

Introducing **The Kids Cook Monday**

A General Overview



Start your week off right:
Make Monday family night!

**The Kids CookSM
Monday!**

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The Kids Cook Monday is a weekly opportunity for families to take health into their own hands.

The Kids Cook Monday provides examples of kid friendly recipes and video demonstrations along with nutrition and safety tips – making it easy for families to cook and eat together every Monday. When kids pitch in making meals, they're empowered to consider the portions, the vitamins and the nutrients of what they're eating. And since the family that cooks together eats together, parents can check in with their children during dinner. Cooking also reinforces skills to help kids succeed like math, teamwork and following instructions. So start your week off right and make eating right a family night!



The Kids Cook Monday offers a website dedicated to kids and families cooking and eating together.

The Kids Cook Monday website features new kid-friendly recipes and family cooking videos every Monday. Stop by to see what fun family cooking contests and classes our participants are offering. Visit: TheKidsCookMonday.org to check out all the activities, tips and resources to start each week with a focus on family.

A screenshot of the The Kids Cook Monday website. The header features the title "The Kids Cook Monday!" in large, colorful letters, with a tagline "Start your week off right: Make Monday family night!". Below the header, there's a navigation menu with links to "About TKCM", "Recipes", "Videos", and "Blogs". The main content area is divided into several sections: "Our Supporters" with logos for The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, Nourish Interactive, Family Cook Productions, the creative kitchen, and kiwi; "Here's a weekly opportunity for families to take health into their own hands!" with a cartoon illustration of a child cooking; "This Monday's Recipes" featuring three recipes: "Lemon Green Beans with Almonds" (Ages 4-7), "Cherry Tomato Pasta" (Ages 8-11), and "Soba Noodles with Sesame Sauce" (Ages 12-15); "Bloggers Cookin' With Kids" with a link to "Fooodista"; and "Julieanna and Family Mix Up Some Monday Muffins" with a video player. The right sidebar lists "The Kids Cook Monday Resources" including "The Kids Cook Monday Kit", "The Family That Eats Together Psychology Today", "The Importance of Family Dinners Columbia University", "How to Fight Childhood Obesity in 3 Easy Steps CNN", "My Pyramid for Kids USDA", "8 Reasons to Make Time for Family Dinner Health.com", "Recommended sizes for portions Web MD", "Family & community cooking programs Family Cook Productions", and "Kid nutrition tools and tips! Nourish Interactive".

Why Cook with Kids?

There are many benefits of including children in the meal preparation:

Exposure to scratch cooking helps kids develop a mature palate and a taste for fresh, wholesome ingredients. The earlier kids become accustomed to nutritious foods, the less likely they will acquire a taste for processed foods.

Kids are much more likely to eat what they make. Is there anything more fun than eating your art project? Cooking creates a sense of ownership. When kids help in the kitchen, there are fewer meal-time battles and more willingness to try new foods.

Meals prepared from scratch usually contain more nutrients and fewer calories, chemicals, and sweeteners than pre-packaged foods and restaurant meals.

Cooking together provides a natural way to discuss nutrition and the impact that food choices have on the environment. The more educated children are about food, the more likely they will appreciate your suggestions to eat something healthy.

The earlier they learn how to cook, the sooner they will learn an essential life skill. It's hard to imagine that teaching a three year old how to break an egg could result in a culinary protégé, but kids often become quite talented in the kitchen. This makes the messy floors worth it down the road when they start to cook for you.

Spending time in the kitchen gives them confidence. Kids thrive on feeling accomplished. Cooking is an ideal way to boost self-worth and teach responsibility. There is nothing cuter than watching children proudly serving their food to others.

Preparing meals together means quality time as a family. Cooking with children when they are young offers an opportunity to communicate with them on a regular basis. Your time chatting and cooking in the kitchen together becomes even more important as they reach the adolescent and teenage years.

What else do they learn? Science, language, counting, fractions, budgeting, weighing, sequencing, measuring, problem-solving, sharing, fine motor skills, reading, and learning about other cultures – to name just a few important things!



Recipes and information, used with permission, from *Easy Meals to Cook with Kids* by Julie Negrin ©2010. Book is available at www.julienegrin.com

How to Turn Mealtime into Family Time!



Having meals together as a family is probably one of the easiest and most important activities you can do to promote healthy eating. Surprised? I know it sounds too easy; but honestly, sometimes the simplest things turn out to be the most important.

Kids are little sponges and they are learning and forming their nutrition habits throughout the day. During mealtime kids learn about foods and their parent's food preferences. Children are starting to form lifelong associations with food (positive or negative) and their own food choices (what they "like" and what they "don't like").



Here are some easy tips and guidelines to help you turn mealtime into fun family time.



- Start each week with a Kids Cook Monday family dinner night. When the whole family pitches in during mealtime, kids are more likely to eat the finished product. Use the cooking time to teach your child about nutrition and serving sizes. Remember adults and older kids can be nutrition role models as younger kids are developing life long health and eating habits.

• Gather round the table. On family dinner night, eat around a table and let family be the focus by turning off the TV, cell phones and ipods. Use The Kids Cook Monday dinners as an opportunity to check in, catch up and share thoughts with each other.

• Don't be a short-order chef. Prepare only one meal for the entire family, but feel free to give your kids "cuter" portions. An adult-sized plate can be daunting for a child, so be sure to start small. Try breaking up the meal into several tiny portions (with healthy foods first) so your child can feel that they've successfully cleared their plate.

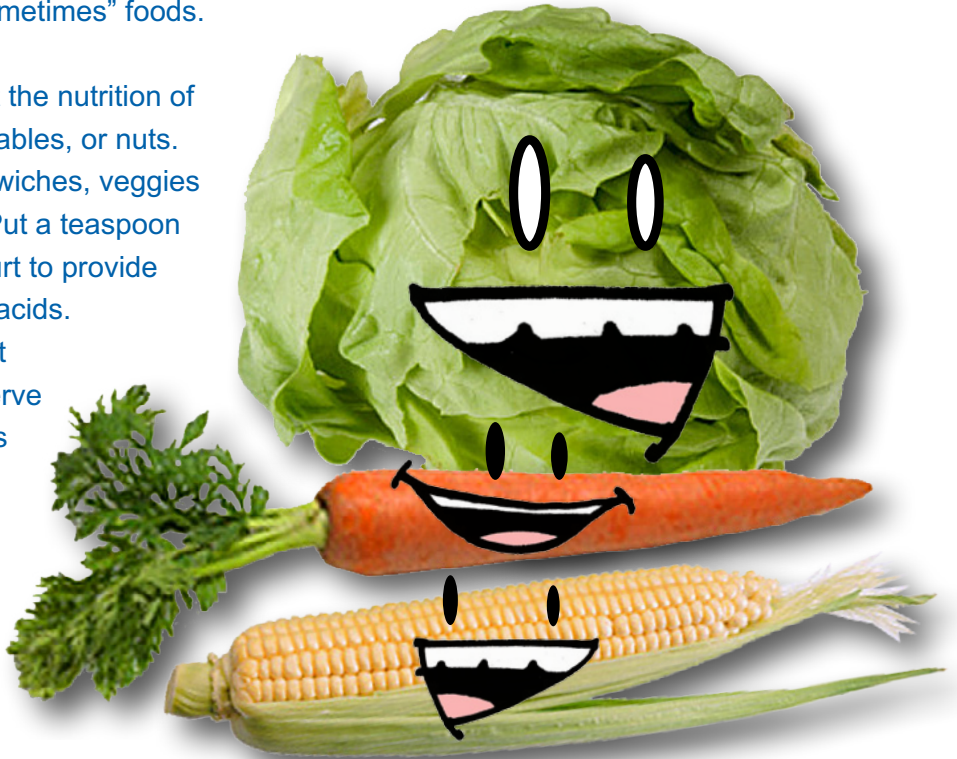
• Make healthy eating fun. Sometimes all a child needs to embrace nutritious eating is a bit of excitement! Try offering dips, finger foods, interesting shapes, meal themes or a wide range of colors. Avoid forbidding



foods or using certain foods for punishments or rewards. Instead let your kids pick a special day when they can indulge occasionally, so kids learn the difference between “everyday” foods and “sometimes” foods.

- Sneak in produce: You can boost the nutrition of any meal by mixing in fruits, vegetables, or nuts. Add cucumbers or carrots to sandwiches, veggies to pasta sauce or nuts to salads. Put a teaspoon of flaxseed oil in dressings or yogurt to provide your child with brain-building fatty acids. Keep an open dialogue about what healthy foods your kid likes and serve them new foods with similar flavors to expand their pallet.

- Don't give up: Studies have shown that many kids won't try a new food until it's been offered several times, so keep trying! Don't become upset if your child rejects a new food; after a few attempts it may seem more familiar. Offer unfamiliar foods as an appetizer or with tried and true favorites. Encourage your child to try at least two bites of anything new and be sure to applaud adventurous eating.



Tips by

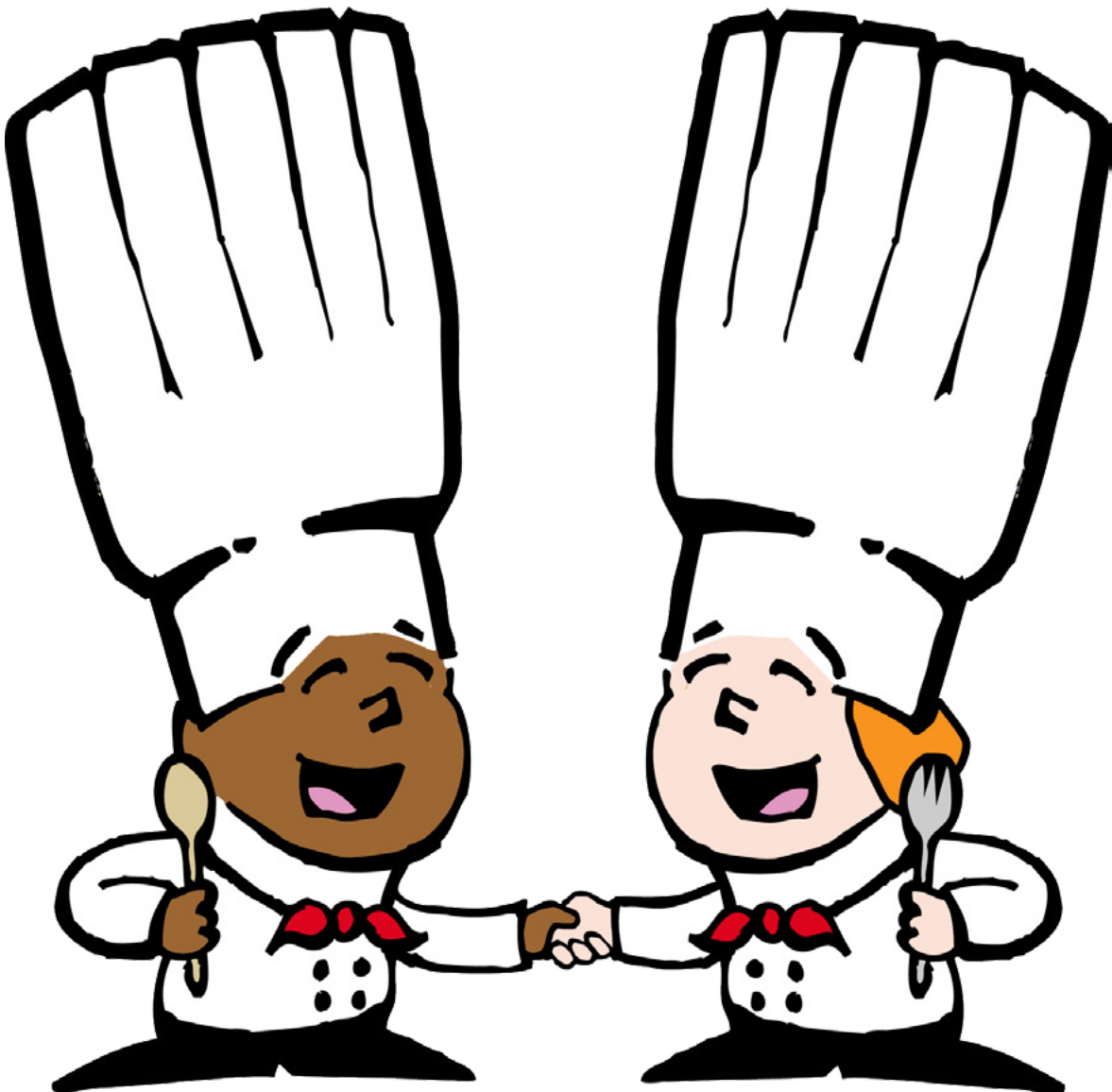


LAPTOP
LUNCHES



Resources & Games

For Kids



Everybody Eats Lunch

by Cricket Azima



Learn about cultures from around the world by making dishes from other countries!

From the book [Everybody Eats Lunch](#)

© written by Cricket Azima, illustrated by Titus Thomas and published by Glitterati Inc., 2007

Snacks in a Snap

	SNACK	HOW TO PREPARE
1	Apples & Honey	Using an apple segmenter, place apple segments on a plate. Squeeze some honey into a corner of a plastic bag. Twist to close. Cut the tip off the corner to make a tiny hole. Invite children can squeeze out the honey, drizzling in a pretty pattern! (Note: Use different colored apples & leave the skins for more colors.)
2	Fruit Salad	Select seasonal (substituting some thawed frozen in winter is fine!) and peel, slice or cut into bite-sized pieces. Place in a large bowl. Squeeze a half of lime over the fruit and drizzle a tablespoon of honey. Stir well and serve!
3	Pastina & Cheese	Grate a small amount (1/3 cup or so) of cheddar, pecorino or other mild-tasting cheese. Cook $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pastina and put in a bowl. Add the grated cheese, hot pastina and one or two tablespoons of milk. You can add diced raw veggies as well or grated carrot.
4	Kebobs	Cube some cheese, slice/cube some fruit, and make sure you have roughly equal quantities of each item. Using coffee stirrers as skewers, have children make snack kebobs, selecting patterns (e.g. 1 strawberry half, 2 cheese cubes and 1 grape. Repeat.). Dip into yogurt dressing.
5	Baked Apples	Core one apple per child (or $\frac{1}{2}$ for 2's) and place in a microwavable dish. Place a bit of the following into each core: butter, brown sugar, raisins and cinnamon. Cook in microwave for about 6 minutes. Serve with a bit of milk.
6	Cherry Tomatoes	Mix some chopped chives or basil into $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ricotta cheese (part skim is fine). Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Cut cherry or grape tomatoes in half. With small spoon, have children scoop out the seeds from the tomatoes. Replace with the cheese snack!
7	Nut Butter Crunch	On "Wasa" type flatbread, spread the nut butter (try cashew or pumpkin seed butter for amazing flavor and burst of energy). Crack in half and enjoy!
8	Banana Crunch	Mash one large (or 2 small), very ripe banana (children will love this step!). Measure $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of granola. Mix into mashed banana. Spread onto thin flatbread wafers, enjoy!
9	Spiced Pepitas	For 4-5 year old children, add the following to a small saucepan: 1 tablespoon butter, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, and a 2 teaspoons ground cumin. Heat on low until the butter melts. Add 3 cups pepitas and stir well to coat.

Snacks in a Snap

	SNACK	HOW TO PREPARE
10	Apple Sauce	Peel or segment 6 or more apples. Place in a pot and add water to about ½ the height of the apples. Add 3 tablespoons of sugar and 2 teaspoons of cinnamon. Cook over medium heat, stirring as needed.
11	Flower Sandwich	Cut whole grain or pumpernickel raisin bread into quarters. Spread with nut butter, herb butter, chevre or ricotta cheese (with a bit of honey added).! Sprinkle with fresh arugula and edible flower petals: pansy, nasturtium, geranium, marigold or rose petals from the garden
12	Trail Mix	Place the following in separate bowls: cheerios, pumpkin seeds, walnut pieces, raisins, banana chips, tiny pretzels, and any other dried fruit in small pieces. Place spoons in each bowl and give children a plastic bag to take a spoon of each into their bag. Shake!
13	Avocado Crunch	Mash one or two ripe (children will love this step). Squeeze in ½ a lemon, and 2 teaspoons of flax seeds. Add a pinch of salt. Top onto cucumber disks (described in #17below) and dust with sweet paprika.
14	Tangy Coleslaw	Grate half a red or green cabbage. Dice a red or yellow pepper. Grate a large carrot. Slice 2 scallions. Mix everything well. For dressing, combine 1/3 cup lemon juice, 1/3 cup buttermilk, 1 tbl. deli mustard, 1 tbl. honey mustard, 2 tsp. sugar, 1 tsp. cider vinegar and mix.
15	Seasonal Smoothie	In a blender, combine 6 ounces low-fat milk, 4 ice cubes, 2/3 cup of seasonal fruit and approximately 1 tablespoon of honey. Blend well and serve.
16	Frozen Smoothie	In a blender, combine ingredients above, but use 1 frozen banana or combination of frozen banana and frozen berries. The result will be like a slushy, and children can eat it with a spoon!
17	Cucumber Boats	Cut cucumbers (peel on is ok) into 1/8-inch disks (slices) or in quarters lengthwise (wedges) and then in half so you have 8 wedges. Then remove seeds from the wedges. Top slices or wedges with: egg salad, tuna salad, nut butter, etc. Be creative!
18	Pita Pockets	In a bowl, combine 1/3 pound chopped kalamata olives (pitted); 8 ounces crumbled feta cheese and 2 large chopped tomatoes. Add ¼ cup olive oil, 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, ½ teaspoon dried oregano, salt & pepper. Combine and spoon into warm pita pockets.

FamilyCook Productions

Secret NO. 3

COLORS BRING VARIETY

MEAL PLANNING CHALLENGE: Select 2-3 items from every color category as you plan your meals/recipes and snacks each week

BLUE/ PURPLE	GREEN	WHITE/ BROWN	YELLOW/ ORANGE	RED
BLACKBERRY*	ARTICHOKE	BANANA	APRICOT	APPLE
BLUEBERRY*	ARUGULA	DATES	CARROT	BEET
EGGPLANT	ASPARAGUS	CAULIFLOWER	CLEMENTINE	CRANBERRY
GRAPES	AVOCADO	GARLIC	GRAPEFRUIT	CHERRY
PLUM	BROCCOLI	GINGER	LEMON	POMEGRANATE
PRUNE	BRUSSELS SPROUTS	ONIONS	MANGO	RADISH
PURPLE FIG	CELERY	PARSNIPS	NECTARINES	RASPBERRY*
RAISIN	CUCUMBER	POTATOES	ORANGE	RHUBARB
RED CABBAGE	ENDIVE	SHALLOTS	PAPAYA	STRAWBERRY*
	GRAPES	TURNIPS	PEACH	TOMATO
	GREEN BEAN	WHITE NECTARINE	PERSIMMON	
	KIWI	WHITE PEACHES	PINEAPPLE	
	LETTUCE		PUMPKIN	
	LIME		SQUASH	
	PEAR		TANGERINE	
	PEAS			
*Frozen in the off season is fine				*Frozen in the off season is fine

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FamilyCook Productions supports families with culinary & nutrition education that takes a holistic approach to healthy family meals. For over 15 years, FamilyCook [programs](#) and publications have been a trusted resource on healthy meal strategies for parents, teachers, community groups, farmers' markets -- and teens! Through innovative farm-to-table programming for all ages, learning about nutrition, to eat 'all your colors' of fruits and vegetables, and what is in season locally becomes a delicious multi-cultural adventure. Sign up for the [newsletter](#) or download [free tools](#) and [recipes](#)!

Resources & Information

For Parents



Picky preschool eater?

Eat Healthy ^{the} Monster Way



Shop Together

- Allow your child to pick produce at the grocery store.
- Select one new food each time you visit the store.
- Describe the color and texture of fruits and veggies.
- Offer "this or that" choices for less desirable foods.



Cook Together

- As a team, read recipes or explore cookbooks.
- Name your dishes or create new ones together.
- Let your preschooler get hands-on with food—stir, measure, knead, tear greens, & crack eggs.



Eat Together

- Plan times to eat together by putting it on the calendar.
- Focus on food and family by turning off the TV.
- Offer the same foods to the whole family--no special meals for preschoolers.
- With help, let your preschooler serve themselves. Teach them to take small portions.
- Don't praise a clean plate. Allow preschoolers to stop eating when full.

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Hygiene and Safety Tips

Here are some suggestions on how to keep the kitchen clean and safe for your mini chefs.

Hand-washing. I'm extremely strict about hand-washing: all of my students, even the toddlers, must hit the sink before working with food. I show them how to use warm water and soap, scrub well, and dry their hands in order to prevent spreading germs. The ideal amount of time for hand-washing is at least 20 seconds. While hand sanitizers are good for when you're in a pinch in public, it's best to teach children to wash their hands in the sink when they are cooking.

Using knives. Small children, as young as two years old, can use plastic knives, metal butter knives, and lettuce cutters with close supervision. They are sharp enough to chop most produce (except vegetables such as onions, carrots, and potatoes) but dull enough that they can't cause any serious accidents. It's often the grater and peeler that are the most dangerous. Keep a close watch on little fingers when they use those tools!

Hot equipment and electrical appliances. I don't allow children to open the oven or work at the stove by themselves unless they are 10 or older and/or extremely mature. I also don't allow children under the age of 10 to work with electrical appliances unless an adult is overseeing the project. All electrical appliances should stay unplugged unless in use.

In case of emergencies. It's a good idea to store a fire extinguisher in a spot that older children can reach and teach them how to use it. I recommend reminding kids what to do if there is a fire: they should not throw water on it but, rather, they should find an adult who can cut off its oxygen supply (like putting a lid on a pot or keeping the oven shut). All children should be taught how to call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency.

Cross-contamination

It's important to note that any time you are working with meat, poultry or fish, you should use a clean plastic or glass cutting board (versus wood which is porous and can absorb bacteria).

You must never cut animal products and then use the same knife or cutting board to cut fruits or vegetables. Instead, the knife and board should be thoroughly cleaned with hot soapy water (or in a dishwasher) and air dried. Kids should also be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly after working with meat, poultry, fish, or eggs.

Recipes and information, used with permission, from *Easy Meals to Cook with Kids* by Julie Negrin ©2010. Book is available at www.julienegrin.com

Kitchen Tasks for Different Age Groups

When working with kids in the kitchen, it's hard to strike a balance between being too laid-back and too involved, especially if they are struggling with a task. If they are having a hard time, I recommend waiting a minute before stepping in to help. Offer verbal suggestions first, and if that doesn't work, put your hand over theirs and do the task together. That way, they can learn a new motion or skill. It's important to help children feel a sense of ownership over a dish – while also making sure that it turns out edible so that they feel successful. Allowing children to find their own way through the cooking process is a rewarding experience for both adult and child.

Tasks for Kids

For each recipe, I divided the instructions into five age categories: 2 and up; 4 and up; 6 and up; 8 and up; and one for only “Adults.” I allow kids 10 and up to do tasks designated for “Adults” by themselves so long as there is an adult nearby.

The following are suggested tasks for each age group. Of course, maturity and dexterity differ in each child. It's up to you to determine what's appropriate for your child.

2-3 year olds and up

Most toddlers enjoy helping in the kitchen. They are very tactile and love the concept of eating their art project. This age group, however, needs very close adult supervision since their dexterity and motor skills are still developing. Keep in mind, though, that toddlers are sponges and usually pick up skills very quickly, so don't underestimate their abilities! Just give them lots of counter space and big bowls to work with because they have trouble doing things in small spaces.

This age group can do the following tasks with minimal assistance:

Squeezing lemons or limes, using a plastic juicer, washing produce in the sink, drying produce in a salad spinner; picking fresh herb leaves off stems, ripping them into small pieces; tearing up lettuce, sprinkling dried herbs and salt, using a pepper grinder, kneading dough, scooping potatoes or yams out of the skins, brushing (or “painting”) oil with a pastry brush, using the rolling pin for dough or puff pastry, whisking together vinaigrettes, squeezing water out of thawed spinach, stirring, and mashing.

They will need close supervision to: Grate, peel, chop vegetables and herbs with a knife, and break eggs.

Kitchen Tasks for Different Age Groups (cont.)

This age group can master basic tasks like breaking eggs and kneading dough:

Breaking an Egg – Let kids practice in a large, sturdy bowl with some paper towels nearby for messes:

Have them hold the egg with their dominant hand and hold the side of the bowl very securely with the other hand. Have them gently tap the center of the egg on the edge of the bowl until there is a small crack. Over the bowl, have them hold the egg so that the cracked side is facing down and both of their thumbs are over the hole. Then, instruct them to carefully pull the egg apart so that the egg slides into the bowl.

Kneading dough – Here are three steps that I use to teach small children (and grown-ups) how to knead dough. This is an oversimplified explanation for a fast-moving technique, but it's helpful for kids to have a step-by-step method that they can repeat to themselves during the task. Once the dough is in a ball, have them Fold, Press, Turn.

- 1) **Fold** over the top half of the dough
- 2) **Press** with the heels of their palms
- 3) **Turn** the dough halfway around the surface

Keep repeating this process for 3-5 minutes.

4-5 year olds and up

In this age group, there is a lot of variability in motor skills, independence, and the ability to focus, which means that some kids will continue doing the 2-3 year-old tasks, and others will feel ready to move on to the 6-7 year-old tasks.

6-7 year olds and up

This age group usually has developed fine motor skills so they can take on more detailed work, like using measuring spoons and forming evenly sized patties. They may still need reminders to watch their fingers during grating and peeling.

They also excel at: Dicing and mincing vegetables, grating cheese; peeling raw potatoes, ginger, mangoes and other fruits and vegetables; slicing and scooping out avocados, greasing pans, using a microplane zester, de-seeding tomatoes and roasted peppers, draining and slicing tofu, rinsing grains and beans, forming cookies and patties, pouring liquids into small containers, and garnishing (or “decorating”) dishes.

8-9 year olds and up

There is a wide range of skills in this age group. Some 8 year olds are not mature enough to work at the stove. Others have the focus and diligence of an adult. You'll have to decide if they should continue with the 6-7 year old tasks or if they are responsible enough to do more.

Kitchen Tasks for Different Age Groups (cont.)

This group can take on more sophisticated tasks such as: Using a pizza cutter and can opener, scooping batter into muffin cups, scraping down the (unplugged) electric mixer bowl and food processor bowl, putting away leftovers, pounding chicken, proofing yeast, skewering food, slicing bread, and chopping hot chili peppers (latex gloves are a good idea!).

10-12 year olds and up

This age group can usually work independently in the kitchen. Before letting them do grown-up tasks on their own, they should have close adult supervision to assess whether they can follow basic rules such as:

- 🍅 Keeping pan handles tucked into the stove
- 🍅 Unplugging electrical appliances as soon as they are done using them
- 🍅 Covering both hands in large oven mitts when removing something from the oven
- 🍅 Safely using a chef's knife and carrying it correctly (pointed down at the floor)
- 🍅 Turning the oven and stove off when they are done using them



Josh and his brother, Daniel making calzones together.

Once they pass a few of these “tests,” they can move onto basic tasks at the stove (stirring, making eggs) and oven, or using a chef's knife, without close adult supervision. However, I recommend that there still be an adult in the house in case of emergency.

Recipes and information, used with permission, from *Easy Meals to Cook with Kids* by Julie Negrin ©2010. Book is available at www.julienegrin.com





How to Talk to Your Kids About Substance Abuse*

When talking to your kids about drugs and alcohol:

- Acknowledge that marijuana, alcohol and tobacco are substances that are out there and that many people use them. Explain that nicotine and prescription drugs are also “abuse-able” and should be treated the same as alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Start talking with your kids at an early age and take time to explain things to your child in basic terms that are easily understandable. Make your child comfortable talking to you about “difficult” topics such as drugs, alcohol and smoking.
- Listen carefully to your child. Educate yourself so you can answer his or her questions. As children get older, their questions get more difficult, so you need to be prepared.
- Peer pressure may play a pivotal role in a child’s decision to use drugs, drink or smoke. However, encourage your child to be their own person and make their own decisions.
- Tell your child the truth—that drugs, alcohol and tobacco may make them feel good for a while (by activating brain chemicals). Unfortunately, that feeling is brief and no one can know the true potency or lifetime effects of these substances.
- Try to impress on your child the long-term consequences drinking, smoking or using drugs may have on something they enjoy doing, such as sports, math or writing.
- Point out that adolescents are in a period of life during which they need their brains to operate at full efficiency. These substances can impair brain function.
- Make the point that repeated “chemical activation” will eventually cause people to crave that chemical and want to keep using it even if it hurts them.
- Explain that these substances may dull a painful part of their lives for a brief period, but it will never change or help the underlying situation.
- Write a family “contract” established to make your opinions on drug use, drinking and smoking clear. Be consistent with family rules.
- Be a model of healthy behavior for your child.

 THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE
ABUSE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

 **Family Day** 
A day to eat dinner with your children™
www.CSAFamilyDay.org

*Adapted from “Just Say Know: Talking With Your Kids About Drugs And Alcohol” - Cynthia Kuhn

Online Resources

Online Resources and Friends

- [The National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University \(CASA\)](#)
- [Let's Move](#)
- [Playnormous](#)
- [Nourish Interactive](#)
- [Julie Negrin, author of Easy Recipes to Cook with Kids](#)
- [Family Cook Productions](#)
- [Cricket Azima/The Creative Kitchen](#)
- [Laptop Lunches](#)
- [Tribeca Yummy Mummy](#)
- [Veggie Teens](#)

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