

Cooking with Young Children

Cooking can help young children learn and practice some basic math concepts and build language skills. The experience of creating meals with you can help build their self-confidence and lay the foundation for healthy eating habits.

It may take a little flexibility and some simple prep work, but with the right expectations, your time in the kitchen with your child can be a culinary adventure you'll both enjoy. To start you off, try some of the following simple recipes used in Bookmates' Alphabet Soup program.

Recipes

Banana Roll

Ingredients:

- 1 Banana
- 1 popsicle stick
- Orange juice
- Rice Krispies



Instructions:

- Cut banana in half
- Have child peel their banana and insert lengthwise a popsicle stick
- Have child dip their banana into some orange juice and then roll it into cereal
- Now let them eat their Banana Roll off the stick

Tortilla Roll

Ingredients:

- 1 Tortilla, whole wheat
- Cheese (cheddar)
- Spinach leaves or Romaine lettuce



Instructions:

- Cut tortilla into quarters
- Slice cheese thinly
- Wash spinach leaves well and dry
- Add cheese slice and spinach leaves on each piece of tortilla
- Roll the tortilla around the cheese and spinach like a wrap sandwich

Veggie Dip

Ingredients:

(Makes 6 servings)

- 1 cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- ¼ tsp dried dill weed
- 1/8 tsp onion salt
- ¼ tsp lemon juice
- Variety of cut up vegetables (e.g. peppers, cauliflower, tomatoes, celery, broccoli, carrots, cucumber, mushrooms, snap peas)

**Instructions:**

- Add the ingredients together in a bowl, stir well
- Have child help wash and cut up vegetables (sliced, diced or florets)
- Have child spoon out a portion of dip onto a plate or bowl and enjoy the dip with veggies

Healthy Eating Games

The Veggie Guessing Bag

Place different vegetables in a bag or box one at a time and have your child put his/her hands in the bag to feel the vegetable. Have them guess which vegetable it is. Talk about how it feels – smooth, bumpy, fuzzy, round, small, big.

Odd One Out

Say a series of four words including three vegetables and one odd word, for example, "Carrot, potato, cat, onion". Ask the child to identify the odd word.

Make the game more challenging by using an odd word that is also a food, for example, "Celery, capsicum, carrot, yoghurt". Ask your child why the odd word does not belong with the rest of the group.

Rhymes & Songs

Bananas Unite

BANANAS UNITE!

Peel bananas, peel peel bananas [x2]

Chop bananas, chop chop bananas [x2]

Mash bananas, mash mash bananas [x2]

Eat bananas, eat eat bananas [x2]

GO BANANAS!!

Green Zucchini

(Tune: Alouette)

Green zucchini, I like green zucchini,
Green zucchini, that's what I like best.

Do you like it on your head?

Yes I like it on my head

On my head, on my head

Oh.....

Green zucchini, I like green zucchini,
Green zucchini, that's what I like best.

Do you like it on your shirt?

Yes I like it on my shirt

On my shirt, on my shirt,

Oh.....

Green zucchini, I like green zucchini,
Green zucchini, that's what I like best.

Do you like it on your socks?

Yes, I like it on my socks.

On my socks, on my socks,

Oh.....

Green zucchini, I like green zucchini,
Green zucchini, that's what I like best.



Chop Chop

Chop, chop, choppity, chop

Cut off the bottoms

And cut off the tops

What there is left

We will put in the pot

So chop, chop, choppity, chop.

Moo, Moo, Brown Cow

(Tune: Baa, Baa, Black Sheep)

Moo, moo, brown cow

Have you milk for me?

Yes sir, yes sir, tasty as can be

Churn it into butter

Make it into cheese

Drink it in a big glass

Have yogurt if you please.



Moo, moo brown cow

Have you milk for me?

Yes sir, yes sir, tasty as can be.

Fruit Salad

(Tune: Are You Sleeping?)

Watermelon, watermelon

Papaya, papaya

Banana, banana

Fruit salad, fruit salad.



How Cooking Can Help Young Children

Bringing children into the kitchen can benefit them in a number of ways. Cooking can help:

- **Build basic skills.** You can help your child hone basic math skills by doing something as simple as counting eggs or pouring water into a measuring cup. You can ask what comes first, second, and third or count together as you spoon dough onto a cookie sheet. When you read a recipe together, you're introducing new words to your child's vocabulary and promoting literacy. Following steps in the recipe can work on listening skills.
- **Encourage an adventurous palate.** Preschoolers are notoriously picky eaters, and bringing them into the kitchen to cook can help get them to open up to new tastes. When your 3-year-old daughter plays chef she might sample dishes she wouldn't try if you just served them to her. So encourage kids to taste new ingredients you're working with and talk about what they like and how healthy foods make a body grow.
- **Help young kids explore with their senses.** Kids learn by exploring with their senses and the kitchen is an ideal place to do that. Invite them to listen to the whir of the mixer, pound dough and watch it rise, smell it baking in the oven, and finally taste the warm bread fresh from the oven. If it smells good, looks appealing, and is easy to eat they may just be willing to try it!
- **Boost confidence.** Preschoolers love to show what they can do and working in the kitchen provides opportunities to gain a sense of accomplishment. If they helped assemble the pizza, let them know that their help was important. You could name the pizza or another dish after your child. Serve "Will's Pizza" or "Ella's Salad" for dinner tonight. Even if the end results are not exactly what you expected, praise their efforts.

Ideal Jobs for Preschoolers in the Kitchen

A few tasks in the kitchen are particularly well-suited to kids ages 3 to 5. The key is to give them "jobs" that meet their skill level and are something they enjoy. So if your child loves to pound, bring out the bread dough and let your preschooler pound away.

Here are some other ways kids can help:

- stirring pancake batter
- tearing lettuce for salad
- adding ingredients
- assembling a pizza
- helping you "read" a cookbook by turning the pages

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