



Kids in the Kitchen!



Developmentally Appropriate Cooking & Food Preparation Activities for Kids

Developmentally, children are already able to help out in the kitchen by the age of two! However, food handling activities must be developmentally appropriate for the child's age. Here are some tips on what children can do in the kitchen during meal preparation.

The 2 Year Old

The two year old can improve large motor skills through various food activities. Activities that use arm muscles are the best introduction to cooking and food preparation. Suggested activities include:

- Washing fruits & vegetables using brushes to scrub the soil off
- Rinsing plates & utensils
- Stirring/mixing with assistance
- Food preparation that requires tearing (lettuce, herbs, spinach), breaking (carrots, celery, asparagus), or snapping (green beans)
- Dipping fruits & vegetables into healthy spreads, dips, yogurts, or peanut butter

THE 3 Year Old

The three year old can work on medium muscle skills and perfect the movements using those muscles. They can perform the above suggested activities and also can help prepare several foods during this phase.

- Wrapping/unwrapping fruits & vegetables in aluminum foil, plastic wrap, etc
- Pouring liquids into pots, bowls, or measuring cups
- Stirring/mixing batters, dips & sauces with a large mixing spoon
- Shaking salad dressing, bread crumb mix



THE 4 Year Old

The four year old is starting to perfect small muscle development and use their fingers for exploration. Kitchen activities are greatly expanded at this age!

- Peeling experiences such as shucking corn, shelling shrimp, peeling hard boiled eggs & oranges
- Kneading/rolling dough, making meatballs
- Juicing fruits
- Cracking raw eggs
- Mashing cooked egg yolks, bananas, potatoes, & cooked fruits (applesauce)



THE 5 Year Old

The five year old uses hand eye coordination and can follow well defined (but limited!) directions.

- Measuring ingredients in small bowls
- Peeling vegetables
- Cutting fruits & vegetables with dull or special knives for children
- Grating cheese

*** REMEMBER: At any age, the most important concept to remember when cooking with children is SAFETY! With food and for themselves.**

Let children help plan and prepare a meal! This is a great time to talk about the food groups and what makes a balanced diet. Let them be involved in each step of the planning and preparing; this sometimes may take longer, but cooking with kids is as much about the "process" as it is about the finished product. If children are involved in the preparation, they also may be more likely to eat the food on their plate!

