

Cooking with Kids

Overview

Looking for ways to engage your children at home while sharing essential life skills? You are in luck- we have a fun and hands-on activity for the whole family using your very own kitchen and items already in your pantry! Cooking with your child is a great way to help them develop a strong knowledge base about good nutrition, meal planning and preparation, and incorporating how to read food labels. A lot of times, children are more likely to try new foods that they have a hand in preparing- so make trying new foods exciting and expand their horizons by getting your child in the kitchen and learning!



Take Action

Home Cooking Class

- Choose a recipe with your child based on food availability and how much time you have to dedicate to preparing the recipe. This is a great opportunity to brainstorm with your child around creative recipes or meals based on what you have already on hand at home. Add a budget and nutrition component with older children by discussing the cost of items used and analyzing food labels to dive deeper into the nutrient makeup on the recipe. For some recipe ideas, check out our Healthy Kids [blog](#) or our [Nutrition Toolkit](#) in partnership with Dole.
- Establish home kitchen rules! Set parameters and rules early on to make sure safety is a priority and your child understands. Make sure your child understands how to use different utensils and appliance safely and the

importance of having adult supervision at all times. This is also a great time to relay some common food safety tips as well.

- Take inventory of current cooking equipment and outline additional supply needs if needed. Think about the tasks involved in the recipe and assign them to you and your child accordingly. Some kid-friendly tasks can involve measuring, stirring, or gathering ingredients! Always offer guidance and remember to compliment your little chef! You can consider doing some prep work beforehand if you need to move at a quicker pace.
- Once your recipe is prepared, let your child take the first taste! Sit down together as you enjoy your creation and discuss the process, success, and what you learned.

Food Art

- Don't have access to a kitchen or have younger children who are not quite ready for cooking tasks? Try a food art activity to teach similar nutrition concepts and have fun! You can still relate healthy eating behaviors to a food art activity. For example, you can be creative and highlight healthy fruits and vegetables as your food art ingredients while explaining the importance of each and how they help growing bodies! Click [here](#) for some food item ideas that are nutritious options.
- Do some prep work before the activity and have items cleaned and cut so they are ready to use. You can then allow your child to use cookie cutters and common household items, such as toothpicks, to piece their food art together!
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Tips



Discuss the importance of food safety and how to ensure a safe cooking environment - taking into account the use of perishable foods, temperature, etc.



Keep recipes simple. Cooking usually takes longer with kids since they might need more time to process instructions and additional assistance when trying out new skills



Don't stress! We know kids and cooking don't equal neat, so allow for the extra mess and enjoy the time together.



Host a family cooking competition! Let each family member or child choose a dish to prepare (with adult supervision!) and vote on the favorite.



If you have a home garden, incorporate items from it into your recipe. If you don't, consider creating your own home garden and making this part of your activity in the future! You can put a home garden in any space, see how to [think creative for your home garden!](#)

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Resources

[Cooking with Kids Resources and Activities](#)

[Kids in the Kitchen Tips \(Fruits and Vegetables: More Matters\)](#)

[MyPlate Messages and Facts \(USDA\)](#)

[Ten Tips: Be Food Safe \(USDA\)](#)

[Cooking With Kids - for Parents \(Nemours\)](#)

[Food Safety in the Kitchen \(CDC\)](#)

[KidsHealth](#)

Easy Nutrition Education Activities

Use digital learning resources to take nutrition education at home to the next level.

How to Read Nutrition Facts Labels

Help kids make better choices by simplifying the information on nutrition labels to teach them to identify key nutrients that are common in healthy foods.

Mindful Eating

Encourage children to practice mindful eating strategies to slow down, enjoy their food and practice mindfulness throughout the day.

Creative Gardens: Thinking Outside the Garden Box

Think outside the box with creative container gardens and take a step into gardening.