

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF COOKING WITH KIDS?

Children and adolescents who participate in cooking eat more fruits and vegetables, are more confident about choosing healthy foods, and have healthier diets overall. Being involved in meal preparation is also associated with more milk consumption and less consumption of sugary beverages.

### WHAT ABOUT BENEFITS BEYOND DIET?

Being involved in meal preparation and cooking together is related to stronger family relationships and greater mental wellbeing in children and youth. Research showed that children who participate in hands-on cooking classes experienced improvements in food preferences, cooking confidence and attitudes, and hands-on cooking skills.

### HOW YOUNG CAN CHILDREN BE INVOLVED IN COOKING?

Children as young as three years of age can be involved in meal preparation and simple cooking tasks. These might include choosing recipes and helping to make a grocery list, gathering ingredients from the refrigerator or pantry, washing produce, and measuring ingredients.

### WHAT ABOUT OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS?

Older children and adolescents can also peel vegetables or grate cheese, chop ingredients, and

use kitchen equipment like blenders and mixers. Adolescents can also be the family chef one time per week and be responsible for menu planning.

### WHAT ABOUT THE SCIENCE OF COOKING?

This is a great time to turn everyday cooking into science lessons without kids even knowing it! For young children, pouring and measuring aids is eye-hand coordination. For older children it can become a lesson in converting measurements to the metric system. Ask children why does water boil at different temperatures at different altitudes? Why do we refrigerate some foods and not others? What happens when we whip cream or egg whites?

### DON'T FORGET THE WHOLE MEAL!

Cooking involves more than chopping and stirring. Involve kids in the whole meal event by having them set the table, put leftovers away, and help with clean up.

### DE-STRESS OVER THE MESS!

Remember that new chefs make mistakes. There will be eggshells in the batter, flour on the floor, and imperfectly cut potatoes. As time goes by, junior chefs will gain more confidence. Complement children on newly learned skills. Engage children and youth in planning for the next masterpiece!



### **FAMILY COOKING RESOURCES**

[cookingmatters.org/sites/default/files/Cooking\\_Matters\\_at\\_Home\\_compressed.pdf](https://cookingmatters.org/sites/default/files/Cooking_Matters_at_Home_compressed.pdf)

[files.webservices.illinois.edu/5807/cooking\\_with\\_kids.pdf](https://files.webservices.illinois.edu/5807/cooking_with_kids.pdf)

[familyresiliency.illinois.edu/resources/mealtime-minutes?page=2](https://familyresiliency.illinois.edu/resources/mealtime-minutes?page=2)

[soundcloud.com/user-346411005/kids-in-the-kitchen-involvement-links-to-healths-benefits](https://soundcloud.com/user-346411005/kids-in-the-kitchen-involvement-links-to-healths-benefits)

### **EVIDENCE BASE (SELECTED)**

Quelly, S. B. (2018). Helping with meal preparation and children's dietary intake: A literature review. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840518781235>

Metcalfe, J. J., & Leonard, D. (2018). The relationship between culinary skills and eating behaviors: Challenges and opportunities for parents and families. *Physiology & Behavior*, 193, 302-306. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2018.04.013>

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