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Family Matters

Improving Health Together

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Learning in the Kitchen

By Libby Christensen, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Routt County

Many people think you can only learn STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in a classroom or a lab. In fact, our homes have one of the best laboratories, the kitchen. Experimenting in the kitchen is one of the most effective (and tasty) ways to promote the relevance of science. Most kids I know love to eat and make baked goods. Next time your child wants to put on an apron and whip up something in the kitchen, add a little STEM to the mix.

Apply the approach listed below to any recipe. Take advantage of teachable moments by allowing your child to explore what they are eating. STEM in the kitchen will do far more than just give your kids some practical education. Your children will learn to appreciate every bite. They will also be more empowered to make informed decisions about what they choose to put into their bodies.



Let's Talk

Curiosity is at the foundation of a long and positive relationship with STEM.

Ingredients

Start by gathering up all the ingredients and go over them one by one. Discuss where each item comes from. Discover the process and technologies involved in altering the ingredients from their natural state to their current state. Some items require little processing (like eggs), while others go through multiple stages before we purchase them at the store (like sugar). Look at the ingredient labels and talk through the nutritional facts. Discuss serving sizes and measure them out for each ingredient. Discuss options to replace, delete or add ingredients.

Tools



Next, explore the tools in the kitchen. Go over safety, same as you would in any science lab. You will use bowls, measuring cups and spoons, a wire whisk or electric mixer, a spatula, a pan, and an oven. Chat about the purpose of each item. Are there any alternative tools you could use to make your baked good? What if you cooked it on the stovetop instead of the oven? Would the result be the same or different?

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

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Scientific Process

Now you and your young chef are ready to bake! The scientific process is very important here. As you start mixing the ingredients together, discuss the purpose of each ingredient and the importance of measuring each item. After successfully completing the bake, allow your children to experiment. Let them think about each ingredient and decide if it is necessary or if the recipe would be improved with a little bit more or a little bit less.

Recipe for Health **Pueblo Chile Cornbread**

Cornbread is a simple quick bread made with cornmeal. Native Americans have been using ground corn as food for thousands of years. The Pueblo chile is a staple in Colorado. The Pueblo chile is flavorful. Be aware that the spice level can range. Taste a little bit of the pepper, before adding it to the recipe, and make sure it meets your family's heat tolerance.

Ingredients:

- 1 ¼ cup milk, whole or a lower fat option
- ½ cup Mexican crema or Greek yogurt for less fat
- 2 large eggs
- ¼ cup of olive oil
- 1 ½ cup cornmeal, yellow
- ½ cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar or honey
- 1 cup roasted Pueblo chiles, peeled and diced
- 1 cup corn kernels (canned or defrosted frozen)
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded



Directions:

- Wash hands and all food contact surfaces.
- Heat your oven to 400°F.
- While the oven is heating, oil a 10" cast iron skillet. If you do not have cast iron skillet, grease a 9x9-inch baking pan.
- Place the milk, crema or yogurt, eggs, and olive oil in a bowl. Mix until combined. Add the cornmeal, mix, and let sit for 10 minutes.
- Using another larger bowl, place the flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and sugar. Mix well to combine.
- Add half of the wet mix to dry mix, and stir until combined. Add the rest of the wet mix to the dry mix. Mix until fully incorporated.
- To the combined mixture, add the chiles, corn kernels and cheese. Stir until evenly distributed in the mix.
- Pour mixture into skillet or 9x9-inch baking pan. Place into oven at 400°F.
- Cook for 35-45 minutes or until desired doneness is reached.
- Wash hands, equipment and food contact surfaces.
- Using hot pads, carefully remove the cornbread from oven. Let rest for 10 minutes to allow cornbread to cool and firm before cutting.



Recipe adapted from Jason K. Morse for Colorado Department of Agriculture Colorado Proud Program.