



Caring for Kids

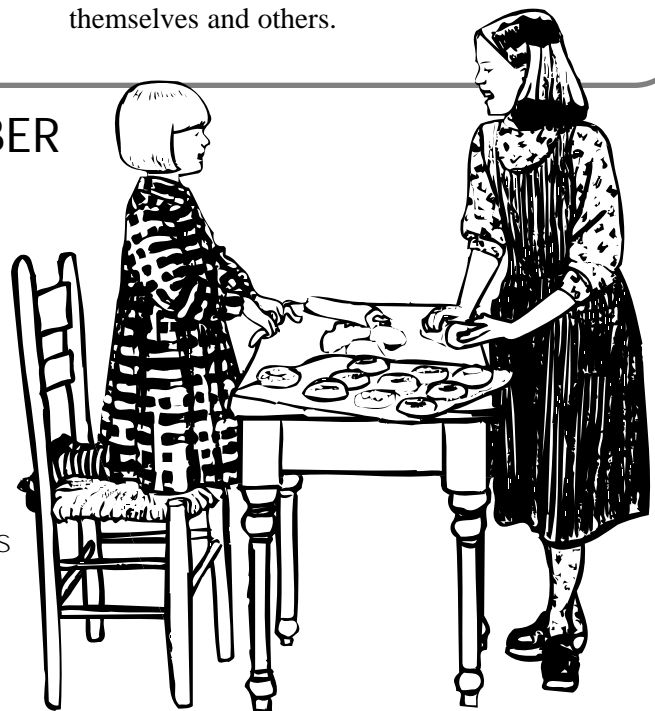
Kids Can Cook — and Learning Is the Secret Ingredient!

Most children learn quickly that eating is fun. They also enjoy helping adults cook. Put the two together and you have the perfect recipe for learning. Children learn best when they're busy and interested in what they are doing. When children are busy scrubbing, mixing, stirring, kneading, spreading, tossing, squeezing, and pouring, they don't realize there's a special ingredient that you're adding: It's called learning!

- Cooking involves reading and talking. There is much to talk about as a recipe is read, followed, and prepared.
- Children learn math skills through counting, measuring, and following step-by-step directions.
- Science is learned as children see how food changes during cooking. They learn about hot and cold, floating and sinking, dissolving, melting, and freezing.
- Good nutrition is encouraged through cooking. Seeing exactly what goes into a recipe helps children learn to make better decisions about the food they eat.
- Children can learn about and connect with other cultures as they prepare foods from various cultural groups.
- Thinking skills are developed as children learn to compare and make relationships in food preparation. If we use too much flour in our cookie recipe, the result is a dry, hard cookie. Proportions are easily mastered when children learn that if you double the ingredients in the cookie recipe, you get double the cookies.
- Social skills are practiced in cooking when children work together, take turns, and solve problems. Most importantly, self-esteem abounds when children prepare foods for themselves and others.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Good cooks of all ages always wash their hands before cooking.
- Tell children to wait until the dish is done before sampling it. This will help prevent illness.
- Expect spills and messes.
- Children have short attention spans. Give them quick, simple jobs, and give instructions one at a time.
- Children get excited and forget. Repeat directions as often as needed.
- Young cooks need constant supervision.
- Give children jobs to help with cleanup.



S N A C K S

These simple, healthy recipes can be set up as an activity. To make this a real learning experience, prepare recipe cards with a simple drawing that shows each child how to prepare their own serving. Include measurements at the bottom of the drawing and set the cards up from left to right. You can help the children read and follow the recipe.

BREAKFAST BANANA BOAT

serves 1

What you need:

- 1 small banana
- 1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 cup toasted oat cereal
- 1/4 cup seasonal fresh fruit cut up in small pieces

What you do:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have each child peel a banana. If a child is not comfortable doing this, that's okay. Have safe, smooth-edged plastic knives available for children to use. Encourage the children to slice their banana into bite-sized pieces. Use seasonal fruit such as apples, strawberries, or blueberries. Children can help wash and prepare these fruits as well. Children can put their banana pieces in a small bowl, spoon the yogurt on top of the banana pieces, and sprinkle with cereal and fruit. This simple, easy to prepare, and very nutritious snack requires no cooking and lets children be involved in preparing every step of the way.

"WORK IT OUT" COOKIES

What you need:

- Rolled oats
- Packed brown sugar
- Butter
- Flour
- Baking soda

What you do:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Give each child a bowl and have available all the ingredients listed. Let each child measure 1 cup oatmeal, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup butter or margarine, 1/2 cup of flour, and 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda into their bowl.

Encourage them to mash, knead, and squeeze using their hands until there aren't any lumps of butter. Form into small balls and put on an ungreased cookie sheet. Have each child press their cookie down with their hand. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on cookie rack.

CAUTION: When cooking with young children, safety is your first priority.

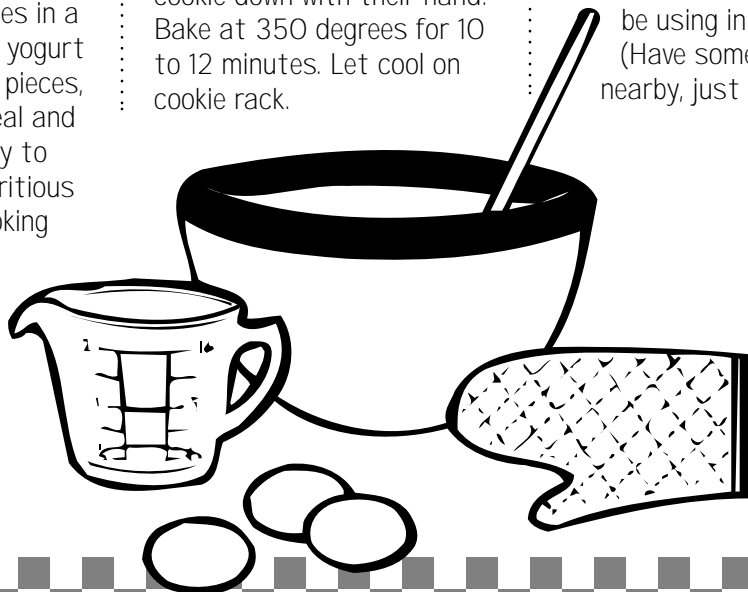
■ Young children should not be allowed to use the stove. Explain to the children that putting things in or taking things out of the oven is for adults only. Remind children that the oven and pan are very hot and could burn them if they touch it.

■ Be aware that infants and young children can choke easily on some foods. Offer smaller amounts of these foods prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow.

LET'S COOK! TIP:

Before you start...

- Put on an apron.
- Wash your hands.
- Have everything you will be using in front of you. (Have some paper towels nearby, just in case.)



It Makes Sense

Children learn by touching, tasting, feeling, smelling, and listening. They love to help prepare food and cook because they can use all their senses. Children like to eat the foods they make. Plan ways the children in your care can help you. Be sure to consider the age of the child.

■ Of course **babies** can't cook yet, but they will enjoy being with you and experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the kitchen.

- Talk about what you are doing as you move around the kitchen.
- When babies begin to crawl, they're safest in a high chair in the kitchen.
- Talk about and name cooking utensils and foods.
- Talk about what they like to eat.
- Give babies a separate bowl and spoon and let them mix foods that are safe for them to eat.

■ **Two-year-olds** are learning to use the large muscles in their arms. They will enjoy these activities:

- scrubbing vegetables and fruits
- dipping vegetables and fruits
- tearing lettuce and salad greens
- breaking bread for stuffing
- snapping fresh beans
- wiping tables

■ **Three-year-olds** are learning to use their hands. Try these activities:

- pouring liquids into a batter
- mixing muffin batter
- shaking a milk drink
- spreading peanut butter on firm bread (This may be messy!)
- kneading bread dough

■ **Four- and five-year-olds** are learning to control smaller muscles in their fingers. Offer them experiences such as these:

- rolling bananas in cereal for a snack

- juicing oranges, lemons, and limes
- mashing soft fruits and vegetables
- measuring dry and liquid ingredients
- grinding cooked meat for meat spread
- beating eggs with an eggbeater



Think About It!

Cooking with kids takes time, patience, and can be very messy. You may make foods that don't taste or look as good as you thought they would. But these drawbacks are far outweighed by the sense of pride that many children feel when they prepare food for themselves and others. Once you see that "I did it by myself" look on a child's face, you will understand that it's well worth the mess and the patience required to cook with children. When we introduce children to cooking and encourage them to help out in the kitchen, we are saying, "You are a big help, you can do this, and you are important!"

CHECK IT OUT!

The following books will inspire, teach, and delight children of all ages.

- *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie DePaola
- *Stone Soup* by Heather Forest
- *Little Red Hen* by Paul Galdone
- *Betty Crocker Kids Cook!* by Betty Crocker

- *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett
- *Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up* by Mollie Katzen
- *Kids Cooking: A Very Slightly Messy Manual* (with plastic measuring spoons) by Jim M'Guinness

KITCHEN SCIENCE FOR THE VERY YOUNG: *The incredible shrinking ice cubes*

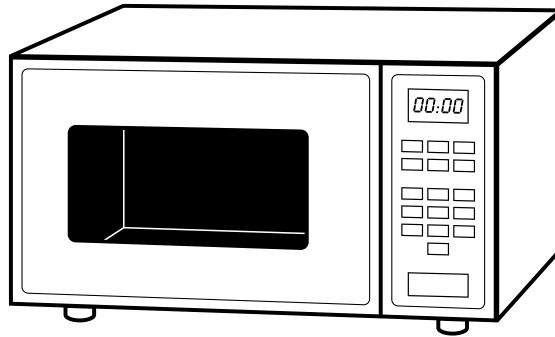
What you need:

Microwave oven
Ice cubes
Microwave-safe dish
Hot pads

What you do:

Discuss kitchen safety. Young children should not be allowed to use the stove or microwave. Children should watch from a safe distance and should be watched closely when doing this activity. Show children the ice cubes. Ask them to tell you about the ice cubes. How do they feel? What color are they? Are they hot? Cold? Wet? Dry? Put the ice in a dish and microwave for a few

minutes. Carefully remove the dish. Ask the children to tell you about what they see. Talk about how the ice cubes look after they have melted. Is it still ice? Is it water? What happened to the ice? Review what happened. Go over how the ice became water as it was warmed up. Continue to ask questions and spend time letting the children come up with answers.



Time to Teach

What can I do about children who disturb others during meals and snacks?

To encourage good behavior, don't have children stay and sit at the table after they are finished eating. Have a quiet activity like reading or puzzles available after meals and snacks. Remind children, *"When you are finished eating and have cleaned up your spot, find a book or do a puzzle over on the rug. Show me that you are ready to play a special game after snack."*



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Visit the Better Kid Care Web site, www.betterkidcare.psu.edu for these resources:

- The E-Newsletter (read and sign up)
- Family Time-Work Time (read and copy for parents)
- Snack and activity ideas
- A live satellite workshop in your own home on your own computer
- Web-based workshops and learn-at-home videos offering training credits that will count toward requirements in PA

TAKE A LOOK!

Caregivers have this to say about our online credit workshops:

"I really enjoyed the convenience of learning at home in my spare time."

"I found this very informative and convenient. I could do this lesson after the children were in bed."

REMEMBER...

the Better Kid Care Telephone Helpline for child care providers is as close as your telephone. Call toll free 1-800-859-8340.

Cooking Abilities of Young Children

Helping prepare and cook foods is a great way for children to:

- learn,
- have fun, and
- try nutritious foods.

What activities your child will be able to help with will depend on her or his age. Keep the following in mind when including young children in cooking activities.

Two-year-olds are learning to use the large muscles in their arms. Try activities such as:

- **scrubbing** vegetables and fruits
- **carrying** unbreakable items to the table
- **dipping** foods
- **washing and tearing** lettuce and salad greens
- **breaking** bread into pieces

Three-year-olds are learning to use their hands. Try activities such as:

- **pouring** liquids into batter (you measure first)
- **mixing** batter or other dry and wet ingredients together
- **shaking** a drink in a closed container
- **spreading** butters or spreads
- **kneading** dough
- **washing** vegetables and fruit
- **serving** foods
- **putting** things in the trash after cooking or after a meal

Four and Five-year-olds are learning to control small muscles in their fingers. Try activities such as:

- **juicing** oranges, lemons, and limes
- **peeling** some fruits and vegetables (bananas and even onions)
- **mashing** soft fruits and vegetables
- **scrubbing** vegetables (potatoes, mushrooms)
- **cutting** soft foods with a plastic knife (mushrooms, hard-boiled eggs)
- **pressing** cookie cutters
- **measuring** dry ingredients
- **cracking** open/breaking eggs
- **beating** eggs with an egg beater
- **setting** the table
- **wiping** up after cooking
- **clearing** the table after a meal

How to Cook with Young Children

1. Decide on the **area of the kitchen** where you will be cooking.
2. Gather **stools or chairs** that will allow your child to stand or sit comfortably while working.
3. **Wash hands.**
4. Get out the **recipe** you will be using.
5. **Read the recipe** with your child. Explain that you will be following the steps in the recipe to prepare the food.
6. Set out:
 - the **equipment and supplies** that you will need (such as a mixer, blender, bowls, pans, measuring cups, knives, and spoons)
 - the **ingredients** that you will be using
7. **Have your child participate in cooking activities** (such as washing fruits and vegetables, adding ingredients, mixing ingredients, and kneading dough).
8. **Clean up** with your child.
9. **Eat** what you have prepared.