

Children usually love to help out in the kitchen. Even young children can assist with many different tasks. One of the best parts about cooking with children is that they are more likely to try foods they have helped prepare. The next time you are preparing a healthy meal, involve the kids by letting them help in the following ways.

Two-year-olds can help with:

- **Cleaning** vegetables and fruits
- **Dipping** foods
- **Washing and ripping** lettuce and other greens
- **Tearing** bread into smaller pieces
- **Delivering** shatterproof tableware to the table

Three-year-olds can help with:

- **Spreading** butters, jams, or other spreads onto foods
- **Pouring** liquids into batter (you measure first)
- **Mixing** batter, dips, or other dry and wet ingredients together
- **Washing** fruits and vegetables
- **Hollowing** out vegetables seeds or pits
- **Kneading** dough
- **Serving** foods
- **Layering** fruit and yogurt in parfaits
- **Placing** things in the trash, either after cooking or after a meal

Four- and five-year-olds can help with:

- **Peeling** certain vegetables and fruits, like onions or bananas
- **Mashing** soft fruits and vegetables
- **Washing** fruits and vegetables
- **Cutting** soft foods with a plastic knife (e.g. soft fruits and vegetables)
- **Using** cookie cutters
- **Squeezing** oranges, lemons, and limes to make juices
- **Cracking** open, breaking and pouring eggs
- **Beating** eggs with an egg beater
- **Measuring** dry ingredients
- **Wiping** up the cooking area
- **Setting** the table
- **Clearing** the table after a meal and delivering the dishes to the sink or dishwasher

continued



Even little ones can spend time in the kitchen while you are preparing food.

Have an extra set of bowls and cooking utensils for infants and young toddlers to play with while you cook. Talk about what you are doing to teach them new vocabulary and allow them to smell and taste foods as appropriate.

Here are a few cooking activities to get you started:

- **Veggies and Fruit with Different Dips or Sauces** – Allow children to cut fruits and vegetables when possible and mix their own dips.
- **Layered Yogurt and Fruit Parfaits** – Allow children to create their own parfaits by layering the yogurt and fruit.
- **Garden “Roll-Ups”** – Use lettuce or tortillas as your wrap, and fill with the child’s choice of vegetables, sauces, herbs, etc.
- **Cucumber, Bell Pepper, or Summer Squash “Boats”** – Allow the children to hollow out their own vegetable and fill with cream cheese, herbs, other vegetables, etc. If you have access to an oven, you can take this recipe to another level and fill hollowed vegetables with rice, beans, cheese, etc. and bake at 375 degrees for 10-15 minutes or until tender. Make sure each child’s boat is identifiable as their own.
- **Fruit and Veggie Insects** – Make apple lady bugs by cutting a red apple in half, then sticking raisin “spots” on using cream cheese as the “glue.” Make cucumber caterpillars by slicing a cucumber in half lengthwise, then decorate with finely chopped vegetables, using dip or cream cheese as “glue.”

bon
appetit!