

On Cooking with Kids

From <http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/everydaycooking/family/cookingwithkids>

Getting kids into the kitchen to cook with you is a win-win situation, no matter how old they are and no matter what you make. By interacting with you in the kitchen, your child will gain more than just learning how to cook. First and foremost, you will have the opportunity to foster a greater sense of intimacy between you and your child. Here are a few other positive results from interacting together in the kitchen, which are then broken down into age groups:

- Reading and following recipes improves math, science and reading comprehension skills.
- Eating dishes from other countries enables learning about other cultures, foreign languages, and geography, and provides a culinary vocabulary.
- Learning about food preparation enhances organizational and cleanliness skills.
- Chances are greater that your child will eat the healthy food you are making if he helps.
- Cooking together strengthens feelings of responsibility and being a valued member of the team, will form a lifetime of good memories and help to strengthen bonds.

Preschool: Fine motor skills are enhanced with motions like pouring and stirring; counting ingredients and amounts teaches simple math skills; and working as a team reinforces socializing, learning how to share, and taking turns.

Elementary: Math, science, and reading skills are practiced and improved; an understanding of other cultures and traditions can be taught; the rudiments of nutrition can be learned; and basic cooking skills are learned.

Teenagers: Cooking skills and techniques are refined and knowledge of global cuisine can be enhanced; a sense of success and accomplishment is gained by making a dish or a whole meal.

How can you get the kids more involved in the kitchen?

Here are five steps to a successful time together:

1. Ask them what they'd like to make, to give them a sense of control and self-worth.
2. Read the recipe first together so that you know what happens and in what order.
3. Take out all of the ingredients ahead of time and have the proper tools ready and grouped in the order in which you're going to use them.
4. Have towels at the ready.
5. Practice patience and have a sense of humor—the two most valuable tools!

Creating a Kid-Friendly Kitchen

While small children definitely require a kitchen in lockdown status, no matter what the age of your child, there are a few things every parent should do to keep the kitchen safe.

- *Danger with a Capital D*

While age-appropriate equipment and tools should be in a place where your child can easily reach them, dangerous items such as knives, kitchen scissors, matches, igniters, and anything with sharp blades, like food processors, should be kept out of reach. Depending on the child's level of maturity, this can apply to households with teenagers as well. Also, a small child needs a slip-free step stool.

- *Clean-Up Time is All the Time*

Non-toxic cleaning supplies, a broom, and a mop should be easily accessible to your kids so that cleaning up becomes an integral part of the cooking/eating process. Get a few fun, funky aprons to have on hand.

- *Keep them Inspired*

Cookbooks, nutritional guides, food magazines, bookmarked food Web sites, and other inspirational materials should be easily available to kids.

- *Stock Wisely*

"Sometimes foods" (cookies, candy etc) should be placed higher in the cupboard so that they cannot easily be reached or be within the line of sight. Healthier snacks, such as fruit, pretzels, nuts, raisins, mozzarella sticks, on the other hand, should be easily reachable.



Editor's note:

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Cooking with Kids

From <http://www.pbs.org/parents/food-and-fitness/eat-smart/cooking-with-kids/>

Cooking together can be a delicious learning experience for children and their parents. Kids can explore new foods, learn about nutrition, and develop math and reading skills as they measure and read directions. These simple guidelines are designed to help you make cooking safe and fun, and to entice your children into trying something new!

- 1. Planning is part of the fun!** Invite your child to help to plan a meal or pick a recipe, make a list of ingredients, find them in your kitchen, and/or shop for them. This way, children can learn how to organize and follow through, as well as think ahead. Give your kids a sense of control and accomplishment by letting them make choices whenever possible.
- 2. Wash hands before you start cooking.** This goes for grown-ups too!
- 3. Create a safe place where kids can cook.** Set up a work area at a lower height to make easier for preschoolers to reach things. Offer children a stool only if you know they can balance on it. Remove any sharp objects from their reach.
- 4. No matter where kids work, always supervise them closely.** Stay in the kitchen until the cooking is finished – or take the kids with you to another room.
- 5. Set up clear rules about the stove.** Explain to them about the stove in age-appropriate, simple terms; for example, “The stove is hot! It’s *not* OK to touch it. Mommy or Daddy will put the pan in the oven. You can watch.” Always keep pan and utensil handles turned towards the back of the stove.
- 6. Give preschoolers their own safe utensils.** Offer them wooden or plastic ones. If older children are able to use grown-up equipment, monitor them carefully. Avoid giving children graters, as fingers can easily get scraped.
- 7. Reading and following directions are in the mix!** Ask your child to read each instruction aloud as you prepare the food. Kids will get a sense of turn-taking and sequencing from following directions in order.
- 8. Practice math as you measure and stir.** Your child can count and help measure to build math skills. When cooking with more than one kid, ask each child to count “stirs” as he or she whips the batter.
- 9. Siblings or groups of kids can take turns doing the same step – in their own unique way.** You may want to let each child participate in each step of the recipe. This may take longer, but cooking with kids is as much about “process” as it is about product.
- 10. It’s easier to enjoy cooking together if you’re not “starving.”** Either pick a quick recipe that makes a healthy snack, or have veggies, fruit, and dip to snack on before you start.
- 11. Be spontaneous!** To avoid a trip to the store, make simple substitutions. Cornmeal can sometimes replace flour, use vegetable oil instead of melted butter, etc.
- 12. Introduce new foods.** Kids often will try unfamiliar foods, including vegetables and fruits, when they transform them into personal “creations” like a funny face pizza or a fruit kabob.
- 13. Turn a sandwich into a special snack!** Cutting sandwiches with cookie cutters makes them special. Decorating with vegetables and fruits will transform a simple sandwich into a sandwich face.
- 14. Make set-up and clean-up part of the routine.** Kids may love using a mop or dustpan as much as they love the cooking, but save cleaning until the cake is in the oven.