

FN705 (Reviewed August 2021)




Now  
You're  
Cookin'!

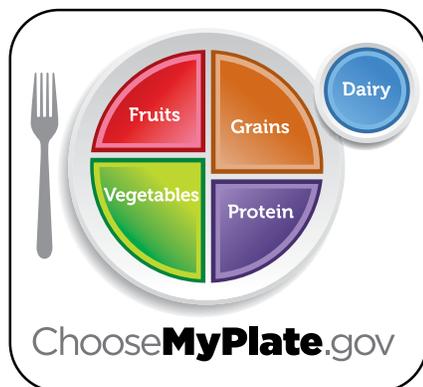
# Meals with Help from Kids!

**Tamara Smith**, Former Dietetic Intern

**Julie Garden-Robinson**, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D.  
Food and Nutrition Specialist

An increasing number of children and teenagers are eating more meals and snacks away from their home and family. They may be choosing unhealthy ready-to-eat food options rather than spending time preparing a healthy snack or meal – and eating with their families.

Encouraging children and teenagers to cook can build healthy lifestyle skills, creativity and healthy food choices. You also are helping them form good eating behaviors that will last a lifetime.



## Did You Know?

- Only about one-third of families eat together at least once a day.
- Frequent family mealtimes are related to better school performance in children.
- On average, about 29 percent of kids make their own dinner at times.
- Children who help prepare a snack or meal are more likely to try it.

## Benefits of Cooking with Kids

Depending on the age group, letting your children cook or help you cook has many benefits!

- Cooking builds self-esteem. Children develop confidence, responsibility and independence when they can help you prepare a snack or meal. When they get more practice, they will be able to prepare more foods on their own.
- Cooking teaches! When kids begin to cook, they can help stir, pour, shake and tear. As they become more experienced, they can move on to spread, mix and knead. Later they can cut, grate and measure with supervision! Kids can develop math and language skills when they measure ingredients and read recipes.

# NDSU

## EXTENSION

- Cooking gives kids a sense of accomplishment. They have a sense of pride when they finish cooking and get to share what they have made with their family.
- Cooking helps kids make smart food choices. Rather than choosing ready-to-eat snack or meal options, they know how to make healthier snacks themselves. They are able to make informed decisions to eat nutrient-dense foods.
- Cooking builds creativity! Preparing foods allows kids to show their artistic side. They may have new ideas about methods of preparation, combining different flavors or how the dish is presented when it is served.

## Age-appropriate Tasks

Around age 5 to 7, kids 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

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

## Safety First

Many parents are hesitant to allow their children to cook because of the many hazards in the kitchen. The following are some steps to keep you and your kids safe!

- Tie long hair back. Wear short sleeves or roll up long sleeves.
- Wash your hands, scrubbing for 20 seconds or longer.
- Run a sink full of warm, soapy water and clean all cooking surfaces. Remember that countertops will be too high for kids to reach. Use a surface that is lower, such as a dining room table.
- Teach your children about what surfaces and objects in the kitchen will be hot and what they need to avoid. Show them which utensils are sharp and need supervision to use.
- Be cautious about cords. Young children can pull appliances off countertops.
- Turn handles of pots and pans on a hot stove inward to prevent burns.
- For food safety, spoons used for taste testing should be put in the sink of warm, soapy water, not back in the bowl.
- Make kids aware that produce, raw meat and cooked foods should remain separate from each other to prevent the family from getting sick due to food poisoning.
- Wash sharp knives right away instead of letting them soak in the sink.

**Set a Goal**

# Recipes

## Healthy Recipes Using Whole Grains, Calcium-Rich Foods and Fruits

Kids often fall short on whole grains, calcium-rich foods, fruits and vegetables in their diets. Kids should be eating at least 6 ounces of grains (including at least 3 ounces of whole grain foods), 3 cups of milk or dairy products, 1½ cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables daily. When cooking with your kids, choose recipes that incorporate these food groups to help them meet their daily requirements.

### Granola Bars

- 4 c. uncooked oats (not instant)
- 1 c. packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ c. raisins or dried cranberries
- ½ c. shredded coconut
- 1 c. chopped nuts (cashews, peanuts or walnuts)
- ¾ c. melted butter
- ½ c. honey

Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Mix well with greased hands and press into a well-greased 15.5-inch by 10.5-inch jelly roll pan. Bake at 450 degrees for eight to 10 minutes or until light golden brown. Cool thoroughly and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container to keep them chewy.

*Makes approximately 32 servings. Each serving has 160 calories, 8 g fat, 2 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 40 mg sodium.*

Recipe Source: [www.cooks.com](http://www.cooks.com)

### Fruit Salsa

- 1 pint fresh\* strawberries, washed and hulled
- 1 large ripe white peach or pear\*, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1/3 c. fresh mint leaves, thinly slivered, plus 6 whole sprigs for garnish (optional)
- ½ jalapeno chili, seeded and minced, or to taste
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice, or to taste
- 2 Tbsp. light brown sugar, or to taste

Dice strawberries into ½-inch pieces. Combine all the ingredients for the salsa in a bowl and gently toss to mix. Add lime juice and sugar to taste. The salsa should be a little sweet and a little sour. Chill thoroughly.

*Makes approximately eight to 10 servings. Each serving has 30 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g protein, 8 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 0 mg sodium.*

\* You may substitute frozen fruit, thawed and drained.



# Recipes

## Cinnamon Tortilla Chips

10 10-inch flour tortillas (whole-wheat or white)  
Butter-flavored cooking spray  
½ to 1 tsp. cinnamon  
1/3 c. sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix cinnamon and sugar together and place in empty spice container (or use commercial cinnamon-sugar mix). To make cinnamon chips, coat one side of tortilla with cooking spray. Cut into wedges of desired size and place in single layer on baking sheet. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Spray again with cooking spray. Bake for eight to 10 minutes. Repeat for remaining wedges. Cool for 15 minutes. Serve with salsa.

*Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 240 calories, 6 g fat, 6 g protein, 41 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 530 mg sodium.*



iStock.com

## Orange Cooler

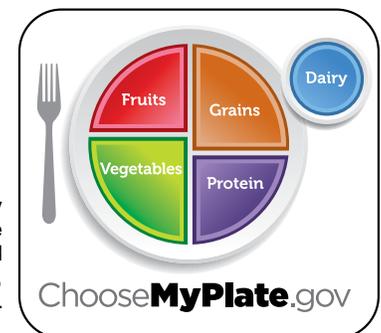
1 6-ounce can frozen orange juice concentrate  
1 c. water  
1 c. low-fat milk  
1 tsp. vanilla  
3 Tbsp. sugar  
13 ice cubes

Place ingredients in blender. Blend for 10 seconds. Wait briefly and continue blending process twice. Pour into glasses and serve immediately.

*Makes four servings. Each serving has 110 calories, 0 g fat, 3 g protein, 26 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 30 mg sodium.*

## Eat Smart. Play Hard. Together

- For more information about food safety and nutrition, contact your county office of NDSU Extension.
- Visit the NDSU Extension website at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food)
- Visit [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov) for more information about healthful eating for the entire family.



“Eat Smart. Play Hard.” is an initiative of the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

The NDSU Extension Service does not endorse commercial products or companies even though reference may be made to tradenames, trademarks or service names. NDSU encourages you to use and share this content, but please do so under the conditions of our Creative Commons license. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this work as long as you give full attribution, don't use the work for commercial purposes and share your resulting work similarly. For more information, visit [www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons).

**For more information on this and other topics, see [www.ndsu.edu/extension](http://www.ndsu.edu/extension)**

County commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost for Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, NDSU Main Campus, 701-231-7708, [ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu](mailto:ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu). This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701-231-7881.