

TIPS FOR DADS

COOK WITH YOUR KIDS!

Everyone needs to eat regular meals. So why not turn your meal prep time into quality time with your kids as you serve up delicious food?



COOKING CAN TEACH CHILDREN A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT SKILLS, INCLUDING:

- ✓ Reading and learning new words.
- ✓ Cooperating with others.
- ✓ Following instructions.
- ✓ Understanding and using basic math (e.g., fractions) to calculate proportions.
- ✓ **Patience.** (Let them know that “something good to eat will be coming out of the oven, but we have to wait a few minutes.”)

WHEN YOU COOK WITH YOUR KIDS:

- A.** You gain **OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE FUN, TALK, AND SPEND QUALITY TIME** with your kids.
- B.** You **BUILD FAMILY MEMORIES** that will last a lifetime, even when mealtime doesn't go exactly as planned!
- C.** **YOUR KIDS BECOME FAMILIAR WITH COOKING.** Watching you cook increases the chances that they will know how to prepare food other than ramen noodles when they're off at college or moving into their own apartment!
- D.** **YOU SERVE AS A ROLE MODEL,** showing your kids that cooking (and cleaning up) is a perfectly acceptable activity for men, women, boys, and girls.

GETTING STARTED

You don't have to be an Iron Chef to enjoy pattering around in the kitchen. Even the most basic tasks can be fun for everyone. Kids can take turns cracking eggs, stirring ingredients, dropping bread into the toaster, or using a can opener (with supervision, of course).

- 1.** Start off easy by making dishes that require relatively few ingredients, such as muffins, cookies, smoothies, scrambled eggs, omelets, and grilled cheese sandwiches.
- 2.** The first time you cook together will go more smoothly if you gather all the ingredients you'll need before you start. Later, as you and your young chefs become more experienced, list-making and shopping together can become fun parts of the overall experience.
- 3.** The two goals for cooking at the beginning are to:
 - a) Produce simple food that the whole family will enjoy eating.
 - b) Share a feeling of pride and accomplishment that will motivate everyone to get back in the kitchen again.

A FEW GUIDELINES

Always follow safety measures, particularly when children are using sharp knives, stirring pots, opening the oven, or approaching a burner. (Kitchen accidents usually happen quickly and can be extremely painful.)

Celebrate. When you serve the food, be sure to let your helpers (and everyone else who is enjoying the fruits of your labors) know that it was a team effort.

Back off. As you and your kids become more experienced cooks, let the kids plan meals and select recipes—even if they choose a recipe that involves incredibly complicated steps.

Experiment. What happens if you add a little more of one ingredient or a little less of another one?

Watch cooking shows. Some cooking shows on TV feature kids making impressive dishes. Watching these shows together might inspire your kids to do more cooking.

Keep it fun. Start off easy and build slowly. Trying to prepare a 9-course dinner when all you have is an hour will frustrate you and your kids. You don't want cooking time to feel like torture. It should be a fun bonding experience.



NRFC RESOURCES

- Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families: https://www.fatherhood.gov/sites/default/files/resource_files/e000003368.pdf

OTHER RESOURCES

- ChooseMyPlate.gov provides tips for creating grocery plans, shopping smart by understanding prices, and preparing healthy meals: <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget>
- Recipes for Beginner Cooks: <https://www.food.com/ideas/best-recipes-beginner-cooks-6873#c-760762>