



Family Habits: Kids in the kitchen



Getting children involved in the kitchen by experimenting with kitchen utensils, ingredients, textures, tastes and smells, is a great way to build a love of healthy food as well as developing cooking skills and good habits. Even very young children can watch you cook from a safe spot and play with unbreakable kitchen utensils such as wooden spoons, plastic measuring cups and metal pans.

Ages 2 to 3 (Expect some mess!)

- Washing hands before preparing food
- Washing vegetables
- Tear leafy greens
- Break broccoli and cauliflower into pieces
- Rinse and drain food in a sieve or colander
- Knead dough
- Spread butter or cream cheese onto bread or a bagel with a dull knife.
- Crack an egg and whisk it, with help
- Mix and pour ingredients, with your help
- Carry ingredients from place to place

Ages 4 to 6

At this stage, they can begin to use real cooking tools, although they should still stay away from a hot stove or oven.

- Stir mixed ingredients
- Peel oranges and hard-boiled eggs
- Juice lemons and limes
- Mash bananas, or cooled boiled potatoes
- Use child-safe scissors to cut herbs
- Decorate with a pastry bag
- Grease a baking pan
- Measure ingredients, with assistance
- Turn blender on and off, with assistance
- Set the table
- Turn on a kitchen timer
- Use a dull knife to cut soft items such as bananas or mushrooms. (Safety note: Explain which knives are safe for them to use and when, and which ones are not safe for them to use yet)

Ages 7 to 9

You know your child best, so be led by your judgement about which of these tasks you feel they are ready to perform safely.

- Form patties/burgers
- Open a tin with a manual tin opener
- Grate cheese
- Peel potatoes and carrots
- Zest a lemon
- Place food onto skewers
- Steam vegetables
- Roast vegetables on a baking sheet with supervision
- Fill and use a blender, with supervision
- Put away groceries
- Start using a sharper knife to cut a variety of ingredients with supervision
- Introduce hob and oven safety rules and continue to supervise

Ages 9 to 12

At this age your child can develop on the skills they have learnt to make a meal independently but stay with them in the kitchen to supervise and remind them of oven and hob safety rules.

- Choosing a recipe
- Making a shopping list for the ingredients they need
- Prepare a chosen meal
- Lay the table
- Clear the table
- Wash the dishes!