

February 26, 2021

## **Teaching Your Child to Cook**

By Judith J Castillo, Neighborhood News Staff Writer

Flipping, frying, dicing, slicing—all the savory sounds of cooking—so what's missing? The laughter and chatter of young children helping in the kitchen. Teaching children the lifelong skills of cooking will stir in them a love for the culinary, one teaspoon at a time.

### **Take baby steps**

Souffle, now that's a difficult task...teaching a child to cook, not so much, if you take it in steps. Depending on the age of the child, incrementally introduce kitchen tasks appropriate for their level of skill. You wouldn't introduce a toddler to the task of filleting a fish, but you could have them help set the table, pull grapes off of the bunch, or peel hard boiled eggs. Getting children comfortable and involved with cooking-related tasks is the first step. All processes in the kitchen environment, even washing dishes, stocking fridge and pantry, and taking out the trash are part of the job. Allow your kids to take part in all of these activities to increase their comfort and confidence level.

### **Make it fun**

Do you salsa? Not the condiment, but the dance! Have music playing in the background to help children get excited about spending time with others in the kitchen. Kids are discovering new things every day in their lives. Show them the tools of the trade, the different kitchen gadgets and how to use them, salad spinners, peelers, mixers, mandolines, mashers, strainers, and the list goes on. Kids can don their best apron or chef's hat to add to the excitement. Make your kitchen a restaurant and create a menu of the meal the kids will be serving to the family.

### **Plan if you can**

Planning is crucial. Making a menu of items your kids will prepare and shopping for ingredients ahead of time will ensure that your efforts, like my souffle, are not a flop. Menu items like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, omelettes, fruit salads, loaded baked potato, yogurt parfaits, or chocolate chip pancakes are easy and kid delicious. A simple internet search will yield endless possibilities. Search with your children to find foods they will enjoy.

Bon Appetit!

For further reading, check out these articles:

- <https://mommyuniversitynj.com/2015/03/16/10-benefits-of-cooking-with-kids/>
- <https://www.momables.com/teach-your-kid-how-to-cook-by-age/>
- <https://www.kitchenstewardship.com/teach-kids-cooking/>



