

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.