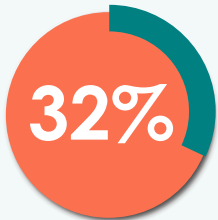
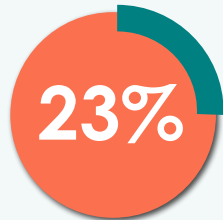


Parents Balance **Cost, Convenience and Health** in School Lunch Decisions

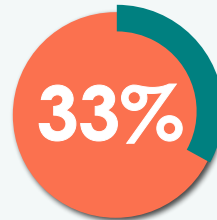
As families head back to school, parents weigh a mix of practical and personal factors when deciding how their children (ages 12 and under) will eat lunch:



of parents rely on school-provided lunches.



pack lunches from home every day.



take a hybrid approach.



When asked why, parents cited a variety of drivers:



Value

40% say school lunches are more convenient, and **35%** choose them because they're cheaper.



Health

36% believe home-packed meals are healthier.



Taste

47% say their child simply prefers the taste of what's made at home, while **21%** say their child prefers the taste of school lunches.



Culture

30% of parents pick school meals because "it's what the other students are doing," and **16%** prioritize lunches from home that better align with cultural or religious traditions.

Parents are making choices at the intersection of **cost, convenience, taste, health and culture**—the very same factors shaping the broader food landscape. As we look ahead to [Meals 2026: The Evolution of Prep to Plate](#), these decision-making patterns highlight how food providers, brands, and retailers can better support families with solutions that balance **affordability, wellness, and personalization**.