

Create Holiday Cooking Memories

This holiday season invite your children into the kitchen to create some special family memories. Working together in the kitchen can be a satisfying experience for parents and children. The kitchen provides a perfect learning environment for children while providing a bonding experience for the parent and child. Cooking together can be a recipe for building relationships and learning important life skills.

Benefits of cooking with children

Cooking with children takes time, effort and patience, and can be very messy at times. The food may not look as attractive as when you do it yourself; however, the benefits make it well worth the effort. Children learn some important lessons along the way, such as:

- Basic cooking skills, including cleanup
- Reading and math skills as they read recipes and measure ingredients
- Eating healthy
- Self-confidence
- Self-care and personal responsibility
- Following directions and cooperation

Learning is not the only benefit children receive while cooking with parents. Studies show that children also are less likely to abuse drugs in the future as a result of spending time with their parents while they are young.

Safety comes first

Cooking is fun and safe as long as you teach your children these tips:

- Wash hands for 20 seconds before and after cooking and after handling raw meats or uncooked eggs.
- Rinse fruits and veggies thoroughly with cool, running water before preparing or eating
- Avoid sneaking tastes of any food that includes raw ingredients such as eggs.
- Use dry pot holders when working with warm foods or liquids.
- Closely supervise the use of knives and other kitchen tools and equipment.

Take time to follow these few tips and you and your child are well on your way to a great cooking experience.

Question: My niece and nephew, ages 6 and 9, want to help me cook. What are some age-appropriate things they can help me do?

Around age 5 to 7, children should be able to perform the following tasks with supervision:

- Helping collect ingredients from the cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer
- Pouring
- Stirring and mixing ingredients by hand
- Assisting in measuring ingredients
- Setting a timer

Around age 8 to 10, they may be able to help perform tasks such as:

- Preheating the oven to the correct temperature
- Using the microwave
- Using a blender with assistance
- Using a knife to cut, slice, or dice with supervision

The tasks will be different for each child, depending on how much experience he or she has in the kitchen.

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