

Let's Cook Together

Little hands can help! Emma cut cheese in funny shapes with cookie cutters. Jackson made smiles on peanut butter sandwiches with apple slices and raisins. Thunya tore lettuce for salad. Jeffrey poured milk.

Children are natural kitchen helpers. They like to share simple tasks of food shopping and picking foods for meals. They enjoy preparing and serving food to the family.

Cooking builds self-esteem.

Helping in the kitchen builds confidence and early skills of independence. Most kids feel proud and important when they help prepare food. Sharing in family tasks helps them feel that they belong in the family.



Cooking teaches.

Kitchen tasks give your child a chance to measure, count, and see food change. That's early math and science learning. Your child can learn new words and symbols by cooking with you. Talk about the food and what you are doing. Read words together on food containers.

Small muscle skills develop, too, when your child uses his or her hands to help with kitchen tasks.

Cleanup teaches responsibility. It's part of many creative, messy things we do.

Cooking together is fun family time.

Kitchen time offers a special parenting chance. Cooking together creates closer bonds and lifelong memories. It's also a chance to talk and hear what your child has to share.

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Kitchen Safety Rules For Kids and Families

- Fasten hair back if it's long.
- Wear clean clothes, maybe with short sleeves.
- Get started with hand and table washing.
- Taste with a clean spoon. A licked spoon goes in the sink, not back in the bowl.
- Resist nibbling cookie dough or cake batter.
- Stay away from hot surfaces and utensils and sharp objects. An adult needs to help.
- Work at a table, child-size surface.
- Walk slowly. Carry food and utensils with care.
- Wipe up spills.

Together, follow four food safety rules:

- 1) Be clean.
- 2) Keep raw and cooked food separate.
- 3) Cook food to proper temperature.
- 4) Refrigerate perishable food right away.

Pick kitchen tasks that match your child's abilities.

- 1) Start: stir, pour, shake, tear
- 2) Then: spread, mix, and knead
- 3) After that: cut, grate, and measure (with supervision)

Think about this!

- If your child makes a cooking mess, it's okay! Young kids don't have the same muscle coordination and skills that you do.
- Even if meals take longer to prepare, it's worth letting your child help. Kitchen time is learning time that you share together.

