

KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

Involving kids in cooking is not only a fun and educational activity but also a great way to teach them important life skills. When kids are involved in meal preparation, they are more likely to try new foods and develop a preference for healthier options! This can contribute to a lifelong habit of making nutritious food choices. Cooking and eating together also fosters quality family time and bonding. It's an opportunity for conversations, storytelling, and working together towards a common goal.

Here are some ways to involve your kids in the kitchen:

- *Let them Help!:* Measuring, washing produce, cutting fruit or vegetables, stirring/mixing and setting the table for meals are all ways kids can easily participate.
- *Teach Basic Skills:* Use cooking as an opportunity to teach basic math (measuring ingredients), science (how ingredients change when they're cooked), and even geography (learning where different foods come from).
- *Visit Farmers' Markets:* Take kids to farmers' markets or local farms to learn about fresh, seasonal ingredients. This can instill an appreciation for local and healthy foods and understanding of where food comes from.
- *Clean Up Together:* Don't forget to involve kids in the cleanup process. Teaching them that cleaning up is part of cooking responsibility helps instill good kitchen habits.

Encouraging Kids to Try New Things

Introducing children to new foods can sometimes be a challenge, but it's an essential part of broadening their culinary horizons. Here's how you can encourage them to try new things:

- *Lead by Example:* Children watch and learn from their parents. Be open to trying new foods, and they're more likely to follow suit. Your enthusiasm can be contagious.
- *Fun Presentation:* Make meals visually appealing. Use colorful fruits and vegetables, and get creative with food presentation. Kids are drawn to vibrant, interesting-looking foods.
- *Family Food Explorations:* Make trying new foods a family affair. Explore international cuisines together to expand their palate. Turn it into an exciting learning experience for everyone.

Being a Good role Model

As the saying goes, "Monkey see, monkey do." Children are keen observers and tend to model their behavior after their parents. This principle holds true in the realm of food as well.

- *Evaluating your eating:* Your eating habits and attitudes toward food greatly influence your child. Be mindful of your own relationship with food. If you embrace a wide range of foods and mealtimes, your child is more likely to follow suit.
- *Consistency:* Be consistent with your mealtime routines and encourage good table manners. Children are more likely to adopt these behaviors if they are reinforced consistently.
- *Family Meals:* Regular family meals set a positive tone for kids. They see that sitting down together at the table is important and enjoyable. It's a powerful way to reinforce the significance of shared mealtimes.