

# COOKING TO THRIVE

## COOK TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

**Family time can be spent in the kitchen and children will learn about food and cooking!**

Most children enjoy helping in the kitchen. While they help you cook, you can talk to them about healthy foods. Children like to eat the food they make. Cooking with your children is a good way to help them develop healthy eating habits and build food preparation skills!

### Babies and Young Toddlers

The best way to involve little ones at this age is to set your baby someplace safe so he or she can watch you cook! Although babies cannot yet help you cook, just being with you in the kitchen is still beneficial in the following ways:

- ◇ **Communication Development** - Talk and explain to babies what you are doing.
- ◇ **Visual Tracking** - Babies will watch you move around in the kitchen.
- ◇ **Sensory Experiences** - Babies will hear the sounds of the electric mixer or food being added to a hot pan. They also experience new smells while food is cooking.

Older babies can play with kitchen items like plastic bowls and measuring cups. Set some pots and pans upside down and let older babies bang on them with a wooden spoon. Put dried pasta in a sealed container so they can shake it. Let older babies smell and touch the ingredients you are using.

### As children get older, they learn the following when they help in the kitchen:

- ◇ **Fine Motor Skills** - Measure, pour, and stir ingredients
- ◇ **Reading and Vocabulary** - Read, follow, and prepare recipes
- ◇ **Math** - Count, measure, and follow step-by-step directions
- ◇ **Science** - Food changes during cooking, and children learn about hot and cold, dissolving, melting, and freezing
- ◇ **Thinking** - Children compare and make relationships in food preparation. For example, they learn about proportion when they double the ingredients in a recipe and get double the cookies!
- ◇ **Social** - Children work together, take turns, and solve problems. They also learn about other cultures as they prepare foods from various cultural groups.
- ◇ **Nutrition** - Children see what goes into the food they eat and learn to make better decisions about nutrition.

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Around two years of age, children are ready to start helping with a few simple tasks. They will still need a lot of instruction and supervision, but they are likely to be very enthusiastic about helping! They also love eating their art projects!

Listed here are some appropriate tasks for children. Remember that children develop at their own rate. Children always need very close adult supervision. You must determine what is appropriate for your child.

*Always remember to have children wash their hands with warm water and soap before and after handling food!*

### Older Toddlers

- ◇ Pour dry and liquid ingredients into a bowl
- ◇ Stir ingredients
- ◇ Tear lettuce or greens
- ◇ Knead and shape pizza and bread dough
- ◇ Use a rolling pin
- ◇ Shake liquids in a sealed container to mix
- ◇ Apply soft spreads like peanut butter
- ◇ Rinse fruits and vegetables
- ◇ Scrub potatoes
- ◇ Carry ingredients from one place to another
- ◇ Brushing oil or butter with a pastry brush

### Preschoolers

- ◇ Peel fruits like oranges and bananas
- ◇ Pull apart pieces of broccoli and cauliflower
- ◇ Peel hard-boiled eggs
- ◇ Mash soft foods with a fork
- ◇ Cut herbs with kid-safe scissors
- ◇ Cut soft fruits with a plastic knife
- ◇ Measure dry ingredients
- ◇ Measure liquid ingredients with help
- ◇ Use a whisk
- ◇ Set the table
- ◇ Help put groceries away

### Elementary

- ◇ Read recipes out loud together
- ◇ Use a small paring knife
- ◇ Cook with you at the stove
- ◇ Use a can opener, garlic press, or Microplane
- ◇ Grate cheese with a box grater
- ◇ Form patties
- ◇ Whip cream with a hand mixer
- ◇ Grease a baking pan
- ◇ Scoop batter into muffin cups.
- ◇ Thread food onto skewers
- ◇ Load and unload the dishwasher

### Adolescents

- ◇ Safely use a chef's knife
- ◇ Learn how to operate kitchen appliances
- ◇ Learn safety skills such as tucking pan handles
- ◇ Follow recipes on their own
- ◇ Learn how to cook basic things such as eggs

#### *Did you know...*

- Research has shown that children who help in the kitchen choose to eat more fruits and vegetables.

- Participating in cooking can help with picky eaters. Encourage your child to try some of the ingredients but do not force it. Being around and becoming more familiar with new ingredients will eventually help your child want to try new things.

Be patient with spills and mistakes. Remember that the goal is to help your children learn about healthy eating.