

**Eating Smart & Moving More
Celebrating Healthy Families**

Eating Smart

**Five Easy Ways to
Enjoy Cooking with
Kids**

Cooking with kids gives you the chance to teach many things besides food and nutrition skills. Cooking is a wonderful way to teach culture (different people enjoy different foods); real-life math (doubling or halving a recipe's ingredients); organization (getting everything ready); and following directions (reading a recipe).

Get kids involved in planning fun meals or snacks.

Although you may see cooking as a chore, kids see the kitchen as an exciting, even magical, place. Everyone loves to be involved in choosing their favorite dishes for meals and snacks. For small children, eating becomes something special when “I got to pick it out” – and even better when “I made it myself.”

Get kids involved in shopping for new foods.

Food shopping with children works best when they are well rested and not hungry. Use the trip through the aisles to talk about possible meals and different ways to prepare different items. Allow children to choose a new item that appeals to them in the produce section (or at the local farmers' market).

Get kids involved in kitchen safety.

All children need adult supervision in the kitchen. Give frequent reminders about what's okay to touch and which items could be dangerous. Talk about which kitchen tasks are for grown-ups and which are for kids. Establish kitchen rules, such as always washing hands and never touching knives or a hot stove.

Get kids involved in preparing tasty recipes.

Children can manage different kitchen tasks at different ages. A preschooler can stir ingredients that have been pre-measured. An elementary-age child can read the recipe and do the measuring and mixing themselves. Tweens can learn to cut and chop safely. Teens can try challenging techniques from a cooking show.

Get kids involved in setting an appealing table.

Children feel proud when they make even a simple dish, like a fruit salad or sandwich themselves. You can reinforce their success (and desire to try cooking again) by making the table special too. Put their creation on a “fancy” plate, light a small candle, use colored napkins or put some flowers in a vase.



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