamingo Land has it all: a Theme Park, a Zoo complete with flamingos, and a Holiday Village, all in one site in north Yorkshire, attracting 1.4 million visitors last year. All, that is, except anything healthy to snack on or make a light lunch of.

The most frustrating thing about Flamingo Land is that most healthy food and drink is out of bounds to any one who doesn't want to sit down for a formal meal in a restaurant. On the day I visit, Tasty Jackets is closed, which could have offered me an alternative. For families wanting to fill their day with as many of the rides and attractions as possible, taking time out to sit down in a restaurant will not always top the list of priorities. Perhaps, even, not ideal, when the Velocity Motorbike Launch rollercoaster is going to launch you and your children from 0-100 kilometres an hour in just 2.8 seconds. Café Metropolis is the only place on site that offers healthy drinks and vegetables to children; but it was the third restaurant in a row to turn me away because we can't face a full meal. After some considerable searching, my grumpy hot children and I eventually found the MetroDiner where we could buy a jacket potato with salad and some milk.

It is a hot day when I visit, and all these rides, and my excited children, are thirsty work. There is no free water to be found anywhere, however, and I struggle right across the site before I find a vending machine that serves real water rather than the new "Lucozade Hydro Fitness" version.

Fresh juicy fruit appears out of the question too, the lady in Chicken Shack informs me that "fruit is only at the supermarket." Apparently, this is reserved for the use of people staying at the Holiday Village. Pure fruit juice appears not to be an option either, although 'juice drink' options like 5-Alive and FruitShoots are common.

London

#### The Tower of London

Rank: 2

Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour

Towards the top in the *Which? Day Chipper* survey, The Tower continues to guard its healthy eating reputation well. As a general rule, its strength lies in the two main outlets, the New Armouries Restaurant and the Tower Café, which both provide a good range of healthy drinks and home made healthy food. Buoyed up by this, I caught myself feeling rather let down by the Well Tower and Gallery Kiosks. Their fare is confined to hot dogs, a limited range of low fat sandwiches, sweets, biscuits, crisps, cakes, Pepsi, Fruit Shoots and Tropical Ice Drinks. The latter were on promotion via a Tower of London branded 'Free Sports Cup'. One stand serves freshly squeezed home-made lemonade, a refreshing alternative to Pepsi.

The New Armouries Restaurant does an excellent job of getting a number of healthy snacks into the hands and lunchboxes of children. It neatly ended my fruit search, by presenting platters of green and red apples, bananas and oranges at the entrance, alongside an array of apparently homemade cakes.

The children's main menu could do more to incorporate vegetables, and cannot be deemed particularly healthy unless a parent chooses to steer their child via the salad bar too. A plus is the fruit salad, which comes in smaller pots for children at less than half the price of the adult portion. Pure orange juice, and semi-skimmed milk cartons and traditional ginger beer are available alongside Pepsi and other soft drinks.

The Tower Café proudly advertises its home baking and freshly made tempting sandwiches, alongside Whippy ice cream and 'ice drinks'. A nice touch is the little pots of yoghurt available with various combinations of muesli, banana, honey and brownie chunks and bags of dried apple slices and root vegetable crisps alongside jelly babies and fairy cakes at the tills.

The Tower's Kids Box - available from both main outlets - is reasonably priced and includes enough healthy options to make up a decent balanced lunch with most combinations of five items chosen from the Armouries' menu of eight. These include a finger roll with Marmite, Dairylea or Babybel; Mini Cheddars; a Mr Juicy carton; a Penguin biscuit; assorted flavours of jelly; a raisin bag; a bag of four cherry tomatoes; and a mini cake bag. The Tower Café adds a basket of fruit, Walkers Crisps and FruitShoots into the mix. Since much of the food is made freshly each day, children's sandwich fillings could be improved by offering more/fresh alternatives to processed cheese

As a parent bringing my child here, I'd appreciate a bit more effort on the hot food range and in the snacking kiosks, but in general I'd feel relaxed enough about the healthy eating situation to enjoy an excellent day out.

London

#### **Madame Tussauds**

Rank: 6

#### Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour 5 mins

The queue is mighty, and the anticipated thirst of visitors on a hot London day is met with drinks vending machines at every other bend. Although there are no healthy juice options alongside the soft drink bottles, there is at least the choice of mineral water.

Given that Jamie Oliver is here in person — grouped with Churchill, Adolf Hitler and Elizabeth I - there is surprisingly little imagination applied to the food on offer in the kiosks and shop. Cadbury's chocolate, sweets and popcorn are the things to fill up on here, and the only option alongside sweetened fizzy drinks is sugar-free Minute Maid Froot Refresh, which has more fruit content than many juice drinks on offer but also contains additives.

The shop operates along a theme of BIG. Massive bars of chocolate and lollies sit alongside super sticks of rock, and the gummy sweet snakes are branded the world's largest. Mega Buckets are supplied for kids to fill with over 1kg of sweets, and pre-prepared packets of chews and candies weigh in at 350g.

The best decision we make here is to join Pavarotti at the Costa Coffee outlet, which goes some way to redeeming the day by supplying all-fruit smoothies and freshly squeezed orange or apple juice. There are several healthy lunch options for me to turn to, including wraps and green salads, but these are all rather adult-oriented and there's no food on offer here targeted at children. That said, an imaginative parent would be able to share, and to tempt their child with the lovely looking fruit salad on offer.

The worst decision I make here is to drift into the Chamber of Horrors. This mixes even less well with food than the worst skydrop ride at any of the theme parks.

Near the exit, as I prepare to escape, I come across the *Refresh at Madame Tussauds* café, heavily branded with corporate partners Coca Cola, Nestle and KP. I spy some brown bread sandwiches on offer, but all meal deals come with crisps and soft drinks. Finally, as if you were in need of more junk food options, Mario's German Bratwurst burger van is lurking directly in front of the exit.

Not an unrelenting chamber of horrors this, but there is no healthy food intended for children, and a quite stupendous load of sugar.

London

#### **London Zoo**

#### Rank: 3

#### Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour 15 mins

Head straight for the Oasis Café. It's the leading food outlet at the Zoo, and as noted by the 2004 Which? Report it literally is an oasis in a disappointing desert of junk food kiosks.

For one thing it is the only place where I could get some free water. Some other enterprising Mums tipped me off that I could get a water bottle filled up there, as I stood groaning by yet another waterless vending machine.

Alongside water, the Oasis Café has an excellent selection of healthy drinks, including kid-sized all-fruit smoothies, cartons of milk, and cartons of fair trade pure fruit juice. They also sell a range of baguettes, sandwiches and ready made or made to order salads, and soup of the day, which was a tempting tomato and basil — all made fresh on site. Hot meals are available with a side order of vegetables like broccoli and included a healthy Thai green curry and rice option and their barbecue is organic. Organic yoghurts and apples are prominently displayed along the counter shelves. Fair-trade cereal and fruit Geobars are the till-side tempters.

At the designated children's counter 'Feeding Time at the Zoo' children are offered a 100% organic lunch box, which includes cheese and herb curly puffs, raisins, orange drink, chocolate cake and a children's sandwich I wonder if there is more they can do to increase the fruit and vegetable content. The Fish and Chip shop has taken an important step by opting for Marine Stewardship Council certified hoki instead of the conventional overfished cod or haddock. Introducing kids to battered hoki as a treat on a day out makes it more likely that they'll accept the more fishy flavour back home too. Ideally vegetables would be made part of the meal, rather than just chips, although couscous and salad options are on the menu.

The most disappointing find at London Zoo was the meal deal culture at kiosks, which positively discouraged healthier options. Parents buying Rollover Hot Dogs, or a family box of Dinky Donuts, at the Aquarium kiosk for instance, could choose "any drink excluding mineral water" free, thus promoting fizzy drinks over water. Kiosk staff generally responded to requests for fruit juice by picking up a bottle of additive-laden FruitShoot. Shops, too, are laden with confectionery and Walls ice creams, and stock no healthy snacks or drinks except mineral water.

The overall verdict? Shows promise, but must try harder. I could not help thinking that the positive food culture of the Oasis Café and the progressive decision on hoki are being undermined by its snack food and vending.

**North West** 

# Camelot Theme Park Rank: 9

Time taken to find fruit: None found

Camelot carries the dubious distinction of having been awarded the lowest score in the 2004 *Which?* report *Day Chipper*. Given the profile of the school meals scandal since, I had assumed that such notoriety might have prompted Camelot to follow the advice of nutritionists and make a few fundamental changes.

Not a bit of it. Instead, the number of hot dog stands has doubled. The five 'magical lands', which make up the magical kingdom of Camelot, all share the same mundane set of junk food choices. Not one of them can conjure up any fruit or free water.

Working our way towards rides like the Dungeons of Doom, it was no mean feat to distract my impatient child from the candy around the till or the vending machines selling every fizzy drink but no water. Having partially succeeded, a Rollover Hot Dog stand, selling only hot dogs, Walls ice cream, candyfloss and popcorn confronts us at the indoors soft playground for children.

We head up the Knight's Valley to Merlin's Playland and the Land of the Brave, ready to choose between the "mouth watering food choices in the fabulous Coca-Cola Food Court". Between two ceiling-high Coca-Cola bottles I find a row of food outlets without one healthy drink or snack between them. 'Hunger busting kid's meals' consist of burgers, sausage or fishcakes and deep fried chicken or fried vegetable and cheese nuggets with fries and fizzy drinks. "How's that for tasty value?" the signs insist.

Mercifully, I manage to manoeuvre my child to the Enchanted Glade picnic area, which, with lots of picnic tables and bins, is Camelot's saving grace. I was not alone in thinking so. Masses of families had gathered to eat their own healthier - if slightly warm and squashed - snacks from home.

So Camelot retains the title of worst day out on offer in the UK when it comes to food choices. Sadly, this is no longer such a distinction. It is forced to share the bottom slot with the equally dismal New MetroLand.

**North West** 

### **Blackpool Pleasure Beach**

#### Rank: 8

#### Time taken to find fruit: 3 hours 45 mins

Anywhere that brags on its website about having "the largest Burger King restaurant in the UK" was perhaps never going to score too highly on healthy food culture. But at least there was the promise of a few alternative options. For its 6.2 million visitors, I was promised, "Pleasure Beach offers an amazing choice of food."

Choice is certainly something that Blackpool does well when it comes to rides. There are over 125 of them, brightly branded with the logos and colours of the food and drink giants. The iconic red rollercoaster is now the PepsiMax Big One, competing for fame with the Irn Bru Revolution and the children's area, Beaver Creek is loaded with promotion for Robinson's Fruit Shoot ride.

All this branding mania gives a clue to the staple drinks on offer to children. Kid's were only ever offered fizzy drinks with their meals, and Pepsi super tube 'yards' are all the rage to wash down the ubiquitous 'bucket of chips'.

The find-a-fruit challenge kept me busy for a record 3 hours and 45 minutes, despite asking for guidance from any number of uncertain staff. When I finally struck lucky it was in the Oyster Bar, where melon balls were available with prawns and champagne. Apparently, one of the 35 outlets I visited does usually have a fruit bowl, but this had run out — evidence of other despairing fruit-hungry individuals on the prowl.

Frustratingly, not one of the plentiful sweet dispensers dotted about the site had been given over to nuts instead. The Magnolia Bar promised fresh seasonal salads but it was closed, so I could only imagine what they could offer.

#### **Alton Towers**

Rank: 6

Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour 5 mins

Alongside its fun super-modern rides, like Air, which has me walking on air for ages afterwards, Alton Towers also has the advantage of being set in magnificent grounds, making for a potentially great all-round family day out. Unfortunately a healthy food and drink culture is the missing ingredient.

Right at the entrance I almost fell over a sandwich board which promises you free fizzy drink refills all day if you buy a Coca-Cola Capsule. Refreshment kiosks everywhere turn out to offer nothing refreshing at all, only salt and sugar overload via 'donuts', crisps, sugary popcorn, sweets and slush drinks. The shops are no better for healthy snacking. Once you've been to one, you've seen them all: a 'The Sweet Shop' island in the middle pushes pick-n-mix and Mega Tubs of jelly sweets, Coca-Cola fridge's and Walls ice-cream freezers, banks of Cadbury's chocolate and walls of Maynards and Basset's confectionery. After all this, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the 'Forbidden Treats' outlet might be hiding some subversive summer fruits and yoghurt, with a secret sprinkling of seeds and honey. Strangely, it simply serves up the same range of junk food and confectionery as every other kiosk and tuck-shop on site.

Branding is very close to the heart of the Alton Towers experience, in common with all its sister attractions in the Tussauds Group which share the same set of corporate food and drink partners. Even my beloved Air ride is conspicuously sponsored by Cadbury's Heroes.

While it's very much a kiosk culture, the restaurants do offer a haven of sorts and a degree of food choice. Down Towers Street, the Tower Restaurant and Corner Coffee both have orange and apple juice — though neither is marked on the menu — and between them they can also offer wraps, salads, soup and sandwiches. Ironically, it is the whopper MacDonalds on the child-oriented Cred Street that is among the leaders, offering carrot sticks instead of fries, organic semi-skimmed milk and fruit juice instead of Coke, and a 'fruit bag' as options within its Happy Meal. More disturbingly the family meal deals on offer lack any potions of fruit, vegetables (unless you count deep fried onion rings), or healthy drinks.

As recommended by *Day Chipper*, Eastern Express remains far and away the best place to eat, with a range of curries and daal, including vegetable options, and salad stuffed wraps. There are also bowls of fresh fruit on the counters.

**East of England** 

#### **Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach**

Rank: 8

Time taken to find fruit: None found

"Have you got any apples please?" The ladies in the cafés at Pleasure Beach look at you as if it's a trick question. "Noooo, no, there's none at Pleasure Beach". And so it proves. There is no fresh fruit on site. There is no free water anywhere, no healthy drinks in the vending machines, and only one option of peas in the children's meals and no real attempt to encourage any form of healthy eating.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Need something tantalising for your taste buds? Then look no further and head straight for the Pleasure Beach!" the signs promise. In the 'Wizard of Dogs' we found chips and dips, hot dogs, burgers and a choice of bacon and egg, bacon, or egg in your baguette. Children's offers added chicken nuggets and 'golden whales' into the mix, and came with chips and fizzy drinks every time. Only in the sit-down restaurant there gave the option of baked beans or peas as well. Only the chance find of fruit juice cartons late in the day at a burger stand rescued Great Yarmouth from scoring only one point in our survey and joining the junk food villains.

**South East** 

#### Legoland, Windsor

Rank: 3

Time taken to find fruit: 35 mins

Legoland is a small child's paradise. It is also starting to get the building blocks in place to provide healthy eating choices. In stark contrast to the majority of attractions we visited, the healthy choices are there to be found for both adults and children. Johnson's freshly squeezed orange juice - five oranges in a little bottle - is available at four of the main outlets.

It only took half an hour to find a piece of fresh fruit, for instance, in the Pit Stop Café, where families can rest near the entrance and enjoy the view of Legoland stretching out before them as an adventure still to be had. The downside is that the good stuff is largely confined to the cafes and restaurants, and gets much harder to find in the kiosks and vending machines. Fruit isn't really a snacking option yet, although I stumbled on pints of strawberries and mixed fruits at a couple of cafes, which showed what tempting offers these could be.

A real plus was the presence of drinking water fountains at child's height alongside the adult ones outside every toilet block. This was just as well, though, because the vending machines are empty of healthy drinks and heavy with Coca-Cola products and branding. Legoland souvenir cups subsidise refills of soft drinks undermining the draw of free water.

All children's meals now come with a 'Choose the Healthy Option', which replaces chips with carrot sticks, or sometimes a jacket potato, and there is a choice of a Milk Carton or 330ml Still Water alongside a kid's size soft drink. The Pit Stop café offer banana with custard or little pots of grapes alongside the standard jelly and doughnuts on the kid's treats menu.

There is still a way to go for Legoland though. Parents on a mission to find the healthy options for their children will be safer in their hands than at any of the lower-ranking attractions in our survey. But while the healthy choices are there, the staple and most widely promoted fare - including the main options in the children's meals - are still reconstituted, breaded, battered and fried.

**South East** 

### **Chessington World of Adventures, Surrey**

Rank: 5

Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour

Mass advertising and promotion of junk food and drinks from the Tussaud's group. Limited choice of healthy items in a couple of cafes and fast food chain outlets. Family Meal Deals and a vast majority of children's meals lacked fruit, vegetables or healthy drinks. Mass advertising for Coca-Coca refill capsules and 3 for 2 offers on bottles of fizzy pop and the only healthy item available in any smaller outlets or shops was water (Fruit juice stall closed).

Wales

#### **Oakwood Theme Park**

#### Rank: 7

#### Time taken to find fruit: 1 hour 10 minutes

The best thing about Oakwood is that unlike most theme parks, you can tell where you are in the world, in Wales. Y Bwthyn (the shop) sells local confectionery as gifts, and the Dairy Ice Shack advertises Upton Farm dairy ice cream from here in Pembrokeshire.

Hungry on arrival, my family and I alight from the little train at the Whistle Stop station, and are forced to go via a tempting sweet shop en route to The Restaurant. The children's meals here are advertised with posters of chip mountains so we set off on a long expedition in search of something healthier.

Staff confidently direct us to the Acorn Tea Rooms for some fruit and, they do, technically 'sell fruit'. It comes in the form of a single little bag containing approximately half a sliced apple and five grapes. I buy the last one available, and in one happy mouthful my child deprives all other visitors of any fruit for the rest of the day.

After that we fail to find anything to snack on other than donut dippers, popcorn and candyfloss. Meal deals for children here seem to centre on a fried reconstituted meat or fish products served with chips and an additive-laden 5-Alive.

To exploit the only advantage of empty bellies, we go on every white-knuckle ride in the place, running from Hydro's 45ft splash to the acclaimed wooden roller coaster Megaphobia. Fabulous fun. Afterwards we recover on a lovely verandah overlooking the lake at the Smugglers Island Bar. Staff gamely try to concoct a glass of pure fruit juice, but the combined contents of the only two cartons of juice on site fail to fill it, and they offer a bottle of Schweppes flavoured Deuce drink to top me up. Spotting the unwanted Aspartame and Acesulfame K in the ingredient list, I decline.

Sadly, a pack lunch and a cool box of drinks are still pretty essential if you want to leave Oakwood feeling refreshed in body as well as mind.

# Appendix 4 - Ranking

#### Access to free fresh drinking water

- 3 Widely available.
- 1 Only available once.
- 0 None available.

#### Availability of healthy drinks in vending machines

- 4 Good selection of healthy drinks available throughout the site.
- 2 Water always available.
- 1 Water available infrequently.
- 0 Not even water available.

# Availability of healthy cold drinks (milk, pure juices and or smoothies, excluding water) in shops, kiosks, restaurants or cafes

- 5 Good choice widely available.
- 3 Good choice but restricted to larger outlets.
- 2 Limited choice in a few larger outlets.
- 1 Poor choice and hard to find.
- 0 None available.

#### **Fresh Fruit**

- 4 Good choice widely available.
- 2 Only available in some main outlets.
- 1 Rare and difficult to find.
- 0 None found.

#### Children's meals and lunch boxes

- 4 Children's meal both hot and cold always includes fruit, vegetable portions and a healthy drink.<sup>5</sup>
- 3 Children's meal generally had **all** of the following fruit, vegetable portions and a healthy drink or ½ portions of good quality (options of fruit and vegetable and healthy drink) adult meals encouraged.
- 2 Children's meals generally had **at least one or more** of the following (a portion of fruit and of vegetables and a healthy drink).
- 1 Children's meals occasionally have some healthy items (fruit, vegetable portions and a healthy drink).
- 0 No meal included any fruit, vegetables portions or a healthy drink.

#### **Food Promotion**

- 5 Actively promotes good and healthy food choices throughout.
- 3 Beginnings of good food choices in main outlets but smaller outlets need to be improved.
- 2 Junk food dominant but pockets of good practice.
- 1 Junk food dominant throughout.
- 0 Actively promotes and encourages consumption of large quantities of junk food throughout.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The research took the School Food Trust's definition of a healthy drink - these are milk or yoghurt drinks with less than 5% sugar. Pure fruit juices and fruit smoothies

# **Appendix 4 Tourist Attractions Contacts:**

#### The New MetroLand

39 Garden Walk MetroCentre Gateshead NE11 9XY

Telephone: (0191) 4932048

Marketing Office Direct: (0191) 4600184 Email: enquiries@MetroLand.uk.com

#### Flamingo Land Ltd

Kirby Misperton

Malton

North Yorkshire YO17 6UX

Telephone: 0870 752 8000 Fax: 01653 668 280 Email: info@flamingoland.co.uk

#### The Tussauds Group

# (Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington & Madame Tussauds)

Silverglade Leatherhead Road Chessington Surrey

KT9 2QL

t: +44 (0)870 429 2300 f: +44 (0)870 429 5500

#### **Madame Tussauds**

Marylebone Road

London

Tel: +44 (0) 870 999 0046 Email: csc@madame-tussauds.com

#### **Alton Towers**

Alton Towers Press Site: <a href="http://press.altontowers.com">http://press.altontowers.com</a> This site is for Media use only. To gain an access password please call 01538 704015

#### **Chessington World of Adventures**

Maria Hamilton - PR Manager 01372 731 528

<u>press.office@chessington.co.uk</u> Amanda Jacobs - PR Assistant

01372 731 589

press.office@chessington.co.uk

### Thorpe Park Press Office

Tel: 01932 577144

Email: <a href="mailto:press.office@thorpe-park.co.uk">press.office@thorpe-park.co.uk</a> Nancy Edwards - PR Manager

Gareth Arculus - PR & Marketing Executive

#### London Zoo – ZSL

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) press office London Zoo

If you are a member of the media and have a media enquiry related to ZSL please contact:

Joanna Phillips on 020 7449 6241 or

joanna.phillips@zsl.org

Joanna Green on 020 7449 6236 or

joanna.green@zsl.org

Emma Kenly on 020 7449 6280 or

emma.kenly@zsl.org

Alice Henchley on 020 7449 6361 or

alice.henchley@zsl.org

Claire Hodgkinson on 020 7449 6288 or

claire.hodgkinson@zsl.org Telephone: 07889 043843

(Preferred method of enquiry is email)

#### **Tower of London**

Royal Armouries H M Tower of London LONDON

EC3N 4AB

Tel: +44 (0)20 7480 6358

#### **Camelot Theme Park**

Park Hall Road Charnock Richard Chorley Lancashire

School Visits Tel: 01257 455 030 Kingarthur@camelotthemepark.co.uk

#### **Blackpool Pleasure Beach**

Marketing Department 525 Ocean Boulevard Blackpool Lancashire

FY4 1EZ

Enquiries Hotline: 0870 444 5566

#### **Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach**

South Beach Parade Great Yarmouth Norfolk

NR30 3EH

Telephone: 01493 844585

Email: enquiries@pleasure-beach.co.uk

Marketing / Public Relations - Owen Branch or Richard

Hardy <u>—gypbeach@aol.com</u>

#### **Legoland Windsor**

pressoffice@legoland.co.uk

#### **Eden Project**

David Rowe - Head of Press and PR 01726 811901

drowe@edenproject.com

#### Oakwood Theme Park

Canaston Bridge NARBERTH Pembrokeshire SA67 8DE

Telephone: 01834 861889 or 01834 891373 Email: info@oakwoodthemepark.co.uk

# **Appendix 5: Visitor Numbers**

	ATTRACTION NAME	TOTAL OF VISITORS
1	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	6,200,000 people <sup>1</sup>
2	Tower of London	1,940,856 people <sup>1</sup>
3	Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach	1,500,000 people <sup>1</sup>
4	Legoland Windsor	1,453,000 people <sup>1</sup>
5	Flamingo Land Ltd	1,393,300 people <sup>1</sup>
6	Eden Project	1,200,000 people <sup>3</sup>
7	London Zoo	891,028 people <sup>1</sup>
8	The New MetroLand	810,000 people <sup>1</sup>
9	Oakwood Theme Park	390,000 people⁴
10	Camelot Theme Park	190,000 people <sup>2</sup>
	TOTAL	15,968,184 visitors
(A	The Tussauds Group Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington & Madame Tussauds)	No info available

Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions 2002, sponsored by the UK Statutory Tourist Boards, available on <a href="https://www.staruk.org.uk">www.staruk.org.uk</a>
 Camelot's "student pack", copy obtained in August 2006
 Stats courtesy of David Rowe - Head of Press and PR at Eden Project
 Visits to Tourist Attractions 2005 from the Welsh Tourist Board – available on <a href="https://www.visitWales.co.uk">www.visitWales.co.uk</a>