



Did you know that cooking with your child can build numerous life and learning skills? Here are just a few:



Increasing Language & Communication Skills

As you and your child go through the recipe, list the ingredients and the measurements (this is a great way to increase vocabulary).

Recipes require us to follow directions, which enhances listening and understanding, receptive language skills.

Encouraging your child to make predictions about steps and/or ingredients, and repeating steps, instructions and ingredients leads to even greater language development!



Enhancing Fine Motor Skills

Mixing ingredients, rolling dough, pouring, and measuring are all great ways to enhance a child's fine motor strength and control.

These skills are important to develop academic skills such as writing, cutting, coloring, drawing.



Increasing Math Skills

Cooking involves a great deal of measurement; liquids (volume), solids, as well as exposure to spatial relation terms such as less than, more than, equal to.

As we cook and prepare, children are also introduced to fractions (1/2 cup, 1/4 teaspoon, etc.), as well as addition and even subtraction skills.



Introducing Scientific Concepts

Cooking is one big scientific experiment! Children learn what happens when ingredients are mixed (liquids with solids, color-mixing), can practice identifying cause and effect, identify and utilize different forms of measurements, and discuss observations and predictions (what will the food taste like, look like, smell like; will we like it, dislike it, etc.).



Cooking with Kids



Improving Pre-Reading Skills

Show your child each recipe and as you read through the instructions and ingredients, use your finger to track the words as you read them aloud; this is an excellent way to build awareness and understanding of letters, words, symbols, numbers, and other important print concepts.

Enhance your child's comprehension skills by asking them to recall details of a recipe (i.e. "Eli, what was the ingredient I said we needed to add next?").

After finishing the recipe (and tasting the final product), talk with your child about what ingredients or measurements you might do differently next time. Work with your child to enhance early writing skills as you work together to create a new recipe card or add notes to your current recipe!



Teaching Life Skills

Cooking provides opportunities to teach child important health and safety lessons such as how to use utensils correctly, what foods are nutritious and healthy, what foods are less nutritious, handwashing, and the importance of clean-up.



Boosting Self-Confidence

Upon completing a recipe, your child will likely feel a sense of pride and confidence! In addition, as children cook more, their level of independence increases, which in turn boosts their level of self-confidence and self-esteem.



Family Bonding

Cooking is something for the entire family to enjoy, so whenever possible, make cooking a routine part of your weekly schedule! Family cooking time is a great way to bring multiple generations together, but even when it is only you and your child working together, bonding experiences and memory-making moments are abundant!

The Nitty Gritty of Cooking with Your Child

Working with your child in the kitchen provides parents with an excellent opportunity to teach handwashing and handwashing is an easy, cheap, and effective way to prevent the spread of germs and keep you and the rest of your family healthy!



The Center for Disease Control recommends five steps for handwashing—wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry.

Before you and your child begin cooking and kitchen-time, use these five steps to WASH THOSE HANDS:

- 1.** Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap..
- 2.** Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- 3.** Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end, twice.
- 4.** Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- 5.** Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

The Nitty Gritty of Cooking with Your Child



After a recipe is decided on, invite your child to help you gather the appropriate materials and ingredients. This is a great way to provide your young one practice in following single or multi-step directions, identify objects, and to get to know the kitchen!

Work with your child to arrange the materials and ingredients in an assembly line (of sorts). For example, the first step in the recipe asks that you use scissors or a butter knife to remove the crust from bread slices. The second step asks that you use a rolling pin to flatten the bread. Therefore, the assembly line starts with the bread and scissors (or knife) first, the rolling pin and cutting board second, etc....AND, what an amazing way for children to practice ordering and seriation (important math skills), in a meaningful way!

In our kitchen, we are big fans of a “trash bowl”. Set a bowl next to your assembly line and as you prep, rather than walking to the trash can repeatedly, toss your trash into the bowl (eggshells, bread crusts, carrot shavings, etc.), and at the end of prepping, you (or your child) only have to make one trip to the trash can (or the compost pile).

As you and your child work together in the kitchen, take advantage of the opportunity to talk with them about the benefits of some foods.

Sandwichy Sushi

Ingredients:

- 2-4 slices of bread
- Peanut butter (or, depending on nut allergies, almond or sun butter)
- Jam (or fresh fruit such as berries)
- Butter knife or kitchen scissors (No kitchen shears? No biggie! Thoroughly clean some child-safe scissors and use those! You may be amazed at the handiness of prepping with scissors!)
- Rolling pin (no rolling pin? No big deal! Use a heavy-duty water bottle, or a tall glass!)
- Cutting board or plate
- *Optional: Chop sticks*

Directions:

1. Use a butter knife or scissors to assist your child in removing the crust from each slice of bread
2. Place the bread onto the cutting board and show your child how to use the rolling pin to flatten each slice (one at a time).
3. Next, work with your child to spread the nut butter and the jam onto each slice of bread.
4. Tightly roll each slice of bread and use the butter knife to cut the roll into 2-3" slices (or, whatever sushi-sized slice you prefer!), and ENJOY!

Dairy-Free Peanut Butter Ice Cream

Ingredients (for 1 serving):

- 2, bananas (which, you will end up slicing and freezing for the recipe)- this is another great recipe to utilize when you have bananas that are a little too ripe or are on the verge of being too ripe!
- 2 Tablespoons, nut butter
- 3 Tablespoons, chocolate chips (optional)
- 1-2 Teaspoons, honey or agave syrup
- Pinch of salt
- Paper plate
- Blender (or food processor; don't have either? No biggie! You can chop or smash bananas with your hands!)

Directions:

1. Work with your child to peel and slice the bananas. Place the banana slices onto a paper plate or bowl and freeze for an hour (or more). If you do not have access to a blender or a food processor, smash the bananas with your hands before placing the smashed bananas into the freezer.
2. If you do have a blender or food processor, place the frozen slices into the machine and blend until it resembles a 'smashed' consistency.
3. Add the peanut butter, chocolate chips (optional), honey, and a pinch of salt, and blend the machine until you reach an ice cream consistency. Or, using your hands, smash the ingredients together until you reach your desired consistency. You can place the mixture back into the freezer, if you want.

If there are peanut or nut sensitivities, you can replace with any type of yogurt.

The options for ice cream ingredients are endless! Brainstorm with your child to come up with a variety of options, explore, and ENJOY!

Frozen Banana Pops

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 whole banana (per person) -- this is a great recipe to use when you have bananas that are about to be too ripe to enjoy otherwise!
- 1 cup, any type of cereal
- Butter knife
- 2 shallow bowls
- Waxed paper
- Cutting board, paper plate, or baking sheet

Directions:

1. Work with your child to peel and cut the bananas (crosswise, in half), and insert the toothpick or popsicle sticks through the cut side of the bananas.
2. Place yogurt and cereal in separate shallow bowls.
3. Dip each banana in yogurt, then roll in cereal to coat. Transfer to waxed paper-lined surface (cutting board, baking sheet or paper plate) and freeze until firm (typically, this takes about an hour).
4. Remove from freezer and enjoy this delicious, healthy treat!
5. Talk with your child about ways you can change the recipe. For example, strawberry yogurt and sliced strawberries; vanilla yogurt and Cocoa Pebbles?! Encourage their creativity!
6. To save any leftover banana pops, transfer to an airtight freezer container and return to the freezer.

Tortilla Roll-ups

Ingredients:

- Flour tortillas (one per person)
- Lunch meat (1-2 slices per person)
- OPTIONAL: Cheese, shredded or sliced
- OPTIONAL: Cream cheese (1 T per tortilla), shredded carrots, lettuce, pickles, cucumbers, green/red/orange peppers
- Butter knife or spatula
- Plates

Directions:

1. It will be helpful if you and your child work alongside one another as you make the tortilla roll-ups
2. Invite your child to spread a thin layer of cream cheese over the center of the tortilla (leaving a little bit of space around the edges). Using knife or spatula as a spreader is a VERY difficult fine-motor skill, so please plan to assist your child as needed!
3. Ask your child to place one or two slices of lunchmeat over the cream cheese, and, if you choose to add them, sprinkle the shredded carrot on top. Work with your child to add any additional toppings (i.e. cheese, pickles, etc.).
4. Show your child how to fold the edges of the tortilla over (about an inch), towards the center of the tortilla and then, starting with the edge of the tortilla closest to you, roll up the tortilla.
5. If you or your child have a gluten allergy (and/or don't like or want to use tortillas), you can substitute with a romaine or iceberg lettuce leaf. Delicious!
6. Some people prefer to refrigerate their roll-up before they eat, but if you and your child can't wait, dig in right away and enjoy!

Simple Salad

Ingredients:

- Lettuce (Any type, not pre-bagged)
- Vegetables, any type
- Fruit (berries, apples, orange slices, pears, etc.)
- Optional: Cheese (feta, shredded, goat cheese, bleu cheese), Croutons (which you can make croutons by cutting toasted bread into cubes), Sunflower seeds, Dried cranberries, etc.
- 1-2 Tablespoons, olive oil
- ½ lemon (or 1-2 tablespoons, lemon juice)
- Optional: Salt & pepper
- Large bowl, small bowl
- Cutting board
- Peeler
- Butter, or plastic knife (one per person)

Directions:

1. Throwing together a simple salad for meals or a snack provides your child opportunities to try vegetables she may not eat otherwise)! Children are typically more apt to experiment with food when they are 'in charge' of adding it to their meal/snack, so invite your child to explore the kitchen for any vegetables (or other toppings) she can find for the salad.
2. Wash and dry all fruits and vegetables.
3. Work with your child to tear the lettuce into bite-sized pieces and place in a large bowl.

Simple Salad

Directions Continued:

4. Next, peel any vegetables that need to be peeled (zucchini, carrots, etc.). If you have a child-friendly peeler, assist your child in removing the skin. If you do not have access to a child-friendly peeler (typically these have a 'guard' around the sharp peeler part of the tool), invite your child to count as you peel (ask questions such as "How many peels will it take to remove the skin from this zucchini?")!
5. Work with your child to 'chop' the veggies and fruits into the salad bowl. It is helpful to choose ingredients that can be cut with a butter or plastic knife, and if you are adding carrots, use a peeler or grater to shred them into the salad.
6. To make the dressing, add 2 tablespoons olive oil and the lemon juice (whether you are squeezing from a half-lemon, or using pre-bottled lemon juice) into a small bowl (remove lemon seeds as needed) and mix, mix, mix! Add salt and pepper for flavoring and mix once more before adding the dressing to the salad.
7. Personally, I prefer to use a salad bowl that has a lid so that when the dressing is added to the salad, I put the lid on and shake, shake, shake to mix all the ingredients before serving. Enjoy this crunchy, yummy, green treat and talk with your child about any ingredients they think would be a good addition to the next salad creation!



Wash Your Hands Often to Stay Healthy

You can help you and your loved one stay healthy by washing your hands often. It is especially important to wash hands during these key times:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

When You Can't Use Soap and Water

In most situations, washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol with a quick review of the product label.

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

- Apply the gel to the palm of one hand (*read the label to learn the correct amount*).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

Caution! Swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning if more than a couple of mouthfuls are swallowed. Keep it out of reach of young children and supervise their use. Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)