

## Cooking with Kids

### HANDOUT 1

## COOKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Cooking experiences can be used to help teach preschoolers a number of different things. Cooking uses all five senses, and can incorporate math, reading, science, health and nutrition. Cooking activities also help young children develop small motor skills and social skills. Cooking can help children feel a sense of accomplishment and independence.

#### Tips for Planning Cooking Activities with Kids

- Decide on the area of the kitchen where you will be cooking.
- Gather stools or chairs that will allow children to stand or sit comfortably while working.
- Make sure everyone washes their hands.
- Get out the recipe you will be using.
- Set out the equipment and supplies that you will need and the ingredients that you will be using.
- Read the recipe with the children. Explain that you will be following the steps in the recipe to prepare the food.
- Have the children actively participate in cooking activities (such as washing fruits and vegetables, adding ingredients, mixing ingredients, and kneading dough).
- Let the children help clean up.
- Eat what you have prepared.

#### Safety Tips for Cooking with Children

Prevent food-borne illness:

- Always wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before cooking.
- Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw and cooked foods separate. When handling raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs, keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, countertops and utensils with hot soapy water.
- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags and in your refrigerator.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.



- Do not eat foods that contain raw eggs or raw meats.
- Wait until the food is cooked before sampling it.

### More Tips for Cooking with Kids

- Have children stand at the level of the activity. Use a stool if necessary.
- Use cooking supplies that will not break (such as plastic measuring cups and stainless-steel bowls).
- Use plastic knives or butter knives for cutting.
- 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.

## Cooking Abilities of Young Children

Helping prepare and cook foods is a great way for children to learn, have fun, and try nutritious foods. The activities children will be able to help with will depend on their age.

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

- Scrub vegetables and fruits
- Bring ingredients from one place to another
- Dip foods
- Wash and tear lettuce and salad greens
- Snap green beans
- Break cauliflower
- Break bread into pieces
- Wipe table tops
- Carry unbreakable items to the table
- Play with utensils

Three-year-olds are learning to use their hands. They can do what two-year olds do plus:

- Pour liquids
- Mix batter or other dry and wet ingredients together
- Shake liquids in covered container
- Spread butters or spreads
- Serve foods
- Put things in the trash after cooking or after a meal
- Wrap potatoes in foil for baking
- Knead and shape yeast dough
- Place things in the trash



Four and Five-year-olds are learning to control small muscles in their fingers. They can do all that 2- and 3-year-olds do, plus:

- Juice oranges, lemons, and limes
- Peel some fruits, vegetables and hard cooked eggs
- Mash soft fruits and vegetables
- Scrub vegetables (potatoes, mushrooms)
- Cut soft foods with a plastic knife
- Cut parsley or green onions with dull scissors
- Press cookie cutters
- Measure dry ingredients
- Crack open/break eggs
- Beat eggs with an egg beater
- Set the table
- Wipe up after cooking
- Clear the table after a meal
- Move hands to form round shape



### References:

Tips for Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children,  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. [www.usda.gov/cnmp](http://www.usda.gov/cnmp)

Kids Can Cook — and Learning Is the Secret Ingredient!  
<http://betterkidcare.psu.edu/CaringForKids/CaringForKids3-5.pdf>



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## **Cooking with Kids**

### **HANDOUT 2**

## **COOKING ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS**

### **Getting Started**

Cooking with kids takes time, patience, and can be very messy. You may end up with foods that don't taste or look as good as you thought they would. But these issues will be outweighed by the sense of pride that children feel when they prepare food for themselves and others. When you see the look of accomplishment on children's faces, you will know that it's well worth the mess and the patience required to cook with children. When you introduce children to cooking and encourage them to help out in the kitchen, you are letting children know that they are a big help and they are important.

Think about purchasing chefs hats and aprons for your children to wear when they cook. Young chefs love to wear chef's hats and aprons. Low-cost disposable child-size chef's hats and aprons can be purchased online. Your children will really feel important when they get to wear a chef's hat while cooking.

### **Important Points to Remember**

- **Good cooks of all ages always wash their hands before cooking.**
- **Make sure you tell children to wait until the dish is done before sampling it. This will help prevent illness.**
- **Expect spills and messes.**
- **Children have short attention spans. Give them quick, simple jobs, and give instructions one at a time.**
- **Young children get excited and forget what they are supposed to do. Repeat directions as often as needed.**
- **Young cooks need constant supervision.**
- **Give children jobs to help with cleanup.**

*To help children learn words and symbols, create a large chart of all the ingredients and equipment that will be used in the recipe. For example, if the recipe includes apples, draw an apple on the chart with the word apple next to it and the number in front of it of how many apples you will need in the recipe.*

When cooking with kids read the recipe aloud to the kids so they will know what you're cooking. Have a couple children gather the ingredients as you call them out, while others can gather any utensils or bowls you need. This teaches preschoolers that preparation is important before cooking. Always show the children how to do each step before asking them to do it.

### **Keep It Simple**

**Simple, healthy recipes can be set up as an activity.** To make it a real learning experience, prepare recipe cards with a simple drawing that shows each child how to prepare their own serving. Include measurements at the bottom of the drawing and set the cards up from left to right. You can help the children read and follow the recipe.

**Choose your kid-friendly recipes based on the learning theme for the month or week.** If you're working on letters, you can choose an apple and dipping sauce for "A", cookies for "C", pizza for "P" and so forth.

**Use measuring cups with large numbers on it so the kids can see how much one cup, two cups, three cups and other measurements look like.** Hold up the measuring cup and tell the kids how much you need for the recipe and then have a child show you how far the measuring cup should be filled.

**Plan a day when the kids break into groups of two or three and cook a recipe you read aloud.** This helps preschoolers practice listening and following directions skills. Keep the recipe simple, such as putting together a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, making ants on a log or adding ingredients to a bowl.

### **Let Them Be Creative**

For a creative activity, set out three or four healthy foods, and let your children make a new snack or sandwich from them. Use foods your children can eat without choking. All cooks need to wash their hands before beginning.

#### **Start with: Whole grain crackers or graham crackers**

- Mini rice cakes or popcorn cakes
- Small bagels
- Small pieces of pita bread
- Whole-wheat tortillas



#### **Spreads could include:**

- Low-fat cream cheese or cheese spread
- Low-fat peanut butter, other nut butters or soy nut butter (if none of your children have peanut, nut or soy allergies)
- Jelly or jam with no sugar added
- Bean dip

- Hummus

**Toppings could include:**

- Slices of apple or banana
- Raisins or other dried fruit
- Sliced strawberries
- Slices of cucumber or squash
- Cherry tomatoes cut in small pieces
- Slices of cheese or hard-boiled egg



As you help your children make the new snack or sandwich talk about why it is healthy. Use a MyPlate poster and point out the different food groups that are included in the snack or sandwich. Explain that eating a variety of foods is healthy. Ask why the snack or sandwich tastes good. Is it sweet, juicy, chewy, or crunchy?

## Easy No-Cook Recipes

### Banana Dessert

This simple, easy to prepare, and nutritious snack requires no cooking and lets children be involved in preparing every step of the way.

For each child you'll need:

Ingredients:

- 1 small banana per child
- 1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt, plain, vanilla or fruit flavored
- ½ cup toasted oat cereal
- ¼ cup seasonal fresh fruit such as apple slices, strawberries, or blueberries cut up in small pieces.



All cooks need to wash their hands. Children can help wash fruits. Have safe, smooth-edged plastic knives and cutting boards available for children to use. Have each child peel a banana. If a child is not comfortable doing this, that's okay. Show the children how to slice their banana into bite-sized pieces and encourage them to slice their own. Children can also cut up strawberries and apples into bite size pieces.

Children can put their banana pieces in a small bowl, spoon the yogurt on top of the banana pieces, and sprinkle with cereal and fruit pieces.

## Banana Pudding in a Bag

*Serves 4, ½ cup per serving*

### Ingredients:

½ cup low-fat granola  
3 medium bananas  
½ cup applesauce, unsweetened  
½ cup nonfat vanilla yogurt



### Materials:

Large zip-top plastic bag

### Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have kids measure and place granola inside large zip-top plastic bag. Help them squeeze any air out of bag before sealing. Have kids lightly crush the granola by rolling a rolling pin or can over the cereal in the bag.

Have kids peel bananas and break or slice them into small pieces with a plastic knife and place in the bag of crushed granola. Let kids measure and add the applesauce and yogurt to the banana mixture in the bag. Adults should help kids close the bag tight, pressing out any extra air before sealing. Have the kids take turns **gently** squishing and mashing the ingredients together until they're well blended.

Let children squeeze the pudding into bowls and eat the pudding or you can write each child's name on their bag or chill the pudding in the sealed bags inside the refrigerator until ready to serve.

## Fruit Salad on a Stick

*Serves 6*

### Ingredients:

3 kiwi fruit, sliced ½ inch thick and slices quartered  
3 bananas, sliced ½ inch thick  
1 pint basket of strawberries, sliced ½ thick  
¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed  
1 cup fat-free vanilla or fruit-flavored yogurt



### Materials:

Coffee stirrers or long toothpicks with sharp tips cut off



Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have children thread fruit pieces on coffee stirs or toothpicks and lay completed skewers on a tray. Help one child mix orange juice concentrate and yogurt. Let children spoon dressing into small individual cups.

Let children dip and eat their own fruit skewers.

**Salad on A Stick**

*Serves 20*

Ingredients:

20 cherry tomatoes, cut in half  
mozzarella cheese, cut into 20 small squares  
20 small basil or spinach leaves  
20 coffee stirrers



Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Show children how to skewer a tomato half, a basil or spinach leaf, a square of the cheese, and then cap with the other tomato half. Let each child make their own salad on a stick.

Let children spoon low-fat ranch dressing into small individual cups.  
Let children dip and eat their own veggie skewers.

**Waldorf Salad**

Ingredients:

1 stalk celery  
1 apple  
1 cup seedless grapes, cut in half  
1 banana  
1 orange  
1 cup low-fat lemon yogurt



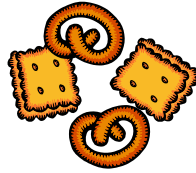
Directions:

Have children wash the celery, apple, and grapes. Children can peel the banana and orange or pluck grapes from their stems. An adult should slice the apple and celery, and cut grapes in half. Children can cut the apple slices, banana and orange sections into bite-size pieces with a plastic knife. Have children place fruit and celery in a large bowl. Add yogurt, mix well and serve.

## Trail Mix

### Ingredients:

Dry, low-sugar cereals  
Raisins  
Dried cranberries  
Small cheese crackers  
Granola  
Pretzels  
Butterscotch chips  
Nuts, if none of the children have nut allergies



### Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Place ingredients in individual bowls with spoons. Have kids select four or more ingredients to make a batch of trail mix. Have kids measure out 1/2 cup of each ingredient they have selected and pour it in a large bowl. Use a spoon to mix the ingredients together. Let each child scoop 1/2-cup servings into their own bowl or cup.

Store extra trail mix in a large, airtight container.

## Tasty Burritos

### Ingredients:

Whole-wheat flour tortillas  
Cooked lean ground beef or turkey  
Cheese, reduced-fat, shredded  
Refried beans  
Chopped tomatoes, olives, other chopped vegetables  
Mild salsa



### Directions:

Place all ingredients except tortillas in bowls. Place serving spoons in each bowl. Give one tortilla to each child. Let them select ingredients and spread a spoonful of each ingredient down the center of the tortilla. Show children how to fold one side of tortilla up an inch or so over one end of the ingredients. Do the same with the opposite side. Then show them how to fold one of the other sides over the ingredients and roll up the tortilla like a burrito. Cut each burrito in half and eat.

## Easy Minimal-Cooking Recipes

### Personal Pizzas

*Serves 10*

Ingredients:

5 English muffins cut in half and lightly toasted  
2 cups spaghetti sauce  
2 cups pineapple tidbits in own juice, drained  
2 cups lean diced ham  
2 cups reduced fat mozzarella cheese, shredded



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. All cooks need to wash their hands. Set out ingredients in bowls with spoons. Give each preschooler an English muffin half. Help the children add sauce to their pizzas, then allow them to top the pizza with the toppings of their choice. Encourage the children to make designs on the pizza with their desired toppings. Place each child's pizza on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper with child's name written beside their pizza. Bake the pizzas for 4-6 minutes or until the cheese melts and muffins are heated. Cut each child's pizza in quarters and cool slightly before serving.

### Funny, Fruity Pizzas

*Serves 10*

Ingredients:

10 slices low-fat mozzarella cheese slices (1 slice per child)  
5 English muffins, sliced in half (1 half per child)  
Fruit (2 each: apple, banana, orange, or seedless grapes)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. All cooks need to wash their hands. Have the children wash the fruit. Children can peel bananas and oranges (may need help) or pluck grapes from their stems. Give each child a cutting board and plastic knife. Have children cut the fruit into small pieces.

Give each child one half of an English muffin. Have the children place a slice of cheese on each muffin. Place English muffins on a baking sheet. An adult toasts the English muffins in oven or toaster oven until the cheese melts. When muffins cool slightly, have each child top his or her muffin with fruit.

## Work it Out Cookies

### Ingredients:

Rolled oats  
Brown sugar  
Butter or margarine, softened  
Flour  
Baking soda



### Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Give each child a bowl. Have available all the ingredients listed with the appropriate size measuring cups and spoons. Let each child measure 1 cup oatmeal, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup butter or margarine, 1/2 cup of flour, and 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda into their bowl. With each ingredient, show them how to measure it and place in their bowl. Encourage children to mash, knead, and squeeze using their clean hands until there aren't any lumps of butter. Show children how to form the dough into small balls and put on an ungreased cookie sheet. Have each child press their cookie down with their hand. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on cookie rack. Let each child have one cookie.

### **References:**

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.). \*Family child care connections\* 4(6). Urbana, IL: National Network for Child Care at the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

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Dear Parent:

We are cooking up fun in our center!

Did you know that cooking helps builds a child's self-esteem?

Helping in the kitchen builds confidence and early skills of independence. Most kids feel proud and important when they help prepare food. Sharing in family tasks helps them feel that they belong in the family.

Children are natural kitchen helpers. They like to share simple tasks of food shopping and picking foods for meals. They enjoy preparing and serving food to the family.

Children learn lots of things through cooking . Kitchen tasks give your child a chance to measure, count, and see food change. That is early math and science learning. Your child can learn new words and symbols by cooking with you. Talk about the food and what you are doing. Read words on food containers together.

Small muscle skills develop, too, when your child uses his or her hands to help with kitchen tasks. Cleanup teaches responsibility. It is part of many creative, messy things we do.

Cooking together is fun family time. Kitchen time offers a special parenting chance. Cooking together creates closer bonds and lifelong memories. It is also a chance to talk and hear what your child has to share.

Children of different ages have different skills. Pick kitchen tasks that match your child's abilities.

2-year-olds can stir, pour, shake and tear.

3-year-olds can spread, mix, pour and knead.

4 to 6-year-olds can cut, grate, measure and mash.

If your child makes a cooking mess, it is okay! Young kids do not have the same muscle coordination and skills that you do. Even if meals take longer to prepare, it is worth letting your child help. Kitchen time is learning time that you share together. Have fun cooking with your kids!

Sincerely,



**Reference:** NIBBLES FOR HEALTH 31 Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service



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## Banana Dessert

This simple, easy to prepare, and nutritious snack requires no cooking and lets children be involved in preparing every step of the way.

**For each child you'll need:**

**Ingredients:**

**1 small banana per child**

**1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt, plain, vanilla or fruit flavored**

**½ cup toasted oat cereal**

**¼ cup seasonal fresh fruit such as apple slices, strawberries, or blueberries cut up in small pieces.**



**Directions:** All cooks need to wash their hands. Children can help wash fruits. Have safe, smooth-edged plastic knives and cutting boards available for children to use. Have each child peel a banana. If a child is not comfortable doing this, that's okay. Show the children how to slice their banana into bite-sized pieces and encourage them to slice their own. Children can also cut up strawberries and apples into bite size pieces.

Children can put their banana pieces in a small bowl, spoon the yogurt on top of the banana pieces, and sprinkle with cereal and fruit pieces.

## Trail Mix

**Ingredients:**

**Dry, low-sugar cereals**

**Raisins**

**Dried cranberries**

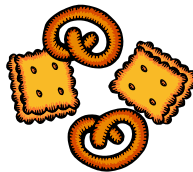
**Small cheese crackers**

**Granola**

**Pretzels**

**Butterscotch chips**

**Nuts, if none of the children have nut allergies**



**Directions:**

All cooks need to wash their hands. Place ingredients in individual bowls with spoons. Have kids select four or more ingredients to make a batch of trail mix. Have kids measure out 1/2 cup of each ingredient they have selected and pour it in a large bowl. Use a spoon to mix the ingredients together. Let each child scoop 1/2-cup servings into their own bowl or cup. Store extra trail mix in a large, airtight container.

## Salad on a Stick

Serves 20

### **Ingredients:**

**20 cherry tomatoes, cut in half**  
**mozzarella cheese, cut into 20 small squares**  
**20 small basil or spinach leaves**  
**20 coffee stirrers**



### **Directions:**

All cooks need to wash their hands. Show children how to skewer a tomato half, a basil or spinach leaf, a square of the cheese, and then cap with the other tomato half. Let each child make their own salad on a stick.

Let children spoon low-fat ranch dressing into small individual cups.  
Let children dip and eat their own veggie skewers.

## Banana Pudding in a Bag

Serves 4,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup per serving

### **Ingredients:**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-fat granola**  
**3 medium bananas**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup applesauce, unsweetened**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup nonfat vanilla yogurt**



### **Materials:**

Large zip-top plastic bag

### **Directions:**

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have kids measure and place granola inside large zip-top plastic bag. Help them squeeze any air out of bag before sealing. Have kids lightly crush the granola by rolling a rolling pin or can over the cereal in the bag.

Have kids peel bananas and break or slice them into small pieces with a plastic knife and place in the bag of crushed granola. Let kids measure and add the applesauce and yogurt to the banana mixture in the bag. Adults should help kids close the bag tight, pressing out any extra air before sealing. Have the kids take turns **gently** squishing and mashing the ingredients together until they're well blended.

## Waldorf Salad

### Ingredients:

1 stalk celery  
1 apple  
1 cup seedless grapes, cut in half  
1 banana  
1 orange  
1 cup low-fat lemon yogurt



### Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have children wash the celery, apple, and grapes. Children can peel the banana and orange or pluck grapes from their stems. An adult should slice the apple and celery, and cut grapes in half. Children can cut the apple slices, grapes, banana and orange sections into bite-size pieces with a plastic knife. Have children place fruit and celery in a large bowl. Add yogurt, mix well and serve.

## Tasty Burritos

### Ingredients:

Whole-wheat flour tortillas  
Cooked lean ground beef or turkey  
Cheese, reduced-fat, shredded  
Refried beans  
Chopped tomatoes, olives, other chopped vegetables  
Mild salsa



### Directions:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Place all ingredients except tortillas in bowls. Place serving spoons in each bowl. Give one tortilla to each child. Let them select ingredients and spread a spoonful of each ingredient down the center of the tortilla. Show children how to fold one side of tortilla up an inch or so over one end of the ingredients. Do the same with the opposite side. Then show them how to fold one of the other sides over the ingredients and roll up the tortilla like a burrito. Cut each burrito in half and eat.



## Easy Minimal-Cooking Recipes

### Personal Pizzas

*Serves 10*

#### **Ingredients:**

**5 English muffins cut in half and lightly toasted**  
**2 cups spaghetti sauce**  
**2 cups pineapple tidbits in own juice, drained**  
**2 cups lean diced ham**  
**2 cups reduced fat mozzarella cheese, shredded**



#### **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. All cooks need to wash their hands. Set out ingredients in bowls with spoons. Give each preschooler an English muffin half. Help the children add sauce to their pizzas, then allow them to top the pizza with the toppings of their choice. Encourage the children to make designs on the pizza with their desired toppings. Place each child's pizza on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper with child's name written beside their pizza. Bake the pizzas for 4-6 minutes or until the cheese melts and muffins are heated. Cut each child's pizza in quarters and cool slightly before serving.

## Funny, Fruity Pizzas

*Serves 10*

#### **Ingredients:**

**10 slices low-fat mozzarella cheese slices (1 slice per child)**  
**5 English muffins, sliced in half (1 half per child)**  
**Fruit (2 each: apple, banana, orange, or seedless grapes)**



#### **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. All cooks need to wash their hands. Have the children wash the fruit. Children can peel bananas and oranges (may need help) or pluck grapes from their stems. Give each child a cutting board and plastic knife. Have children cut the fruit into small pieces.

Give each child one half of an English muffin. Have the children place a slice of cheese on each muffin. Place English muffins on a baking sheet. An adult toasts the English muffins in oven or toaster oven until the cheese melts. When muffins cool slightly, have each child top his or her muffin with fruit.

## Work it Out Cookies

### **Ingredients:**

**Rolled oats**  
**Brown sugar**  
**Butter or margarine, softened**  
**Flour**  
**Baking soda**



### **Directions:**

All cooks need to wash their hands. Give each child a bowl. Have available all the ingredients listed with the appropriate size measuring cups and spoons. Let each child measure 1 cup oatmeal, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup butter or margarine, 1/2 cup of flour, and 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda into their bowl. With each ingredient, show them how to measure it and place in their bowl. Encourage children to mash, knead, and squeeze using their clean hands until there aren't any lumps of butter. Show children how to form the dough into small balls and put on an ungreased cookie sheet. Have each child press their cookie down with their hand. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on cookie rack. Let each child have one cookie.

## Fruit Salad on a Stick

*Serves 6*

### **Ingredients:**

**3 kiwi fruit, sliced 1/2 inch thick and slices quartered**  
**3 bananas, sliced 1/2 inch thick**  
**1 pint basket of strawberries, sliced 1/2 thick**  
**1/4 cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed**  
**1 cup fat-free vanilla or fruit-flavored yogurt**



### **Materials:**

Coffee stirrers or long toothpicks with sharp tips cut off

### **Directions:**

All cooks need to wash their hands. Have children thread fruit pieces on coffee stirs or toothpicks and lay completed skewers on a tray.

Help one child mix orange juice concentrate and yogurt. Let children spoon dressing into small individual cups. Let children dip and eat their own fruit skewers.