



Food For Thought

Healthy Ideas for Preschoolers

Food and Family



Many times adults think it is easier and faster to do something themselves rather than ask their kids to help. Cooking is definitely one of those things. It is faster and often easier to do it yourself, but are there advantages to including the kids in this activity? The answer to this question is definitely **yes**. There are also benefits to eating meals together.

Here are some important reasons to cook and eat meals with your kids.

- ✓ Studies have shown that eating with other people results in improved nutrition at all ages.
- ✓ It has been found that interactions between parents and children at mealtime can improve both learning skills and language skills.
- ✓ Shared meals offer people a way to express togetherness, affection and nourish the mind as well as the body.
- ✓ Many traditions and memories are food-related, offering people a way to link past, present and future generations.

- ✓ Through cooking activities, children learn a basic life skill everyone needs to have. It can also help with reading and math skills and learning to follow directions.
- ✓ How many times a week does your family eat together? Try setting a goal that the whole family will eat together a certain number of times a week.

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking is fun and kids love to help, but hot ovens and sharp knives can also make it dangerous. It is important to let your kids help in the kitchen, but it is also important to have some rules for cooking. Summer is a good time for you and your kids to work together.

Ten rules for cooking fun and safety:

1. An adult should always be in the kitchen when a child is cooking.
2. Always wash your hands before you start cooking.
3. Collect all ingredients and utensils before you start.

4. Be very careful with sharp knives. Hold them with the blade pointing downward and always use a cutting board.
5. When cooking on top of the stove, turn the saucepan handles to the side so you do not hit them.
6. Have a space ready for hot things. Put them on a mat or a wooden board, not straight onto a table or work surface.
7. Always wear oven gloves when picking up anything hot, or when putting things into or taking them out of the oven.
8. Keep a towel nearby so that spills may be wiped up quickly. Clean up anything that spills on the floor immediately.
9. Wash up as you go along. When you have finished cooking put everything away and clean up any mess.
10. An adult should turn the oven on and be sure it is turned off when you are finished.

Using these rules can make cooking fun and safe for you and your kids



Food Preparation Activities:

Four Year Olds

- Wash vegetables
- Shuck corn
- Snap beans
- Wipe table
- Put toast in toaster
- Tear lettuce
- Shape burgers and meatballs
- Peel bananas (if top is cut)
- Place things in trash
- Break eggs into bowl
- Measure and mix ingredients
- Open packages
- Knead and shape dough
- Stir mixtures in bowl with spoon
- Pour cereal, milk and water



- Make sandwiches
- Toss salads
- “Wash” baking utensils (water play)
- Clear own place setting
- Use blenders or hand mixers with close supervision
- Set and clear the table
- Make pancakes, French toast, scrambled eggs, hot cereal and rice with close supervision

Five Year Olds – all of the above plus:

- Make cakes and cookies using baking mixes



Cinnamon Pull-Apart Bread

Nonstick cooking spray
1/2 cup sugar
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
4 Tbsp. margarine
2 pop-cans refrigerated dinner rolls



Parent Prep

Spray a 9”x5” pan with the nonstick cooking spray. In a small shallow bowl, blend the sugar with the cinnamon. Melt the margarine. Open the pop-cans and pull the rolls apart and place on a cutting board.

Call the Kids

Show your children how to cut each of the rolls in half using a plastic knife. Then show them how to dip each piece of dough into the margarine, then roll in the sugar mixture to coat all sides. Place the coated pieces of dough on top of each other in the prepared pan. Sprinkle any remaining sugar mixture over the top. Bake at 375 ° F. for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown. Let cool slightly, remove from the pan and place on a serving dish or plate. Your children now can pull apart the pieces of cinnamon bread.

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