

Safety in the work area

Whether a child is helping with a recipe or creating food art, safety guidelines are important to follow when children handle food for consumption.

Food Safety

- Wash hands well before and after food preparation.
- Do not leave cold or hot foods at room temperature for more than 1 hour.
- Practice “Take the one you touch”.
- Provide child size utensils, mixing bowls and well-marked measuring cups/ spoons.
- Work in clear, clean areas (use 1/4 teaspoon of bleach to 1 quart of water to sanitize food prep surfaces prior to use).
- Sanitize work areas first



Physical Safety

- Adults should always be present when children prepare food.
- Children should be seated when working.
- Use a sanitized cutting board to chop foods.
- Adults closely supervise knife use and operate all appliances.
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Keep paper towels close at hand to clean up spills immediately and let kids help wipe up.
- Use a potholder when handling hot foods.
- Model for children safe kitchen habits, i.e. holding hot pads, proper knife use, wiping up spills, avoiding hand to mouth contact, etc.
- Organize the preparation area and foods used for food activities prior to the children’s participation.
- Provide adequate workspace for each child.
- Provide only age appropriate foods.

Never serve the following foods to children:

- Unpasteurized milk, dairy products or fruit juice.
- Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, fish, eggs (including raw cookie dough).
- Raw sprouts of any kind.
- Unsanitized melons

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CHILD CARE HEALTH

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Young children learn by doing. Play and activities can involve all the senses promoting an intertwining of concepts and ideas that enhance growth and skill development. Involving children in food preparation encourages cooperation among children and results in a feeling of accomplishment. Using food in activities sparks interest in a new food and gives opportunities to extend learning into the kitchen and dining areas. Food experiences allow ways for adults to role model and help children establish and strengthen healthy lifestyle habits.

Babies love to bang pots together. Toddlers enjoy feeling wet dough. Preschoolers feel proud when they help set the table and school age children eat better when they make a part of the meal. Through the ages children like the kitchen. Help them be successful with cooking by giving them age appropriate jobs.



Cooking Skills at Every Age

Young children are eager to cook and there are many things they can do with sloppy enthusiasm in the kitchen. Help them be successful with cooking by giving them age-appropriate tasks.

	18 months to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 5 years	5 to 7 years and up
Skills children may have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste new foods • Identify and name foods • Use a spoon and fork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and name shapes, colors, and textures • Count a little 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count to 10 and more • Name many foods, name cooking tools • Begin to read • Begin to use a knife at the table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count to 100 and more • Name the food groups • Distinguish between fruits and vegetables • Read well • Pour liquids well
Cooking tasks children may be able to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get ingredients out of the fridge or low cabinets • Put wrappers, peels, and other waste into a trash can or compost bucket • While sitting on the floor, help add ingredients to a bowl and mix gently • Dip soft vegetables and fruit • Place muffin liners in muffin tins • Put napkins on the table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to serve themselves from 'family style' dishes of food • Peel banana (once it has been started) • Cut a banana or soft tofu with a table knife • Wash fruit and vegetables • Wipe the table with a sponge • Tear lettuce • Shuck corn • Shape meatballs, cookies and rolls • Clear unbreakable dishes • Begin to spread (peanut butter on crackers, soft butter on toast, cream cheese on a bagel) • Pick fruit and vegetables in the garden • Take the stems off cherry tomatoes, basil leaves off the stems, etc • Shop with a picture 'list' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peel oranges and grapefruit, hard boiled eggs, garlic, and shrimp • Begin to measure ingredients with measuring cups and spoons • Sprinkle cinnamon sugar on toast, cheese on pizza, grated carrot into a salad • Squeeze lemons, limes and oranges with a citrus juicer • Identify and pick herbs in the garden • Scoop seeds out of pumpkins, winter squash, and cucumbers • Crush crackers, cornflakes or graham crackers into crumbs • Pour dry cereal for breakfast • Grease pans with soft butter or cooking spray 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read recipes and shopping lists • Write shopping lists, menus and place cards • Peel fruits and vegetables with a peeler • Grate cheese or zucchini (have children wear a rubber glove to protect their knuckles) • Crack eggs (into a small bowl first so they can pick out any shells) • Use a can opener • Help roll out pizza dough or pie crust • Cut with a sharp paring knife (with adult supervision) • Use a timer • Make sandwiches • Help wash dishes and/or help load the dishwasher • Pour water or milk for meals and snacks • Begin to develop their own recipes

adapted from Tiny Tummies