



Learning Multiple Skills through Cooking

Can you think of one single activity you can do with your child that includes experiences in math, science, reading, parent/child bonding, safety precautions, healthy choices, time, communication, creativity, and builds confidence all at the same time? You don't need to be an expert in childcare education to implement this amazing learning experience – you just need a good recipe. Cooking with children is one of the best ways to make these connections across so many discipline areas.

While it is easier to give your child a task outside the kitchen so that you can cook dinner, the advantages of including them outweigh the inconvenience. It may take more time and create more of a mess, but involving your child in the cooking process will create both short and long term benefits. Children who have a hand in helping to prepare a meal are more likely to try healthy foods, and if they're eating healthy foods, they are too busy to eat junk food.

Before beginning, make sure that you talk about why it's important to wash your hands before preparing a recipe. Practice hand washing, as well as washing any produce or utensils. It is also a good idea to discourage sampling and double dipping because it is easy to spread germs.

In order to get the most out of cooking with your child, choose a recipe you have done before so there are no surprises. You don't want to choose something too difficult when cooking with young children. It may be something as simple as fruit salad or a sandwich.

You can cut down on some of the time it takes to cook with your child by being prepared. Gather the tools and ingredients before starting, and encourage your child to measure ingredients over a cookie sheet for a faster and easier clean up.

Adults aren't the only ones who can use knives. While it should be done under close supervision, this is a perfect time to show your young child how to handle a knife the correct way and how to cut safely so that fingers are protected. It may seem early to teach this skill to your child, but it is important for children to understand the responsibility and dangers. You want your child to understand that knives are tools and should be used the proper way.



When cooking with your child, remember to talk about each step, and use the proper terms for things when you talk. The following are some examples of questions you can ask your child in different situations to encourage critical thinking:

- *If you're making a batch of cookies, ask if they think you should include salt in the recipe. "Do you think adding salt will change the taste of the cookie?"*
- *The recipe calls for 3 cups of water. We have put in 2 cups. "How many more cups do we need?"*
- *The recipe says it needs to cook for half an hour. "How many minutes in half an hour?"*
- *"Which of these kitchen tools is a colander?" "Do you know which of these is a spatula?"*

Check out the following WebMD article that talks about the benefits of cooking with your child, and also give you some recipes that you can try at home.

<http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/features/cooking-with-your-children>