

Real food for thought

YOUNG GOURMETS GO TO WORK



A question of taste . . . Kieron Barry takes a bite and considers his verdict.

IT could have been a job for Egon Ronay as fast food went on trial yesterday.

But a roadside restaurant chain bravely decided to call in the real experts.

With tiny taste buds tingling, nine hungry children were invited to give their frank and fearless verdicts on meals dished up for the youngsters.

And they were ruthless in their honesty.

Their task was to give a gourmet's decision on straight chips v. crinkle cut chips, fish fingers v. 'fun fishes', pancakes with maple syrup v. pancakes with filling, strawberry milkshake v. chocolate milkshake, and pork sausages v. beef sausages.

The nine, aged between seven and 13, were selected after a mass questionnaire was circulated by the Happy Eater group. What's your

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favourite food, they asked. Chips was the overall reply, but the firm wanted something more specific.

Yesterday's tasting was at the Y Hotel, belonging to the YMCA, in London's Tottenham Court Road, the chain's only central London outlet.

Treat

Company chairman Mr Michael Pickard was there to see fair play.

After each course the children were asked to put it all in print, ticking boxes marked: 'delicious, good, all right, not very good.'

The youngest judge, seven-year-old Keiron Barry, of Cranleigh, Surrey, didn't like the pork sausages. But the

banana-filled pancake went down a treat.

'Very, very good,' he enthused mid-mouthful.

Nicholas Morley, aged eight, from Woking, Surrey, also knew what he liked. 'Fun Fish is better than fish fingers—because they taste fishier. Beef sausages were a change—because we only have pork at home.'

He welcomed the opportunity to give his opinion. 'Grown ups always give you what you don't want. If you ask for fish fingers they tell you: "You'd rather have pizza wouldn't you?" And you wouldn't.'

The firm kept the verdicts of the judges to themselves. However, a team of company employees will get the same menu in about a fortnight and will be asked to evaluate the children's views.

The real Egon Ronay had the final word last night. 'I think this panel of children is a wonderful idea.'