

FitFUTURE

Strategies for
Better Living.

Use Your Kitchen as a Learning Lab

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Did you know that your kitchen is actually a learning lab for your children? That's right, children develop new skills in terms of science, math and language when you bring them into the kitchen to plan and prepare meals with you. It also brings you closer together as a family unit.

Sure, cooking with children may take a bit more time, and it might be a bit messy at times, but the rewards are worth the effort! There is no better way to discuss nutrition and "smart food choices" than when your child is engaged in planning a meal with you. Children who have a say in family meal discussions are more likely to try new foods, which leads to healthier diets overall.

The parent-child bond is strengthened when you work together in the kitchen. Ask questions to make them think, like "what colorful vegetables would look lovely with our chicken tonight?" or "can you think of a healthy topping for our baked potatoes?" Use these opportunities to share information about yourself and other family members.



Children love stories about their parents when they were children. Tell them that your favorite sandwich was PB&J or that you loved to pick strawberries with your mom. Share old family recipes, like grandma's famous carrot muffins. Relationships with siblings are strengthened when they work together for a common goal. As a parent you will have to encourage patience, teamwork, and sharing. Make sure you divide kitchen tasks evenly between the children.

Working in the kitchen fosters a sense of responsibility and teaches children about taking steps to reach a goal. They learn to read and follow a recipe, clean up after themselves and safely handle kitchen equipment.

As children measure rice, stir sauce, crack eggs and tear lettuce, they improve basic, science, math and language skills too. They learn to compare and understand sequencing and

play with fractions. They develop new vocabulary. They witness how simple measure ingredients become whole new foods. Ask them questions like "is there more flour or sugar in this recipe?" and "what task do I do first, second...?"

In elementary school, children can complete a lot of simple tasks. These include: mashing, peeling with a vegetable peeler, sifting and stirring, kneading, rolling and spreading. As a parent you must let them work within your comfort zone. Just prepare ahead of time so that things run smoothly. Set up a stool, gather the necessary kitchen tools and maybe have some extra ingredients ready in case of a mishap! Most of all, enjoy this time with your children.

- Bon Appétit!

