Kids in the Kitchen: A Recipe for Learning

Young children can help in the kitchen. By helping in the kitchen, children learn lifelong skills. Listed here are some appropriate tasks for young children. Remember that children develop at their own rate. Plan tasks that your child is able to do.

Always remember to wash hands with warm water and soap before and after handling food!

2- and 3-year olds
- Wash fruits and vegetables
- Clean table tops with a sponge
- Tear lettuce
- Put bread in the toaster
- Place things in the trash

3- and 4-year olds
- Open packages
- Knead and shape dough
- Pat refrigerator biscuits into crust
- Pour milk, juice, and water into sturdy glasses
- Make sandwiches
- Toss salads with wooden spoon or clean hands
- Beat eggs with a fork or whisk in a large bowl
- Wrap foil around potatoes for baking
- Mash potatoes

5-year olds
- Measure and mix ingredients
- Make cakes and cookies using baking mixes
- Use a hand mixer with close supervision
- Grate cheese or carrots
- Set and clear the table
- Load the dishwasher

Children learn best when they are busy and interested in what they are doing. When kids have the opportunity to help in the kitchen, they develop a sense of pride. They also learn:

- Reading skills – as recipes are read, followed, and prepared
- Math skills – through counting, measuring, and following step-by-step directions
- Science skills – as food changes during cooking, and they learn about hot and cold, dissolving, melting, and freezing
- Thinking skills – as they compare and make relationships in food preparation. For example, they learn about proportion when they double the ingredients in a recipe and get double the cookies!
- Social skills – as children work together, take turns, and solve problems. They also learn about other cultures as they prepare foods from various cultural groups.
- Health skills – as they see what goes into the food they eat and learn to make better decisions about nutrition

Cook together. Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time.

Bureau of Child Care Food Programs, Florida Department of Health
www.doh.state.fl.us/ccfp/