



HEALTHY SCHOOLS

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Cooking at Home

Cooking with Children

Cooking is a fun activity for children to do at home, but did you know that a kitchen can be a classroom for children to learn?

In the kitchen, children can practice:

- Nutrition by learning about foods and how to cook meals using basic ingredients
- Math by measuring ingredients and understanding fractions
- Language by reading a recipe and learning new cooking terms
- Social skills by sharing utensils and assigning responsibilities for tasks, etc.

This package has information on how to help your child feel more comfortable in the kitchen, a list of budget-friendly recipes, and a list of skills that children can practice in the kitchen.

Happy cooking!

How to teach children and youth to cook

Most people know that we learn better by doing. Therefore, the best way for children and youth to learn to cook is by letting them try different tasks on their own. Follow these tips to make sure you making cooking a fun, safe, and engaging experience:

- 1. Be aware that cooking could take longer** - One of the main things to keep in mind is that cooking with kids can be messy and may take longer. That is why it is important to be prepared and allow more time than usual.
- 2. Think safety!** Keep in mind your child's ability when giving them a task. Young children for example (2-3 years old) like to explore using their senses, so giving them tasks such as washing fruits in the sink, or adding chopped items to a dish can keep them engaged. As children get older, they will be more comfortable with doing more tasks and even completing a recipe by themselves.
Check out the handout on age-friendly cooking tasks to learn more.
- 3. Keep it simple and fun!** Choose recipes that your children can help with. Cooking can also be a fun way for children to learn and share family cooking traditions. Choose an old family recipe to keep kids engaged or pick a culture to explore through food.



Before you start, let’s review some kitchen basics

Learning to cook safely to avoid cuts, burns or foodborne illness is an important part of any cooking lesson.

Food Safety

Washing your Hands

Keeping hands clean while cooking is very important. Everyone must wash their hands before and during cooking. It is especially important to wash your hands after coughing or using the washroom.

Teach kids why, how and when to wash their hands thoroughly before getting started. Visit the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit’s website for information on how to wash your hands properly: <https://www.wechu.org/resources/wash-your-hands-eng-poster>

Preventing cross-contamination

It is important to separate food to prevent cross-contamination. Cross-contamination is when germs transfer from any food, surface or person to a ready-to-eat food.

Here are some ways you can prevent cross-contamination:

- Wash your hands
- Use separate cutting boards for different foods: one for raw meats, one for fish, one for poultry, and one for produce
- Wash, rinse and sanitize cutting boards, and utensils before re-using them
- Do not put ready-to-eat foods on surfaces (e.g., plates, boards, etc.) that were used for raw foods
- Properly cover all food in the fridge

Cooking foods to the right temperature

Foods need to be cooked to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. The best way to be sure that a food has reached a high enough temperature during cooking is to use a probe thermometer. Checking the temperature of foods can be a good activity to show kids.

Whole poultry	82°C	180°F
Individual pieces	74°C	165°F
Mixtures containing poultry, egg, meat or fish	74°C	165°F
Ground beef and veal Deboned and rolled oats	71°C	160°F
All pork products	71°C	160°F
Lamb Ground, deboned and rolled oats	71°C	160°F
All fish products	70°C	158°F
Egg dishes	74°C	165°F



Knife Safety

Children and youth should always be supervised by an adult when using knives.

Here are some tips to avoid cuts:

- Make sure knives are properly sharpen. Use sharp knives with care, do not rush
- Use the right knife for the job (e.g., a small pairing knife for vegetables and fruit) and cut on a proper surface
- If a knife falls, do not try to catch it. Step back and let it fall
- Put dirty knives besides the sink and wash them one by one. Do not put them in the sink because you may cut yourself while reaching into the soapy water.

Watch this video for more tips on how to handle a knife safely and basic cuts:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-Fg7l7G1zw>



RECIPES

Here is a list of some delicious and budget-friendly recipes that you can use to get children involved in the kitchen



Italian Minestrone Soup (serves 8)

Cost: \$9.00 (not including staples like oils and spices/herbs)

Ingredients:

- 1 onion
- 4 celery stalks
- 4 carrots
- 2 garlic cloves
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil
- 5 ml (1 tsp) dried basil
- 5 ml (1 tsp) dried oregano
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) pepper
- 1-796 ml (24 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1.8 L (7 cups) low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1-540 ml (19 oz) can red kidney beans
- 125 ml (½ cup) small pasta (shells or wheels)
- 500 ml (2 cups) leafy greens, chopped (Swiss chard, collard greens, kale, or spinach) can be frozen

Directions:

1. Peel and dice onion, celery, and carrots. Mince garlic.
2. Heat 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil in large soup pot over medium heat and add onion and garlic. Sauté until onions are translucent, about 4 minutes.
3. Add celery and carrot. Cook until they begin to soften, about 5 minutes.
4. Stir in dried basil, dried oregano, and pepper. Cook for 1 minute to warm the herbs.
5. Open canned tomatoes. Add tomatoes and broth to the large soup pot. Cover and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.
6. Open the can of kidney beans. Drain and rinse.
7. Stir in kidney beans and pasta. Cook until pasta is al dente, about 5-8 minutes.
8. Stir in leafy greens and heat until just wilted.

What skills can you teach with this recipe?

Washing vegetables

Vegetables like carrots have a skin that, although we may not eat it, is important to wash so that germs that may be on the outside do not get inside when we slice through it. To wash the food, you can run the vegetable under cold tap water and scrub using a produce brush or a hard sponge.

Learning some common cooking terms

Cooking comes with a set of terms that are used in recipes that may not be too familiar for everyone. In this recipe, the term 'al dente' is used. This term means that the pasta will be cooked to a point that it is still firm when bitten. Check the glossary of terms attached to this resource for more terms commonly used in recipes.



Three Bean Veggie Chili (serves 6)

Cost: \$9.00 (not including staples like oils and spices/herbs)

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- ¾ cup of dices carrots or sweet potatoes
- 1 red pepper or green pepper (optional)
- 2 cans (28 oz/796 ml) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (13 oz/398 ml) tomato sauce
- 1 can (19 oz/540 ml) red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (19 oz/540 ml) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (19 oz/540 ml) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- Pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Peel and diced the onion and carrots or sweet potatoes; peel and mince the garlic; wash and dice the bell pepper (if using).
2. Drain and rinse the beans and chickpeas in a strainer.
3. In a large pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, red and green peppers. Cook until slightly tender.
4. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, beans, chickpeas, corn, chili powder, cumin and pepper.
5. Simmer for 20-30 minutes.

What skills can you teach with this recipe?

Using a can opener

Remind children to clean the lid of the can before opening it. This will prevent any germs that are on the surface of the can from touching the food.

Measuring ingredients

You can review the different types of measuring equipment, for example measuring spoons, dry measuring cups, and liquid measuring cups. In this recipe, measuring spoons can be used to measure the spices. To properly use a measuring spoon, scoop out the ingredient and then use the back of a knife to level off the top and get an exact amount.

Watch this video to learn more: <https://startcooking.com/video/how-to-measure-food>

You can have children practice using measuring spoons using flour or water. This is also a great way for children to practice using fractions (e.g., 1 tablespoon, ½ tablespoon, etc.)



Spaghetti and Meat Sauce (serves 4)

Cost: \$7 (not including staples like oils and spices/herbs)

Ingredients:

- ½ lb ground beef
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cups of grated carrots
- 1 can stewed tomatoes
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cooked spaghetti (roughly 400 grams)

Directions:

1. Turn on stove to medium heat. Cook and stir ground beef and onion in a large frypan until the beef has browned. Drain off fat.
2. Add carrots, tomatoes and oregano to the frypan. Heat to boiling. Lower heat, cover and simmer 25 to 30 mins. Stir several times. Add salt and pepper to taste.
3. Serve sauce with hot cooked spaghetti

Source: Basic Shelf Cookbook

What skills can you teach with this recipe?

How to use a grater

Make sure you supervise children when using a grater to avoid cuts. Here are some tips for using a grater safely:

- Always use the grater on a flat surface
- Keep the food to a medium to large size. This will prevent your fingers from touching the grater because the food was too small
- Use a simple up-and-down motion and hold the food at an angle
- Take your time, do not rush



Tex-Mex Black Bean Salad (serves 8)

Cost: \$12 (not including staples like oils and spices/herbs)

Ingredients:

- 125 ml (½ cup) olive oil
- Juice of 3 limes (90ml or 6 tbsp)
- Zest of 1 lime
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp) salt
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) cayenne pepper
- 2-540 ml (19 oz) cans black beans
- 500 ml (2 cups) frozen corn or 3 ears fresh cooked corn
- 2 bell peppers (e.g., red, orange or yellow)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 medium shallot (optional, if available)
- 125 ml (½ cup) fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish
- 2 avocados (optional, if available)

Directions:

DRESSING:

1. Zest 1 lime and juice 3 limes. Add to a small bowl.
2. Add olive oil, sugar, salt, and cayenne pepper to the lime zest and lime juice. Whisk to combine.

SALAD:

1. If using fresh corn, cook and set aside to cool.
2. Open the can of black beans and place in a strainer. Drain and rinse.
3. Chop peppers and cilantro. Mince garlic and shallot.
4. Add black beans, red peppers, cilantro, garlic, shallot, and corn to large bowl (if using frozen corn, it can be added right into the bowl without cooking).
5. Pour dressing over the salad and toss to combine.
6. When ready to serve, chop avocados and mix gently into the salad. Be careful not to mash avocados.

What skills can you teach with this recipe?

How to juice a lemon/lime

There are other ways to juice a lemon/lime without using a juicer. Follow these easy steps!

1. Wash the lemon/lime and place it on a clean cutting board
2. Roll the lemon/lime back and forth with your palm. This will cause more juice to come out. Cut the lemon/lime in half (width-wise)
3. Insert a fork or spoon in the middle of the lemon/lime while twisting and squeezing it at the same time
4. Enjoy!

Watch this quick video to learn more: <https://startcooking.com/video/juicing-a-lemon>



Broccoli, Kale and Lentil Soup (serves 4)

Cost: \$11 (not including staples like oils and spices/herbs)

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/8 tsp smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup of dried lentils rinsed
- 2 ½ cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- 4 cups chopped broccoli (stems and florets separated) can be frozen
- 4 cups chopped packed trimmed kale, can be frozen
- 2 cups heated milk. If using evaporated milk (canned), use 1 cup of evaporated milk and 1 cup of water
- 2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice or white wine vinegar

Directions:

1. In a pot, melt butter over medium heat. Sauté onions, garlic, hot pepper flakes and 1/4 tsp (1 mL) each salt and pepper for about 5 minutes or until softened and starting to turn golden. Stir in lentils, broth and broccoli stems. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Stir in broccoli florets, kale and milk. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally and adjusting heat to prevent boiling, for 15 to 20 minutes or until lentils and vegetables are soft.
3. Use an immersion blender in the pot or transfer soup to a blender or food processor, in batches, and purée, until smooth or slightly chunky, as desired.
4. Return to pot, if necessary. Heat over medium heat until steaming, but do not let boil. Stir in more milk if soup is too thick. Drizzle in lemon juice while stirring. Season with up to 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt and pepper to taste.

Source: Cookspiration

What skills can you teach with this recipe?

How to mince garlic

Did you know that the smaller you cut the garlic the more intense is the flavour? Garlic can be chopped using a pairing knife or finely minced using a chef's knife.

Watch this quick video on how to mince garlic: <https://startcooking.com/video/preparing-garlic>



Fun Food Crafts for Everyone in the Family to Enjoy

Fun placemats

Decorate a large piece of coloured paper using craft supplies, paint or markers. Children can draw or use pictures of foods using grocery store flyers to add to the placemat. Make a placemat for each member of the family and enjoy a colourful family dinner.

Grow your own mini herb greenhouse

Sprinkle her seeds (e.g., parsley, chives, basil, etc.) in a small paper cup or pot filled with potting soil and lightly cover them. Mist the soil with water from a spray bottle or small watering can, and then cover the top with some cling film and place in a sunny location, like a windowsill. Remove the plastic wrap once the sprouts begin popping up (within a few days) and remove any weak or crowded seedlings as necessary. Once the herbs are large enough, you can transplant them to your own outdoor garden.

Rice maracas

Make rice maracas by filling a paper cup half full with uncooked rice. Place a second paper cup on top and tape together well. Shake the maracas to make rhythms. This activity can also be done with paper towel rolls for “rain sticks.” Try filling the maracas with other dried foods such as lentils to see what different sounds are made.

Chef hat

Make a head-band by folding newspapers or grocery store flyers, and staple the ends together. Be sure it fits around the participant’s head. Use three sheets of tissue paper to make the top part of the hat by taping the edges to the inside of the headband. Try to make the tissue paper sheets overlap and be sure to give the hat a lot of height. Place a crumpled up sheet of tissue paper to sit inside the hat to keep the hat tall.

Personalized aprons

Let your child personalize his/her own apron (or an old long tshirt) using fabric paint or markers.

Seedy artwork

Collect a mix of seeds, rice and legumes. Using glue and coloured paper, let children glue the seeds onto the paper in a design, shape, etc.

Adapted from: You’re the Chef program – Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.



Glossary of Cooking Terms

Chop: To cut food into small, bite-size pieces with a sharp knife on a cutting board

Beat: To stir or mix ingredients with a whisk, spoon or a mixer until smooth

Dice: To cut food into small 6 mm (¼ inch) cube-shaped pieces

Fold: To gently mix ingredients by moving food from the center and lifting towards the edge of the bowl

Mince: To cut food as small as you can

Purée: To grind or mash food through a sieve or blender so that the food becomes a smooth, thick consistency

Sauté: To cook food quickly in a small amount of oil in a pan over direct heat

Set: To allow a food to become solid or semi-solid

Simmer: To heat liquids in a saucepan on low heat so that the small bubbles appear on the surface around the sides of the liquid

Slice: To cut foods such as apples, carrots, tomatoes, meat or bread into thin sections or pieces, using a sharp knife

Stiff peaks: Egg whites whipped until the peaks formed stay upright

Stir: To mix two or more ingredients with a spoon, using a circular motion

Toss: To turn pieces of food over several times, until the ingredients are mixed together

Whisk: To mix together by beating with a whisk or mixer

Adapted from: You're the Chef program – Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.



Kitchen Skills at Every Age

Kids learn about food through their senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing, and tasting). Teaching kitchen skills not only helps your child to learn about food but also teaches them an important life skill.

Since kids develop cooking skills at different rates, introduce your child to skills that match their abilities at each age and stage. Remember to have fun and talk with your child.

<p>2-3 Year Olds Kids this age often insist on doing a task but their attention spans are short. Try simple tasks and supervise them for safety.</p>	<p>Kitchen Skills To Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dry lettuce in a salad spinner• Break bread into pieces• Dip foods (e.g. dip bread into egg batter)• Pick fresh herb leaves off the stem• Add ingredients to a bowl• Stir to combine ingredients• Help find ingredients• Carry unbreakable items to the table• Put things in the garbage after cooking• Shake salad dressing in a closed container• Put paper muffin cups in the muffin tin
<p>4-6 Year Olds This is an age where kids vary in their motor skills, independence and the ability to focus. Cooking can help to develop these skills.</p>	<p>Kitchen Skills To Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kitchen skills from the previous age group• Find the tools and equipment needed• Assemble foods: make trail mix or yogurt sundae with toppings you have prepared• Help measure, add and stir ingredients• Help pour batter into baking dish• Slice soft cooked vegetables, soft fruit, cheese or tofu with a plastic dull knife• Crack and beat an egg• Spread butter and/or spreads• Wash and scrub vegetables and fruits• Tear lettuce to make salad• Peel some fruit (e.g. bananas)• Mash soft fruit and vegetables• Juice oranges, lemons and limes• Press cookie cutters• Arrange food on serving plate• Set the table and clear the table• Cook with a friend for a fun play date



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell you where food comes from
<p>7-8 Year Olds</p> <p>Kids this age can follow simple steps for recipes, can share and take turns. Start to teach cooking vocabulary (e.g. mince, dice, chop, sift, beat, grill, broil).</p>	<p>Kitchen Skills To Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen skills from the previous age groups • Use simple kitchen equipment (e.g. grater, toaster, blender, can opener or garlic press) after you show them how to do so safely • Fill and level measuring spoons and cups • Read a simple recipe out loud and do most recipe steps, except placing items in or out of a hot oven, with adult supervision • Use the microwave with your help • Rinse grains and canned beans • Scoop out baked potatoes or avocados • Scoop batter into muffin cups • Form cookies and patties • Use a grater to shred cheese • Use a pizza cutter • Make a breakfast parfait: cereal, fruit, yogurt • Make tortilla wraps • Toss a salad with salad dressing • Invent a fruit salad or smoothie recipe • Say what food belongs to what food group • Read kid-friendly cookbooks from the library • Make a snacks list and post it on the fridge • Write out the grocery list
<p>9-11 Year Olds</p> <p>Skills vary widely in this age group. While some kids are not mature enough to work at the stove, most kids are coordinated and able to understand how to use appliances safely.</p>	<p>Kitchen Skills To Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen skills from the previous age groups • Prepare simple recipes • Use a sharp knife with easy to cut foods (cooked meats, easy to grip vegetables and fruit, cheese, bread) • Use a timer and thermometer • Pound chicken or meat • Slice bread • Put away leftovers • Make their own school lunch • Trim and slice vegetables • Make a fresh vegetable or fruit platter • Knead dough and let it rise • Use the stove, with supervision, to make basic recipes like boiled eggs, pasta, omelets, pancakes, soups or grilled cheese



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a food processor, blender and mixer• Use a panini press or waffle maker• Store food safely after grocery shopping
<p>12 Year Olds and Older</p> <p>Kids this age can be more independent in the kitchen with coaching from parents/caregivers.</p>	<p>Kitchen Skills To Encourage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kitchen skills from the previous age groups• Follow a recipe without help• Use an oven or stove• Use a chef's knife or other larger knives with supervision• Use a grater to shred cheese or carrots• Plan a dinner menu• Develop grocery shopping skills (selection, cost, label reading, essential ingredients)• Suggest options for using meal leftovers

Adapted with permission from York Region Public Health.