

# McDonald's lets 6 moms tell it like it is



Joanna Canizares, left, of Miami, and Gilda McHenry, of Downingtown, Pa., visit a test kitchen at McDonald's home office in Oak Brook, Ill. They are two of the six moms selected to blog about the chain's nutrition.

By Bruce Horovitz  
USA TODAY

McDonald's (MCD) is about to give six moms something no outsider in the USA has ever had before: inside access.

In a bid to convince health-conscious moms that its food is nutritious, McDonald's says it will bring the group of mothers fully inside the company. The moms will visit restaurants, processing plants, orchards and test kitchens.

Beginning June 20, the moms will keep an online journal for roughly three months about what they see — and how they feel about it. The journal will be posted on the McDonald's website and, the company hopes, read by other moms. McDonald's insists it will have no input on what the women write.

"We've made a concerted effort to start talking to moms," says Molly Starmann, director of U.S. marketing. "We know she is the gatekeeper in family dining."

Women's quality concerns have been McDonald's Achilles' heel for years. Just 48% of women say McDonald's food quality is "excellent" or "very good" compared with an industry average of 68%, according to a 2006 phone and online survey of 14,000 women

by Sandelman & Associates, a research firm.

Marketing expert Dori Molitor says a journal makes sense in theory because women, especially moms, tend to get information and form opinions by talking with other women.

But the CEO of WomanWise, a consultancy specializing in marketing to women, is surprised McDonald's is doing it. "This has potential for being very risky. They must have a lot of confidence in their food channel."

McDonald's dubbed the program Mom's Quality Correspondents. The moms were picked from 4,000 applicants by Arc Worldwide, a promotions specialist.

They aren't being paid, though McDonald's pays for their travel. They got laptop computers for the program that they will be allowed to keep.

The moms, who are ages 35 to 42, all have at least one child at home. To be picked they also had to be at least occasional McDonald's customers. The women will not appear in any McDonald's ads, Starmann says.

The women will be journaling — not blogging — says Starmann, meaning consumer responses to their comments will not be posted on the site. But the six mothers are free to respond to consumers or to post comments on other blogs, she says. They also will appear in videos at [www.mcdonaldsmom.com](http://www.mcdonaldsmom.com).

Joanna Canizares, a Miami postal worker, is one of the panelists. She takes her boys to McDonald's about twice a week, but she worries about trans fats, she says, because her 8-year-old son is "addicted" to Chicken McNuggets.

Canizares says she knows nuggets may not be the ideal food, but "it's the lesser of two evils" because her son sometimes refuses to eat anything else.

"It's better than eating nothing — and at least it has some protein."