

Now you're cook'en



When can you start?

You can start even before your little one can walk or talk by reading books. Then once your little one has the skill open the kitchen up to some fun.

“Make it fun to explore the kitchen...”

Where to start

- Read food orientated books
- Start up a small vegie garden
- Involve children in baking
- Don't forget setting the table
- Sprouting beans is great fun
- Expect a mess
- Make it relaxed and fun

Why get kids cooking?

It's wonderful to sit down to a meal that has involved the whole family, and children pride themselves on helping others. There are so many advantages to involving children in food and meal preparation, ranging from nutritional advantages such as:

- ★ Establishing healthy eating habits.
- ★ Encouraging children to make good eating decisions.
- ★ Avoiding fussy eating or reducing the impact of fussy eating habits.
- ★ Making a positive association between healthy food and a healthy life.

Through to:

- ★ Improved motor skills.
- ★ Encouraging exploration and confidence.
- ★ Gaining an understanding of the importance of food hygiene.
- ★ Appreciation of cultures and their diversity.
- ★ Spending quality time together and sharing experiences.

Ways to get started

- ★ Read books that involve food.
- ★ Make it fun to explore the kitchen (safely of course): pots and pans make great music to children's ears, stirring spoons and utensils are fun to nibble and plastic containers make great rattles.
- ★ Encourage them to help set the table and lay out the cutlery.
- ★ Together, gather food from the garden (herbs, fruit and vegetables) or from the supermarket.
- ★ Encourage them to help wash the produce and even peel it.
- ★ Baking is a great starter and perfect employment for a chief mixer. It can be worthwhile to invest in non-stick baking mats and trays.

Sow the seeds of interest

- ★ Start growing the cut ends of potatoes, carrots and other root vegies. Or pop the odd potato into the garden and grow your own.
- ★ Sprout beans and seeds such as mung beans, alfalfa and wheat grass in little egg cups (made from cleaned eggshell halves with soaked cottonwool), but don't forget to water them.

Working up

Encourage children to master the skills needed to prepare meals. This will help them work towards putting it all together and making their own masterpieces.

- ★ Some toddlers and many preschoolers will be able to assist you with cutting, grating, tossing salads, adding toppings and herbs, pouring and combining.
- ★ Work up to skills such as measuring ingredients.
- ★ Involve them in planning and creating a whole meal from start to finish.
- ★ Don't forget that presentation is important so dishing up is the 'icing on the cake'.
- ★ Set the rules early, use frequent positive reminders of what is okay to touch.
- ★ Enlist your helper when you have plenty of time and it can be a stress-free and fun experience for all concerned.
- ★ Expect things to take more time and be a bit messier.
- ★ Keep up the praise and encourage your child to be proud of their creation.

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