

5 easy ways to Make Cooking Cool for Kids

Kids can learn a lot from cooking. Food and nutrition are just the start. Doubling the ingredients or cutting a recipe in half? Cooking helps kids practice math! Getting things ready teaches kids to be organized. Reading a recipe is a lesson on following directions. When kids realize that different people enjoy a variety of foods, they are learning about culture. Find ideas for easy family meals at www.school-wellness.org/indeEnrichingFamilyMealtimesDownloads.aspx.

1. Plan meals and snacks with kids.

You may see cooking as a chore. Kids think the kitchen is an exciting and magical place. Everyone loves to be involved in choosing a favorite dish for meals or selecting foods for snacks. For small children, eating becomes something much more special when “I got to pick it out.” It’s even better when “I made it myself.”

2. Take kids shopping for new foods.

Bring the children along when you go food shopping. (It will be easier if they are well rested and not hungry before you go!) Use your trip through the aisles to talk about meals you could make. Discuss different ways to fix foods. Let children choose a new item they want to try. Look for an unusual fresh fruit from the produce section. Or try a new vegetable from a local farmers’ market or your garden.

3. Teach kids kitchen safety.

All children need adult supervision in the kitchen. Tell them what is okay to touch. Remind them which items could be dangerous. Talk about which kitchen tasks are for grown-ups and which are for kids. Set kitchen rules – here are some ideas. Never touch a hot stove. Be careful with knives. Wash your hands often. Keep all surfaces clean.

4. Involve kids in fixing tasty recipes.

There are safe kitchen tasks for kids of all ages. A preschooler can stir ingredients that have already been measured. An elementary age child can read the recipe, measure and mix. Tweens can learn to cut, chop and dice safely. Teens may be able to try challenging techniques from a TV cooking show.



5. Make it a special occasion with an appealing table.

Children are proud when they make a dish all by themselves. It doesn’t have to be hard. A fruit salad or sandwich is a good place to start. You can reinforce their success by making the table setting special. Put their creation on a “fancy” plate, light a small candle, use colored napkins or put some flowers in a vase. They will be more likely to try cooking again!