

Introduction

(for parents and teachers)

Cooking with children can be challenging. Most kitchens are not designed with children in mind. The counters and cupboards are usually too high for them to reach. Giving children a stool to stand on solves this problem but also makes it easier for them to reach potentially dangerous items, like sharp knives, hot stoves and electrical appliances.

Cooking with children can also be messy. Spills, wasted food and broken dishes are to be expected, but as the saying goes, don't cry over spilled milk. All the extra effort that goes into cooking with children is worth it.

For one thing, children are more likely to eat food they've helped prepare. Picky eaters will take pride in eating a meal they've cooked themselves, especially if you eat it too and comment on how delicious it is. Cooking with children also provides an opportunity to teach them which foods are healthy and why. It can spark questions about where our food comes from and how it is made.

Unfortunately, most children's cookbooks miss out on this opportunity and instead use not-so-healthy recipes, like recipes for cookies and cupcakes, to make cooking more fun. Even cookbooks that claim to have healthy recipes often call for processed ingredients that come in cans and packages, instead of fresh, whole foods, probably because this makes the recipes easier and quicker to prepare and safer because knives aren't needed. The food is often "cooked" in a microwave, rather than in an oven or on the stove, probably also out of a concern for safety and convenience.

But is this what we want our children to be learning in the kitchen? Do we want them to think it's okay to sacrifice the quality of food for the sake of safety or convenience? And do we really need to tempt children with sweet desserts to get them interested in cooking? Most children enjoy the process

Turn your kitchen into a classroom (or your classroom into a kitchen)!

The measurements involved in cooking can be used to teach numbers, counting, math and fractions, especially when doubling or halving recipes. Reading recipes provides practice in phonics and comprehension. Cooking together, especially if you have more than one child, helps children learn to work cooperatively in a group. When shopping for food, keep your children occupied by asking them to help you find items on your list. Read the labels on packaged foods with your children and discuss why that food is or isn't healthy. Guide your children in how to select the freshest, ripest and highest quality produce. Older children can even be given the responsibility of handling the money and keeping the shopping trip within a budget. Cooking can lead to many other activities and projects, like growing a vegetable garden, raising backyard chickens or composting.

of cooking – measuring ingredients, mixing, using kitchen tools – regardless of whether the end result is pudding or pâté.

Knowing how to cook is just as valuable (in life) as knowing how to read or write. Food is one of our basic needs. And the quality of our food has a profound impact on our health and ultimately, the quality of our life. If we don't teach our children how to cook nourishing foods, who will? Cooking is rarely taught in schools. Even when it is, the same compromises found in most children's cookbooks are often made out of a concern for safety and convenience.

Many parents feel they don't have time to cook, let alone time to teach their children to cook. And with so many processed foods available, they may not see a reason to. Why cook, when you can buy dinner in a package and have it on the table in a few minutes? After all, there are more important things to do, right?

The perceived convenience of processed foods is an illusion, however, because the more we become dependent on these foods for our sustenance, the more we become plagued with health problems. Allergies, asthma, eczema, recurring infections, tooth decay, diabetes,

ADHD and autism have become so common, that we might even call it “normal” for children to have at least one of these problems. Some children can’t even attend school without medication, or they require special education because of their health problems. As any parent of a child with one of these conditions will tell you, there is nothing convenient about this at all. Time saved not having to “slave over a hot stove” is easily outweighed by time spent at doctor visits and sleepless nights caring for a sick child – not to mention the financial stress of medical bills.

We've attempted to keep the content of this book as simple as possible for children to understand, but we expect that parents, teachers and older children may want to know more. The original edition of this book, *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon and Mary Enig, PhD, is a great resource, as is *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration* by Weston A. Price, DDS. The Weston A. Price Foundation's web site (westonaprice.org) is another excellent resource for further research.

Cooking nourishing foods does take a significant amount of time and effort, even more so when you choose to include your children in the process. If you're a working or single parent, it may not always be possible for you to prepare home-cooked meals, but better some than none. The more we make cooking a priority in our lives, the more we will be able to enjoy our lives in good health.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or discouraged, look at your children's faces. Do you see bright eyes and glowing cheeks? This will assure you that the extra time and effort you put into preparing nourishing food for them is worth it. Or you may see something different, the face of a sick or suffering child who desperately needs nourishing food. Either way, your children will give you the motivation and encouragement you need. And eventually they will become great helpers in the kitchen!

The joy of having radiantly healthy children who eat nourishing food – and even know how to cook it themselves – makes our every effort and sacrifice completely worth it!

Tips for Cooking with Children

Get Organized

Re-organize your kitchen with your children in mind. Put frequently used child-friendly items, like measuring cups, mixing bowls, spoons, spatulas and whisks, within easy reach. Put knives, electrical appliances and other potentially dangerous items out of reach, at least until your children have learned to use these items safely. Children who aren't tall enough to work at the counter comfortably should have a stool or sturdy chair to stand on. If you have space, put a low table in the kitchen for your children to work at.

Follow a Routine

Before cooking, everyone should wash hands and put on an apron. Next, read through the recipe and ask your children to help gather the ingredients and tools needed. Finally, delegate who will do each task. Older children can be given more advanced tasks (such as chopping vegetables or cooking on the stove), while younger children can be given easier tasks (such as measuring, pouring and mixing). Some tasks may require the help of an adult (pulling a hot pan out of an oven, for example). Make sure everyone helps to clean up at the end. Singing or listening to music during clean-up time can encourage cooperation.

Even a Baby Can Do It

To include a baby, sit the baby in a highchair where he or she can observe the kitchen activity. Your baby can also be worn on your back in a carrier. Whenever possible, let your baby touch and taste different foods and play with pots, spoons and other baby-friendly kitchen items.

Plan It with Pictures

To involve your children in creating a weekly meal plan, first, gather pictures of all your family's favorite recipes and possibly some new ones to try. Search for photos or illustrations on the Internet, in cookbooks (like this one) or cooking magazines. Or, your children may want to photograph or draw the pictures themselves. Glue the pictures onto index cards and label them with the name of the recipe. To make the meal plan, select the recipes you and your children would like, then arrange the pictures onto a white board with magnets in a grid pattern, using markers to label the days of the week and the meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner). Or attach the pictures to a series of clotheslines, one for each day of the week or each meal, using paperclips or clothespins. Hang your completed meal plan on the wall in your kitchen.



Kitchen Tools

Each recipe in this book will tell you which tools are needed for that recipe, but here are some of the most commonly used tools, with tips on how to use them and which kinds are best.

Knives



A good way to learn how to use a knife is to practice cutting soft foods, like a banana, with a butter knife. Once you have mastered this, you can start using a serrated knife. Serrated knives are best because they have a jagged edge that is less likely to slip. They're especially good for cutting up foods with smooth skins, like tomatoes. Serrated knives also don't need sharpening like other knives do. Always ask an adult for permission before using a knife.



Cutting Board

Cutting boards protect both your knife and your kitchen counter or table from damage when you are cutting up food. Wood cutting boards are better than plastic because they are less likely to harbor bacteria. You should have at least two cutting boards, one for meat and one for other foods.

Food Chopper

A food chopper is a handy tool for chopping food into small pieces. It can be used instead of a knife.



Mixing Bowls



Mixing bowls come in all sizes, but the larger ones are easier to use. They don't tip over as easily and there's more room to mix the food so it won't spill over the side. Glass or ceramic bowls are best. Pyrex mixing bowls come with handy lids that can be used to keep a batter covered when soaking or for storing leftovers. Large glass measuring cups also make great mixing bowls, especially for liquids or batters that need to be poured.

Egg Beater

A beater can be used not only for eggs, but for mixing batters too. You may find it easier to use than a whisk.



Pots and Pans

When cooking on the stove, use pots and pans made out of stainless steel, cast iron, ceramic or enamel. When baking in the oven, use glass, enamel, stoneware or stainless steel pans. Avoid aluminum and Teflon non-stick cookware.



Caring for Cast Iron

Rinse the pan with hot water immediately after cooking. To remove burned-on food, scrub with coarse salt. Never use soap or steel wool to clean the pan. To prevent rust, dry the pan on the stove over low heat. Rub oil on the pan with a paper towel as needed to keep it shiny.

These materials are toxic and can leach into foods that are cooked in them. Aluminum cookie sheets and muffin tins are okay, as long as they are lined with parchment paper or muffin cups, so that the food doesn't touch the aluminum.

Parchment Paper



Also known as baking paper, this is a safe, non-toxic way to line your baking pans and cookie sheets instead of using aluminum foil or non-stick sprays. A reusable silicone baking mat is also a good option.

Storage Containers

It's best to use glass or ceramic containers for storing foods in the refrigerator and pantry. Glass or ceramic should always be used when soaking, culturing or fermenting foods. Avoid using plastic containers or buying food that is sold in plastic. The chemicals in plastic can easily leach



into foods, especially when the food is greasy, salty or acidic. However, plastic containers may be used when storing foods in the freezer, as glass may break.



Food Processor

A food processor makes many tasks in the kitchen easier and faster, whether it's chopping, grating, grinding, whipping or puréeing. A food processor with a powerful motor and a strong blade can be used to grind nuts into nut butter. Food pro-

cessors can be loud and a bit scary, but they're actually safer to use than a blender, because the motor won't start unless the lid is locked. Remember though, the blade inside is very sharp, so never put your hands inside or touch the blade. Always ask an adult for help when using a food processor.



Handheld Blender

This is a useful tool for making soups and sauces, because you can blend the ingredients right in the pot instead of having to pour them in and out of a blender. This is a tool that should only be used with an adult's help. Be sure to keep the blender submerged while it's running, to prevent spatters.

Grain Mill

A grain mill grinds whole grains into fresh flour. Flour that is freshly ground has more vitamins in it than store-bought flour. It's also higher in enzymes and gives better results when soaking and souring. See Sources (page 223) for recommended grain mills.



Dehydrator

A dehydrator is a special kind of oven that removes moisture from foods without cooking it. When food has no moisture in it, it lasts much longer. Fruits, vegetables and even meat can be saved for a long time without refrigeration by dehydrating them. An oven can also be used to dehydrate food, but a dehydrator is better because



it dries the food at a lower temperature, preserving the enzymes and vitamins in the food. See Sources (page 223) for recommended dehydrators.

Microwave Oven

One tool you won't be needing is a microwave oven. It may seem safer, quicker and easier to use a microwave oven, because it doesn't get hot like an oven or a stove, but studies show that microwaves damage the fats, proteins and vitamins in food, making these nutrients harder for our bodies to digest and even toxic. But there is one good thing a microwave can be used for; it can be used instead as a warm place for soaking grains (see page 145).



Measuring Cups and Spoons

When measuring ingredients for a recipe, you'll need a set of measuring cups and spoons, preferably stainless steel, and a quart-sized glass measuring cup for measuring liquids. More about these tools can be found on the next page.

Apron

Cooking can be messy, so don't forget an apron to keep your clothes clean!



Measuring Guide

Knowing how to measure food is an important skill to have when cooking. It helps you to put the right amount of each ingredient in the recipe. There are several ways to measure food. It can be measured by volume (how big it is) using measuring cups and spoons. It can be measured by weight (how heavy it is) using a scale. Or it can be measured by quantity (how many there are).

Volume (how big it is)

teaspoon



tablespoon

1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons



cup

1 cup = 16 tablespoons



quart

1 quart = 4 cups



1 stick of butter equals $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 8 tablespoons



gallon
1 gallon = 4 quarts

Weight (how heavy it is)

pounds/ounces

1 pound = 16 ounces



How much is a pinch?
A pinch is often used to measure salt or spices. It is how much you can pick up with your thumb and forefinger, or about $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon.

Quantity (how many there are)

3 carrots





1 dozen eggs

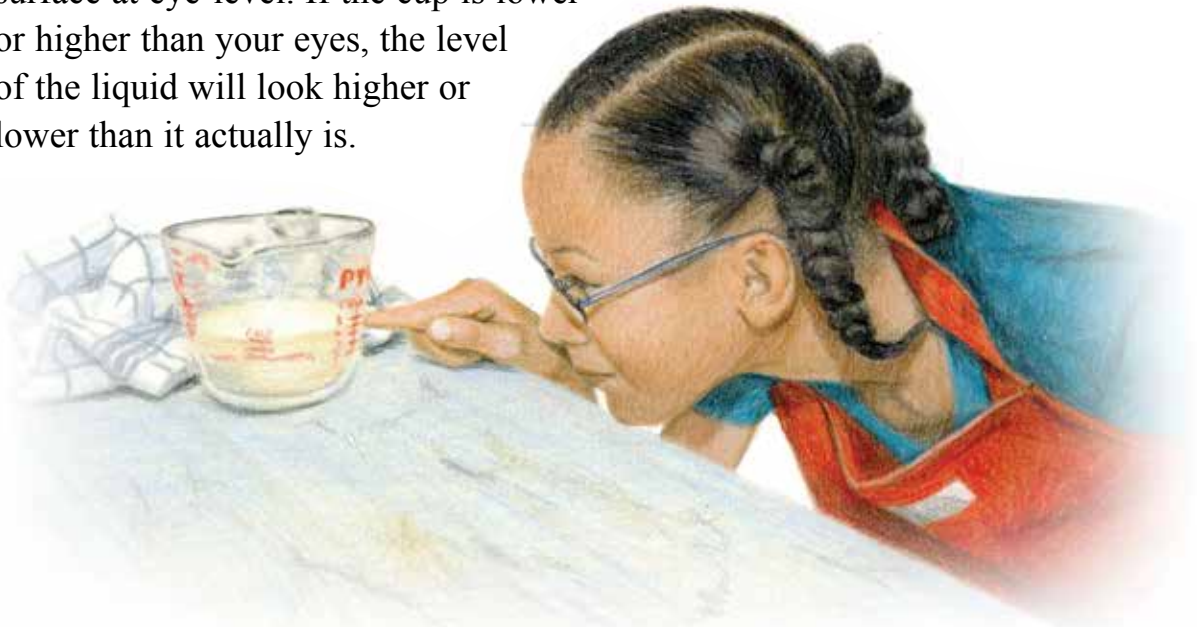
*How many are in a dozen?
Count the eggs to find out.*



When measuring, fill the cup or spoon all the way full, but make sure the food is level or flat on top, not rounded.

The straight edge of a knife can be used to level the food.

When measuring liquids, set the cup on a flat surface at eye-level. If the cup is lower or higher than your eyes, the level of the liquid will look higher or lower than it actually is.



Number of Servings

Most recipes will tell you how many people it serves or how much food it makes. Depending on how many people you are cooking for, a recipe may not make enough or may make too much. You can change a recipe to fit your needs by doubling or tripling it (if you need more) or halving or quartering it (if you need less). This is when it becomes especially helpful to know your measurements, like how many cups are in a quart or how many teaspoons are in a tablespoon. Knowing how to work with fractions is important too, since measurements are often written in fractions, like " $\frac{1}{2}$ cup."

