



Staying Strong with Family Meals

Review of National Family Meals Month™
and Family Meals Movement Results

JANUARY 2021



If hindsight is said to be 20/20, it is now crystal clear that the year 2020 was filled with uncertainty and difficult moments for all populations around the world—perhaps more than any other year in our living history.

While there were very few immediate remedies for the spectrum of problems caused by a global pandemic, there was one particular activity that kept us connected and helped to keep us strong—family meals.



THE DAWN OF MONTH TO MOVEMENT



It was already apparent as 2020 began that this was the year that National Family Meals Month would officially grow into a Family Meals Movement.

Six previous years of skyrocketing success demonstrated that consumers, retailers, suppliers and community collaborators embraced the encouragement of family meals far beyond one celebratory month. The FMI Foundation determined that September would remain a focus of activations but that the timing was right to fuel year-long behavior change with an ongoing movement.

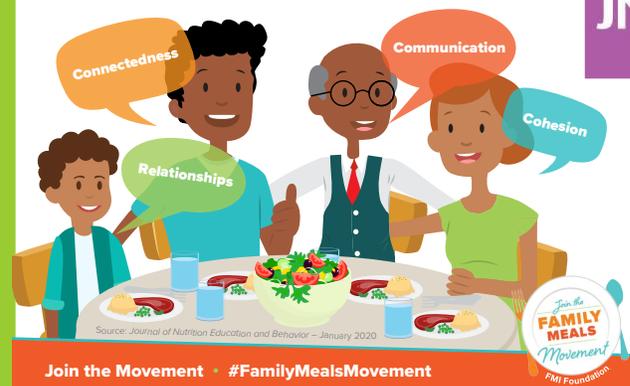
COMPELLING NEWS—SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

The year started strong with the most comprehensive research to date validating the value of family meals.

A new study published in *The Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (JNEB) built upon years of previous research studies and demonstrated that more frequent family meals were associated with better dietary outcomes and family functioning outcomes. In short (and at last), we could prove definitively that frequency of family meals improves fruit and vegetable consumption AND makes families stronger!

FAMILY MEALS MAKE FAMILIES STRONGER

The most comprehensive study to date proves that **family dynamics improve with the frequency of family meals.**



SHIFT IN MESSAGING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

When COVID-19 made the world as we knew it come to a grinding halt, the family meal landscape changed dramatically.

Family meals became a new normal out of necessity since everyone was staying home. Families were redefined based on living arrangements. And meals together were redefined based on technology allowing people to “share meals” in new ways via video conferencing. This created extraordinary new messaging opportunities for the family meals movement.

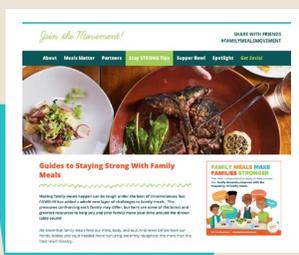
Our new message track encouraged Americans to “stay strong with family meals.” It highlighted the latest published research demonstrating how family meals keep us connected. Notably, our messages provided inspiration and reminded consumers that “family meals are the foundation for a healthy nation.” Our partners loved this messaging and ran with it!



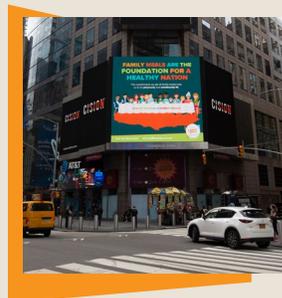
NEW CONSUMER STRATEGY AND TOOLS

This radically different environment called for a fresh approach.

Historically, the FMI Foundation primarily provided family meals resources and tools to retailers, suppliers and community collaborators. However, the new family meal landscape in the COVID-19 world necessitated more direct consumer support and the Foundation rose to the occasion.



We immediately rallied collaborators to aggregate resources to help consumers appreciate the new-found value of family meals and to provide numerous tips on how to achieve them. **These resources populated FMI's Family Meals Movement consumer webpage.**



We conducted national research to show how the definition of family is changing, and to verify how consumers have been staying strong—physically and emotionally—with family meals during the global pandemic. Then, we created national publicity around this research.



Moreover, they were marketed broadly to influencers and via food features in **consumer media and social media.**



We contracted with NBC owned television stations in 10 markets across the country on an integrated media campaign that featured a “Stay Strong with Family Meals” creative spot.



We recruited a **dozen food and lifestyle bloggers and vloggers** to create posts that highlighted the new messages and call to action to stay strong with family meals.

EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPONENTIAL REACH

It is almost impossible to calculate how much the FMI Foundation's family meals messaging was multiplied by the hundreds of retailers, suppliers and community collaborators who—not only used the tools we developed but—invested significantly to develop their own branded media and marketing campaigns to promote National Family Meals Month and The Family Meals Movement.

The “stay strong” thematic was adopted quickly in their consumer outreach.

More pointedly, it seemed to take on added meaning for food industry employees who continued to work when the rest of the world shut down. They truly helped their communities to stay strong by maintaining the critical pipeline of food and health supplies needed to sustain the health and well-being of their customers.



IMPACT—MEASUREMENT

Now wrapping up its sixth year, it never gets old to boast about the reach of this noble education campaign.

Quite literally, we are now tracking **BILLIONS of media impressions each year.** Correspondingly, we continue to track extraordinary changes in consumer awareness, attitudes and behaviors related to family meals.

Our most recent Harris tracking poll shows that **33 percent of Americans (up from 25 percent last year) have seen or heard about our campaign.** Stunningly, of those who saw it, **93 percent say that it has impacted their shopping and consumption habits.** And for households with children, these percentages are even higher (57% and 97% respectively.)

A separate national survey in 2020 verified that our campaign messaging rings true, especially during the pandemic. Seventy-one percent (**71% of people who have been eating more in-person meals (and 70% having more virtual meals) agree that “I feel more connected to my family since the pandemic has started.”** And, not surprisingly, the preponderance of Americans—78%—have positive sentiments about family meals such as “they are a high point of my day” or “they help to make me feel calm” or “they are an important part of my household’s regular routine.”



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WE TRULY ARE “STAYING STRONG WITH FAMILY MEALS.”

Visit **FMI.org/family-meals** to learn how you can join the movement to continue to change the world—one meal at a time.

