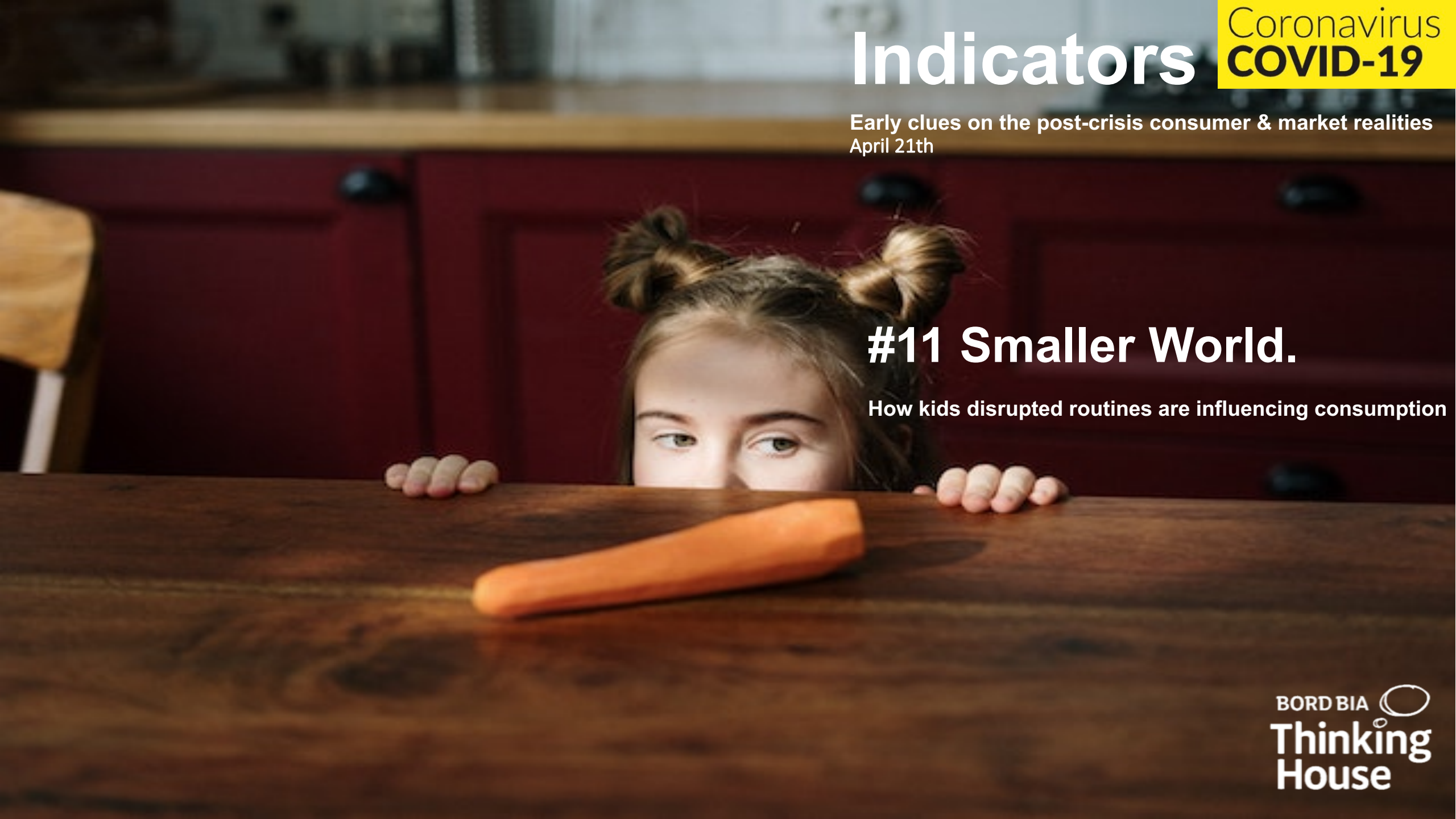

Indicators

Coronavirus COVID-19

Early clues on the post-crisis consumer & market realities
April 21th

#11 Smaller World.

How kids disrupted routines are influencing consumption

BORD BIA Thinking House

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According to the United Nations, more than 1.2 billion children are at home as a result of Covid 19.

The ebb and flow of their daily lives has come to a stand still. Playdates, family gatherings, football matches, dancing classes have all grinded to a halt. Children crave **routines** and routines as they know it have had to be rebuilt together with parents, as everyone learns how to put a new structure in place that makes life as normal as possible.

The **resilience** of children is being tested like never before but they are learning about peace keeping, IT management, culinary skills to name but a few. While their lives might be different it is also giving them a chance to dial back the pace and play in a more simple way while spend quality time with families.

As children's routines have been disrupted, so too has their consumption habits and those of their parents. We have some clues as to the changed behaviours through phenomena like Mindless Eating and Partitioning.

It's a complex topic to cover in just one indicator that we call SMALLER WORLD.

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We know from our very first indicator – **Shielding** – that consumers are increasingly concerned with immunity and are adopting foods that help protect their health.

According to Behaviour and Attitudes (Food Purchase Survey) over one third of consumers have been purchasing ‘more nutritious foods’ since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Equally, parents have been encouraging children to embrace hand hygiene. The Happy Handwashing Song has over 5 million views, while in Hanoi they have created a hand-wash dance challenge which has racked up more than 2 million views on Tik-Tok.

48%

of Irish adults are very concerned about the health risks to their children as a result of Covid-19.

Source: Bord Bia Indicators Barometor

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The Baking Bandwagon

The **bandwagon effect** is a phenomenon whereby the rate of uptake of beliefs, ideas, fads and trends increases the more that they have already been adopted by others. A prime example of a bandwagon effect in action during lockdown has been been parents baking with their kids.

With 48% of Irish parents very concerned about the impact of their children's education as a result of Covid 19, they are looking for new ways to engage them and baking lends itself as a way to learn whilst having fun.

Banana bread is the number one favourite to bake for now, tipping over 1.4 million instagram posts. In Ireland according to Google Trends, searches for banana bread went up 77% in one month, and 54% worldwide, resulting in a recent piquant quote on Twitter: "Is Covid-19 sponsored by banana bread?"

64%

of Irish parents are having more quality time with their families now as a result of Covid 19

Source: Bord Bia Indicators Barometor

57%

of Irish parents are teaching or facilitating learning at home more now as a result of Covid 19

Source: Bord Bia Indicators Barometor

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Broken Habits

Habit is an automatic and rigid pattern of behaviour in specific situations, which is usually acquired through repetition and develops through associative learning. For children, some pretty fundamental consumption habits have been completely disrupted.

Lunch during lock down has is a dramatic shift from the norm. **Status Quo Bias** is evident when people prefer things to stay the same by doing nothing - in the lockdown world the status quo of kids lunchboxes has disappeared. With 54% of lunches eaten out of home prior to lock down (Kantar World Panel), half the population are being confronted with a whole new lunchtime.

Myopic Bias is the tendency to focus on the present or immediate rather than the near or far future. In the world of lockdowns this means parents can give in to whims of pester power.

This focus on the here and now means often looking in the fridge and just working with what's there, but also allows children to experiment with lunches that are less typical to school from beans on toast to scrambled egg, to making sandwiches perhaps using left overs from last nights dinner.

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Mitigating Against Broken Habits

The downside of this disruption to kids Habits is a potential over-consumption of treats. The focus on the here and now, **Myopic Bias**, plays hand-in-hand with a phenomenon knows as **Mindless Eating**.

The expression “Mindless Eating” has been coined by the eating behaviour expert Brian Wansink. It refers to the finding that various cues associated with food non-consciously affect the amount and quality of people’s consumption. Cues often serve as benchmarks in the environment. Cues may include serving containers, packaging, people, labels and atmospheric factors.

Children are only human, believe it or not. They are just as attracted to the colourful packaging of sweet treats in the kitchen as the rest of us. Their disrupted routines only exacerbates mindless eating for amongst children and parents are finding treats a quick way to “keep the peace” at-home. Some 30% of Irish parents are having more periods of family discord or tension now as a result of Covid-19 (BBIB).

One strategy parents may be adopting to mitigate against mindless eating is **Partitioning**. This is the behavioural science insight that underpins ‘funsize’ treats. Partitioning, in theory at least, reveals that rate of consumption can be decreased by physically partitioning food into smaller units e.g. cookies wrapped.

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Dinner Time's New Routine

Another Habit that has been broken over the course of the lockdown is the tendency for consumers to have fragmented family meals. This is quite a shift from our normal busy lives and further highlights the family quality time that is being experienced during this crisis.

23% of Irish adults are learning to cook from recipes now (BBIB) and children are in many cases getting a chance to put anything they have learnt to the test as part of the weekly routine.

In the interest of harmony, a key focus for the family is the creation of a meal everybody loves, with 46% saying they have been creating more tasty meals (B&A) and 27% of Irish adults are choosing familiar favourite foods more now as a result of the Covid-19 response (BBIB).



41%

of Irish families eating together more now as a result of the Covid-19 response

Source: Bord Bia Indicators Barometor

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New Routines For Breakfast

With the morning commute on-hold, the typical rush hour in the morning is now out of the way. So, presumably, we are all taking more time over breakfast?

While sales of cereal surged with **Stockpiling** in March, as we move through the crisis in the interest of avoiding ground hog day, we are may see more creativity over breakfast to keep the little people engaged.

Pandemic Pancakes are trending; another Bandwagon Effect.

Perhaps the more ‘hidden’ behaviour to watch at this occasion will be around **Shielding** and how consumers attempt to protect their families. Immunity boosting foods from probiotics to vitamin c enhanced foods for family may become more of a feature over time.

37%

of under 35 year old adults are now eating healthier for improved immunity as a result of Covid 19

Source: Bord Bia Indicators Barometor

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Implications for Irish Food & Beverages

- Brands can help parents ‘protect’ their children through healthy eating options – particularly immunity
- New habits are emerging in the home – brands can find a new home in children’s new routines
- New formats (e.g. funsize) can provide ‘partitioning’ solutions for parents under-pressure for excess treats
- Brands can enjoy growth with the next ‘bandwagon’ effect – as parents seeks to fill time for kids

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