

How to Cook with Young Children

1. Decide on the **area of the kitchen** where you will be cooking.
2. Gather **stools or chairs** that will allow your child to stand or sit comfortably while working.
3. **Wash hands.**
4. Get out the **recipe** you will be using.
5. **Read the recipe** with your child. Explain that you will be following the steps in the recipe to prepare the food.
6. Set out: the **equipment and supplies** that you will need (such as a mixer, blender, bowls, pans, measuring cups, knives, and spoons) the **ingredients** that you will be using
7. **Have your child participate in cooking activities** (such as washing fruits and vegetables, adding ingredients, mixing ingredients, and kneading dough).
8. **Clean up** with your child.
9. **Eat** what you have prepared.



Safety Tips for Cooking with Children

1. Prevent food poisoning by:
 - Always washing hands before cooking.
 - Not eating raw eggs, raw meats or uncooked foods
 - Waiting until the food is cooked before sampling it.
2. Have children stand at the level of the activity. Use a stool if necessary.
3. Use cooking supplies that will not break (such as plastic measuring cups and stainless-steel bowls).
4. Use plastic knives or butter knives for cutting.
5. Provide constant supervision.
 - Always watch children when they use knives, mixers, or the stove.
 - Supervise the use of ovens, stoves, and other kitchen appliances.
 - Remind children that stoves, ovens, pans, and dishes can be very hot.



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Cooking Abilities of Young Children

Helping prepare and cook foods is a great way for children to:

- ➔ learn,
- ➔ have fun, and
- ➔ try nutritious foods.

What activities your child will be able to help with will depend on her or his age.

Two-year-olds are learning to use the large muscles in their arms.

- ★ scrubbing vegetables and fruits
- ★ carrying unbreakable items to the table
- ★ dipping foods
- ★ washing and tearing lettuce and salad greens
- ★ breaking bread into pieces



Three-year-olds are learning to use their hands.

- ★ pouring liquids into batter (you measure first)
- ★ mixing batter or other dry and wet ingredients together
- ★ shaking a drink in a closed container
- ★ spreading butters or spreads
- ★ kneading dough
- ★ washing vegetables and fruit
- ★ serving foods
- ★ putting things in the trash after cooking or after a meal

Four and Five-year-olds are learning to control small muscles in their fingers.

- ★ juicing oranges, lemons, and limes
- ★ peeling some fruits and vegetables (bananas and even onions)
- ★ mashing soft fruits and vegetables
- ★ scrubbing vegetables (potatoes, mushrooms)
- ★ cutting soft foods with a plastic knife (mushrooms, hard-boiled eggs)
- ★ pressing cookie cutters
- ★ measuring dry ingredients
- ★ cracking open/breaking eggs
- ★ beating eggs with an egg beater
- ★ setting the table
- ★ wiping up after cooking
- ★ clearing the table after a meal

Sources: Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Van Horn, J. E. (Ed.) and L. Horning (Ed.) (1995). Cooking with children: kids in the kitchen. In Todd, C.M. (Ed.) and the WIC program