

Family Times

NEWSLETTER



A NEWSLETTER FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN AGES 5-8

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Kids in the Kitchen

Working together in the kitchen can be a rewarding experience for both parents and children. It provides an excellent learning environment, with children helping to prepare the food they will eat. Being naturally curious, children are often eager to be involved in cooking. Parents can use these teachable moments to provide a beginning for future skills. Children can learn quickly by doing, but they do need guidance. Each child learns at his or her own pace. With practice, they will develop skills. Of course, parents can make learning fun!

Safety First

- Demonstrate safety and cleanliness.
- Wash hands in hot, soapy water before and after handling food; pull back long hair; and keep counter tops clean.
- Help children wait until the food is cooked before tasting and nibbling. It is essential that they not lick their fingers or put their hands in their mouths, especially when working with raw foods such as cookie dough and meat.
- Caution children not to put a spoon back into food after using it for tasting.
- Instruct children to direct sneezes and coughs away from food, to use a tissue to cover mouth and nose, and to wash hands immediately afterward.
- Remember that young cooks need constant supervision.
- Instead of wiping hands on dish towels, use paper towels. If a dish towel comes in contact with raw meats or their juices, immediately remove it from the kitchen for laundering.

Here are some guidelines for matching your children's ability and age to kitchen tasks.

4-year-olds can:

- wash firm vegetables
- tear lettuce or greens
- break cauliflower or carrots
- rinse fruits gently
- dip fruits and vegetables in yogurt or dips
- snap green beans
- rinse salad greens
- wrap potatoes in foil for baking
- wrap dough around meat or vegetables
- mix ingredients like easy-to-mix quick bread batters
- shake liquids in covered containers
- grease pans
- fold napkins
- spread soft spreads like peanut butter on firm bread
- scoop flour and sugar for measuring
- place things in trash
- wipe tabletops
- open packages

5- to 6-year-olds could add these skills:

- knead and shape yeast dough
- measure ingredients
- use hands to form round shapes for cookies or meatballs
- cut parsley or green onions with blunt scissors
- shuck corn
- mash bananas with a fork or potato masher
- cut soft foods with blunt knife
- set and clear the table
- wash dishes (especially plastics)
- load dishwasher
- garnish foods



7- to 9-year-olds could add these skills:

- open cans
- juice a lemon or orange
- peel oranges or hard-cooked eggs
- grate carrots, cabbage, cheese, etc.
- use a vegetable peeler
- beat ingredients with a whisk
- make a salad
- roll out cookies
- follow simple recipes with few ingredients

10- to 12-year-olds could add these skills:

- help plan the meal
- begin to use the oven, microwave, and cook top (with supervision)



The Book Nook

Stone Soup

by A. McGovern will help you talk with children about the texture, taste, and appearance of foods.

- learn proper care and use of small appliances, such as mixers and food processors (with supervision)
- use knives and graters (with supervision)
- prepare recipes with more ingredients

Ideas

- Use cookie cutters for fun-shaped sandwiches. From a slice of bread, cut out two same-shaped pieces, spread with favorite filling (meat, cheese, peanut butter).
- Decorate with fruits and vegetables to make funny faces. Use half a pineapple slice for mouth, banana slices for eyes, and grated carrots for hair on a leaf of lettuce. Or use a cucumber for body, carrot or celery sticks for arms, pieces of red pepper for eyes and mouth, and leafy parsley for hair.
- Fill celery sticks with peanut butter and put raisins on top.
- Spread a cabbage or lettuce leaf with peanut butter. Place a celery or carrot stick in the middle and roll up the leaf.
- Spread a soft tortilla with cream cheese. Top with thin layer of salsa. Roll it up and eat.

- Spread of slice of ham with softened cream cheese. Place a well-drained dill pickle near the edge and roll up the ham. Cut into bite-size chunks, secured with toothpicks.
- Spread one side of two unpeeled slices of red apple with peanut butter. Make a "big smile sandwich" with mini-marshmallows between the slices.

References

Better Kid Care Program, Pennsylvania State University (<http://betterkidcare.psu.edu/101snacksWeb.pdf>).

Kids in the Kitchen, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Tennessee (www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/SP606-J.pdf).

Tips for Parents: Children in the Kitchen, The University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension Service, August 2001 (www.fcs.uga.edu/pubs/PDF/CHFD-E-19-23.pdf).

To Make a Difference

- Be patient.
- Use simple recipes to build skills.
- Focus on the activity, not the results. The finished product may not be perfect, but the children will not notice.
- Expect some spills and messes. Use newspapers under tables to catch spills. Cover children with large shirts (sleeveless or short sleeve) or aprons.
- Give children plenty of chances to be involved and encourage them to share in all aspects of cooking, including the cleanup.
- Plan the activity. Be sure to have all necessary ingredients and equipment and to allow enough time to complete the preparation.
- Encourage healthy choices and try to avoid foods containing lots of fat and sugar.

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