

■ Getting Kids in the Kitchen ■

“Nothing says lovin’ like something from the oven.” This food jingle from an ad some time ago still rings true when it comes to cooking and preparing food with your kids. It takes time, patience and planning to teach your kids food skills but it’s worth it.

Short-Term Benefits of Cooking with Your Children:

- Encourages kids to try new foods, especially veggies and fruits
- It’s a stepping stone to appreciating family meals
- It opens the door to conversation and sharing quality time together
- Kids spend less time with electronics while they are cooking.

Longer-Term Benefits of Cooking with Your Children:

- Increases independence and autonomy by learning skills they can use for a lifetime
- Builds self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment and pride
- Increases family bonding which reduces the likelihood of substance abuse

While it’s never too late to start teaching your kids food skills, the earlier you start the better. Set the expectation that all family members are responsible for age-appropriate food preparation, whether it’s setting the table, washing vegetables for a salad, peeling and chopping produce, following a recipe or participating in clean up.

Begin by maximizing opportunities on weekends when schedules are less harried. Involve the whole family in planning the weekly menu and preparing the shopping list. Let family members offer ideas for foods they like to eat. Take them shopping so that they learn how to choose healthy foods within your family budget.

Breakfast is one of the easiest meals to prepare when kids are starting to learn food skills. It’s also one of the most important meals for promoting good health,

better school grades and better moods. The easier the dish is to prepare, the more likely kids will look forward to making it again. Check out the kid-friendly recipes in the Resources Section and begin making meal-time memories with your family.



CONVERSATION STARTER

What meal would you like to help me prepare for the family this week? Could you make some time to come along to the grocery store with me so we can shop together for the ingredients?

RESOURCES

- **Cookspiration**
<http://www.cookspiration.com/>
- **Better Together**
<http://www.bettertogetherbc.ca/>
- **Family-Friendly One-Week Plan**
www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Menu-Planning/

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