

Extension

July 2016 Newsletter

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Cooking with Children

Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

Summer is a great season to spend a little more time teaching children how to prepare simple snacks and meals. Start with no-cook recipes that require just a few ingredients. Older and more experienced children can learn to use the oven, stove top and microwave.



Benefits of Cooking with Children:

- Cooking with whole foods exposes children to a wide variety of tastes. Early exposure to the taste of healthy foods may help children develop a preference for these tastes.
- Children are more likely to try a new food they helped create. They feel a level of ownership in the food they make.
- Meals you make at home with whole foods are healthier than processed and prepared foods. You control the amount of added fat, sugar, salt and artificial flavors and colors.
- The act of cooking provides a natural opportunity to discuss nutrition topics such as portion sizes, vitamins and other nutrients in foods.
- Food preparation skills learned now will serve children well into adulthood and can be passed down to their children.
- Creating something yummy that can be shared with others helps children develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Math, science and reading skills are enhanced when children learn and practice: weighing, measuring, multiplying, dividing and following recipe directions. Cooking can involve mixing acids and bases to create a chemical reaction, as in making pancakes or muffins.
- Cooking can provide quality time together to chat about all kinds of topics. Parents need to relax, overlook spilt ingredients, not expect perfection and value the process of preparing food more than the end product.

No-cook Food Ideas: Consider starting your kitchen adventures with easy to make, no-cook snacks such as a:

- Sandwich, wrap, or roll-up
- Fruit kabob or fruit salad
- Trail mix (dry cereal, nuts or seeds and dry fruit mixture)
- Yogurt and fruit parfait
- Smoothie (a blended drinkable mixture of fruit, vegetable, ice, milk, juice or yogurt)
- Ants on a log (celery stick spread with peanut butter and sprinkled with raisins)



Easy to cook Ideas:

- Vegetable soup
- Quesadilla
- Grilled cheese sandwich

- Enchilada or smothered burrito
- Baked meatball
- Pancake
- French toast
- Scrambled egg

Let's Talk

Let children know that cooking for the family is an important task that everyone can help with. Children usually enjoy cooking and helping in the kitchen, as long as adults relax and let children get a little messy. Don't expect perfection. Who said pancakes or meatballs have to be round? While keeping safety in mind, let children complete age appropriate jobs. For a list of what tasks children as young as 2 can do visit www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu Give children clear instructions, show them how it is done and let them practice by doing. Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water before getting started.

Recipe for Health: Chicken Enchilada Casserole

Ingredients:

Serves 6-8

- 1 ½ cups thick and chunky salsa, divided into 1 (1 cup) and 1 (½ cup)
- 4 (6 inch) corn tortillas
- 1/3 cup diced onion
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup cooked, chopped chicken
- 1 cup low fat sour cream or plain yogurt, divided into 2 (½ cups)
- 1 cup shredded cheese, divided into 2 (½ cups)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. (Adults or children over 8 years old should do this.)
2. Pour ½ cup salsa in bottom of 9 x 9-inch square baking dish that has been lightly coated with cooking spray. (5-6 year-olds can spray cooking spray in a baking dish, an adult should help them aim the spray nozzle. 5-6 year-olds can measure salsa. 2-3 year-olds can pour measured salsa.)
3. Cut or tear 2 tortillas in half and use four pieces to cover bottom of dish. (2-3 year olds can tear tortillas and place them in the pan.)
4. In a medium mixing bowl, combine 1 cup salsa, onion, beans and chicken. Spoon half of this chicken mixture over tortillas. Top chicken mixture with ½ cup sour cream. And then ½ cup cheese. (2-3 year olds can pour and mix prepared ingredients and sprinkle cheese. 4-5 year olds can spread sour cream with the back of a spoon. Children 8 and over can be taught (under supervision) to chop onion and use a can opener to open the beans. 4-5 year olds can pour beans into a colander and rinse



- under cold running water.)
5. Repeat with a second layer, using the remaining tortillas, chicken mixture, sour cream and cheese.
6. Cover with foil and bake 35 minutes until bubbly. Uncover and bake 5-10 minutes longer until cheese is melted. (5-6 year olds can cut or tear foil and cover the pan. An adult should put the pan in the oven, uncover and place it back in the oven and remove it from the oven.)

Optional: Serve with extra salsa and sour cream or plain yogurt. Additional toppings could include chopped green onion, diced tomato, diced avocado and shredded lettuce. (2-3 year olds can wash lettuce and rinse vegetables. Children 8 and over can chop vegetables and shred lettuce. 5-6 year olds can dice avocado with a blunt table knife or plastic knife. 4-5 year olds can take cold side dishes to the table. Children 8 and older can use hot pads to take hot dishes to the table.)

Recipe from: www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu

For family friendly recipes, and video demonstrations of cooking with children visit:

- Kids a Cookin', Kansas State University Extension www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu
- The Kids Cook Monday Initiative www.thekidscookmonday.org