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Family Matters

Improving Health Together

March 2019 Newsletter

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Getting Children Involved in Meal Preparation

By Glenda Wentworth, Extension Agent Family & Consumer Science, Eagle County

Want an activity to do with your children? There are many benefits to involving your children in preparing snacks and meals with you. Children have an interest in helping in the kitchen. They can learn valuable life skills. In addition, there is the added benefit of spending time with them.

Helping with food preparation provides children with a sense of accomplishment, promotes a child's independence and helps develop their self-confidence. Cooking together fosters a sense of responsibility and gives children a sense of pride when they share the finished product with the family.

Involving children in preparing food also encourages children to make smart choices about eating. It exposes them to healthy food choices. Studies have found children are more willing to eat new foods that they help prepare.

In the kitchen, protect children from anything that is hot or sharp. Give clear and simple instructions. Remember, children have short attention spans. It is important to give them tasks that are quick, easy and appropriate for each child's age. To help your child be successful, it is best to show how a task is done and then let the child practice.

Age appropriate food preparation tasks are different for each child depending on how much experience they have. Here are some general guidelines.

2 year-olds

- Wipe table tops
- Scrub vegetables
- Tear up salad greens

3 year-olds

- Spread soft spreads like butter, jelly or cream cheese
- Pour liquids
- Mix ingredients
- Pour cereal
- Place things in the trash
- Clear their place from the table

4 year-olds

- Set the table
- Peel oranges
- Mash bananas with a fork
- Knead dough



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Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Getting Children Involved in Meal Preparation (Continued from page 1.)

5 year-olds

- Measure ingredients
- Break eggs into bowl
- Cut with a blunt knife
- Use an egg beater

6 – 7 year olds

- Collect ingredients from the cupboards
- Stir and mix ingredients by hand
- Measure ingredients
- Set the timer

8 – 10 year olds

- Use the microwave
- Use a knife to cut, slice or dice with supervision



Let's Talk

Children should be given the opportunity to learn about foods. They should know why it is necessary to eat a variety of foods in order to grow and maintain a healthy body.

To begin, remind children to wash hands using soap and water before handling food or utensils. Collect all of the ingredients for one recipe. As you are preparing the food, discuss the ingredients that go into a recipe. Talk about the facts such as “fruits provide flavor, color and natural sweetness” or “milk makes strong bones and healthy gums” or “eggs provide structure to a recipe.”

Expect spills and messes; be patient and allow extra time for each task. Give children jobs that include helping clean up.

Recipe for Health

Scrambled Egg Muffins

<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/scrambled-egg-muffins/>

Ingredients:

- 2 cups vegetables (washed and diced) (broccoli, red or green bell peppers, onion)
- 6 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 cup low fat cheddar cheese, shredded

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray muffin tin with nonstick spray.
2. Add chopped vegetables to the muffin tin.
3. Beat eggs in a bowl. Stir in salt, pepper, and garlic powder.
4. Pour eggs into the muffin tin and bake 20-25 minutes.
5. Remove the tin from the oven during the last 3 minutes of baking. Sprinkle the cheese on top of the muffins and return the tin to the oven.
6. Bake until the temperature reaches 160°F or a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.



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