

# Toys for grown-up girls and boys

Cereal makers court mom and dad with Pilates balls and coffee mugs

BY JENN GEAREY

When Jitka Licenik was a kid, one of the best things about breakfast was the free toy in the bottom of the cereal box.

"I have very fond memories of choosing cereals based on the toys they had inside them," Licenik says.

"My favourite cereal was Flintstones because they had the best ones. But it really didn't matter what the toy was, it was more about just getting something."

Now, breakfast cereal toys have become serious, grown-up business. And manufacturers seem to be more intent on tempting mom and dad than junior with their free offerings.

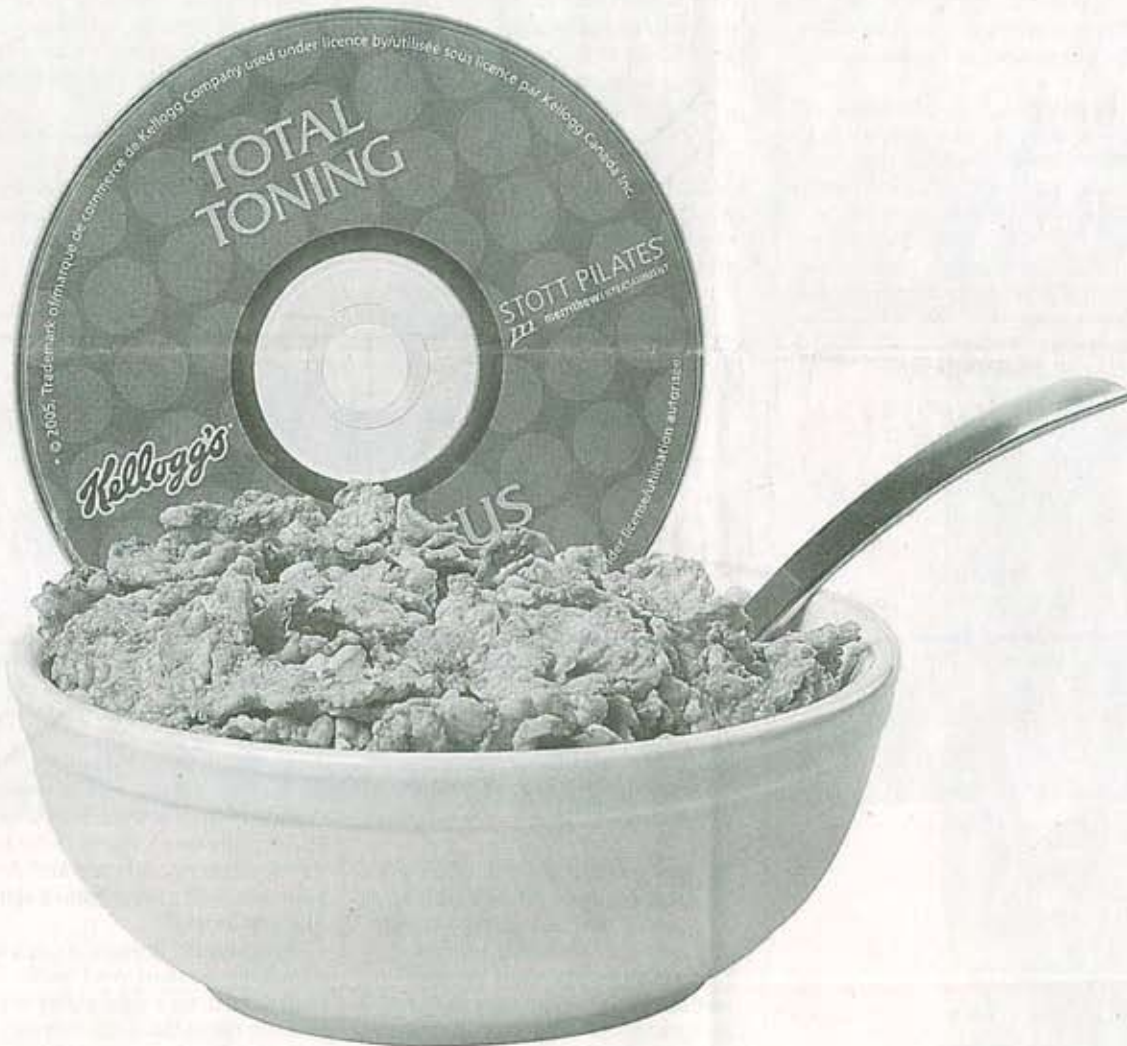
Take a trip down the cereal aisle today and you'll find Special K with a red Pilates ball inside, or Cheerios giving away an adult movie ticket.

A box of Oatmeal Crisp will contain a Trivial Pursuit CD. Vector packs a fitness CD, and Weetabix urges you to send away for free Roy Kirkham flower mugs.

You could find a cookie cutter tucked inside specially marked packages of Rice Krispies.

Even the write-in contest incentives aimed at adults by cereal manufacturers are getting better.

"Last year, Post ran a great contest for travel to past *Survivor* locations," says Don Blair, manager of corporate and government affairs



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This winter, Kellogg's offered free Pilates DVD and toning balls with some of its adult cereals.

at Kraft Canada, which makes Post cereals. "The winner had to be 18 years or older, but they could take three others with them, so the contest could open up to an entire family."

"Our focus now is really about offering fun and active incentives — something that can be seen as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Michael Mulvey, assistant professor of marketing at the University of Ottawa's School of Management, says adult-aimed promotions are a real necessity for cereal manufacturers.

"Once you get to a certain age, you often stop eating cereal — people graduate out of eating breakfast whether it's because they don't have the time or they're trying to lose weight," Mulvey says, adding that "cereal companies have the challenge of retaining their consumers and need to find ways to keep them."

He says it's not just the cereal manufacturers that have changed but the kids as well.

"If you were to show to today's kids some of the toys that used to be in cereal boxes, they would probably think they were lame!" he says.

"Today's kids are just more high-tech."

So it looks like for this generation of young breakfast eaters, it's cereal without the gimmicks. Either that, or let them eat toast.

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