

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The heart of the home is the kitchen, and with good reason. It's where families gather to celebrate, enjoy good food, and spend quality time together. Recipes and traditions are handed down from generation to generation, and grandparents pass their most treasured cooking secrets on to their grandchildren. Some call cooking an art form; others, a craft, but all agree that cooking combines chemistry, creativity, and math in a way that appeals to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Now, you and your children can use this time together to create your own kitchen traditions with these engaging, educational activities from the National Pork Board and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired (YMI). Help your children learn about the role food plays as an important part of celebrations in many cultures as they explore math, science, and art, as well as language skills. Then, create your own simple and easy family meals featuring pork, which is a globally important source of protein that is both delicious and nutritious.

We hope you and your family will enjoy these flavorful and healthy additions to your home family menus.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



For questions, contact us toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by e-mail at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

Make Mealtime Family Time: Activities to Engage Kids

Begin with the Basics

Pork is enjoyed nearly all over the world. Delicious, versatile, and nutritious, it can be prepared in a wide variety of ways and is equally tasty as a stand-alone dish or as part of a recipe. Teach your children how to prepare different types of pork, and then see where their imaginations take them as they use the pork dishes creatively in meal and recipe planning. Check out the **National Pork Board's Easy & Simple At-Home Cooking YouTube channel** at bit.ly/3a1i6KT for the videos below.

1. **Pull some pork!** Pulled pork is a favorite in many regions around the world. Check out the **Pulled Pork Basics** video for tips on how to cook and prepare a tender, juicy pork shoulder. Then add your own unique flavorings to it!
2. **Sink your teeth into a classic!** Pork chops are a staple that can be dressed up or enjoyed as is. Full of flavor and easy to prepare, they appeal to all ages. Follow the easy-to-follow directions for **Pork Chop Basics**.
3. **Try a little tenderloin!** Pork tenderloins are the perfect main course for any meal. Learn how to cook this pork cut with the **Pork Tenderloin Basics** video.



Launch into Lunch

Rev up your engines with protein-packed pork lunches! Use leftover spiral ham to create easy-to-eat sandwiches! Lay out the ingredients assembly-line-style and let your children work together to build their own sandwiches. Or say Aloha to a tasty Hawaiian treat! Layer ham, barbeque sauce, and pineapple for a sweet and savory lunch. It's a luau in a bun! Continue the Hawaiian theme and celebrate spring by making paper flower drawings or decorations for your table. Check out the **Leftover Spiral Ham Ideas** video for these recipes.

Dive into Dinner

Explore more elaborate pork recipes with these delicious dinner choices. First, try your hand at a traditional Japanese dish called Tonkatsu. Originally made with beef, it's now considered even more delicious as a pork dish and features panko-crispy, juicy deep-fried pork chops or sliced pork loin. It's sure to become a family favorite. Be sure to enjoy it with chopsticks! Check out the **Thai-spiced Pork Tonkatsu** recipe on the YouTube channel.

How about holding a fiesta in your dining room with some **Tex-Mex Stuffed Peppers**? (See YouTube video.) They pack a powerfully flavorful punch and feature the benefits of protein, veggies, and healthy grains. Extend the fun by creating a colorful paper garland for decoration. Take the time to celebrate as a family and share the reasons you are thankful for each other!

Resources

- National Pork Board: pork.org
- Pork Recipes: yummys.com/page/pork
- USDA's Choose MyPlate: choosemyplate.gov

Family Mealtime

Mighty Mornings

Get your family up and moving with breakfast meals designed to help build strong muscles. Breakfast provides nutrients and energy for the day ahead. In fact, according to the Mayo Clinic*, a good breakfast should feature lean protein, which is important for building strong muscles. A good breakfast can also include low-fat dairy, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Many of us reach for eggs and bacon or sausage when it comes to preparing our favorite breakfast dishes. It's a delicious classic combination that can be prepared in advance. Try starting with a simple recipe for a bacon and egg casserole, such as the **Overnight Bacon Casserole** at yummys.com/recipe/Overnight-Bacon-Casserole-1870200 and then make it your own by spicing it up with your favorite vegetables.

* mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/food-and-nutrition/art-20048294

Tips for Cooking with Your Child*

Not sure what your child can handle in the kitchen? Every child is different, but in general, even kindergarteners can mix, measure, and assist with adult supervision. Here is a list of kitchen activities by age that you can try with your child to engage them and support learning skills. You know best what activities your child can do.

Ages 5-7

- Weighing food
- Washing vegetables
- Mixing, beating, and kneading
- Tearing and cutting herbs with safety scissors
- Rolling out and cookie-cutting dough
- Measuring ingredients
- Greasing and lining trays
- Picking fruits and vegetables
- Peeling fruits and vegetables (by hand)
- Setting and clearing the table

While preparing meals, have your child help you count, predict what you're going to do next, and describe what the ingredients look, feel, and smell like. Talk about where foods come from and identify the food groups they belong to. Have your child make a menu and place cards for dinner.



Ages 8-11

All the above, plus the following:

- Planning a menu
- Reading aloud and following a (simple) recipe
- Gathering ingredients
- Whisking ingredients together
- Helping you at the oven or microwave
- Preparing a salad

Have your child help you prepare grocery lists and plan meals based on the USDA's MyPlate nutrition guidelines. (See [choosemyplate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov).) Talk about foods from other countries and make a list of foods you would like to try. Research recipes together for family mealtime options. Ask your child to create a list of brainteasers, trivia questions, or topics for mealtime discussions.

Ages 12 & Above

With older children, deepen the learning and talk about food safety, the history of different foods, and the science of cooking. For example:

- Discuss the importance of washing your hands when handling raw meat.
- Identify different types of kitchen tools and equipment, and how to use them safely.
- Find the math in recipes: Fractions, doubling ingredients, and dividing portions.
- Find the science in recipes: What happens when you add heat to different foods?
- Discuss the origins of ingredients and recipes. Where do spices come from? How does food get from the farm to our table?
- Discuss the taste and texture of the foods you prepare.
- Evaluate how meals measure up to the MyPlate nutrition guidelines.
- Research, read, and follow more complex recipes.
- Find recipes that originate from other cultures to try.



Click here for recipes found on the National Pork Board's Easy & Simple At-Home Cooking YouTube channel at bit.ly/3a1i6KT.