



## Kids in the Kitchen

**COOKING** with children is an opportunity not to be missed! They can acquire new skills and practice many others when they are allowed to help in the kitchen.

During cooking projects, explain the process to the children, while asking and answering questions. By teaching children to cook, they will learn much more than how to prepare a tasty meal!

### Why the Mess Is Worth It

- ✂ Exercises eye-hand coordination and increases fine motor skills through chopping, whisking, pouring, mixing, cutting and rolling
- ✂ Improves social skills such as responsibility, safety, cleanliness, working together, sharing and fostering the ability to follow through with a task to completion (including the clean up process)
- ✂ Builds math skills through counting, measuring, fractions and problem solving
- ✂ Teaches geography and history lessons through cultural recipes, family history and learning about regional foods

- ✂ Incorporates science lessons such as the food groups, awareness of healthful new foods, making predictions and observing cause and effect relationships
- ✂ Applies reading skills by using recipes, labels and expanding vocabulary

### Tips for Cooking with Kids

- Start with very simple projects. Young children need lots of practice at mixing, cutting and pouring before they are ready to prepare a complicated dish.
- If possible, incorporate making a list and going shopping at the store or farmers' market for ingredients.
- Choose a space where the children will be safe and comfortable and you will not worry too much about the mess.
- Get help. Attempting a cooking activity with young children can be frustrating if you have never cooked with kids before. Ask for help from parents and/or assistants.
- Work in small groups. Six children is probably a manageable size for one adult. A different group can cook each day.

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- ▶ People who drink 3 or more sugary sodas daily have 62% more dental decay.
- ▶ A California survey found 28% of kindergarteners and third-graders had untreated tooth decay, while 33% of Americans, in general, have untreated tooth decay.
- ▶ According to the Academy of General Dentistry, the average person only brushes 45–70 seconds a day. The recommended amount of time is 2–3 minutes, twice a day.
- ▶ The calcium and phosphorus found in cheese is healthy for your teeth; it reduces the pH level in plaque and re-mineralizes the enamel.

American Dental, Dental Health Action Group

### Quotable Quotes

“If you came and you found a strange man... teaching your kids to punch each other, or trying to sell them all kinds of products, you'd kick him right out of the house, but here you are; you come in and the TV is on, and you don't think twice about it.

— Prof. Jerome Singer, Yale University

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- ◆ Fun With Food Activity
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## Kids in the Kitchen

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- Before beginning, discuss what you will be preparing and what the children will be doing by themselves.
- Have utensils that are safe for children to handle and instructions they can easily follow.
- Let the children do as much of the preparation and cooking as they can safely do. Cleaning up can be fun and gives lots of opportunity for learning.
- Let children help cook a “new” food. Children are more apt to try new foods if they have helped with the preparation.
- Eat the finished product together and talk about what you have done.
- Allow plenty of time for discussion, looking, smelling, touching and tasting.
- Remember to follow food safety rules.

— Donna Green R.D.  
Contra Costa Child Care Council

## Kid Friendly Recipes

### Egg and Avocado Salad in a Baggie

Hard-boiled egg, peeled .....	1
Avocado .....	1 slice
Mayonnaise .....	2 tsp
Pickle relish .....	½ tsp
Whole wheat bread .....	1 slice

1. Place egg in a plastic sandwich baggie. Add avocado, mayonnaise and pickle relish. Seal the bag tightly and then children can mash it with fingers.
2. Cut the corner from the baggie and squeeze the mixture on to the bread. Fold and eat.

### Eat-a-Pita Pizza

For each pita round:

**Pizza sauce, mozzarella cheese, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes and salami or ham and pineapple slices.**

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Place pitas on a baking sheet. Children prep all the ingredients and then top their pizzas.
2. Bake for 12–15 minutes.

### 2-in-1 Yogurt

Fresh fruit (bananas, berries, peaches) ...	1½ cups
Yogurt, plain .....	2 cups
Ginger snap crumbs (optional for parfait)	

1. Have children cut up fruit with plastic knives.
2. They can create two small parfaits with layers of fruit and yogurt.
3. Top one with gingersnap crumbs. Blend the ingredients in the second cup to make a smoothie.

### Banana “Ice Cream”

Banana .....	4
Maple syrup .....	2 Tbsp
Milk (cow’s, almond or soy) .....	½ cup
Vanilla .....	1 tsp

1. Children slice the banana and place on parchment lined sheet. Freeze until firm. Transfer banana slices to a zip lock bag for storage up to a month in the freezer.
2. Combine the frozen banana slices with syrup, vanilla and milk and pulse in a food processor until the consistency of soft-serve ice cream.
3. Spoon into bowls and serve immediately.

### Sticks and Stones Trail Mix

Cherrios .....	1 cup
Pretzel sticks .....	1 cup
Nuts .....	1 cup
Raisins or dried cranberries .....	1 cup
Dried apricots, chopped .....	1 cup

1. Place all ingredients in bowls on the table.
2. Kids measure a spoonful of each into their own ziplock bags to enjoy for a snack.

### Bean Dip

Refried beans, non-fat .....	15 ounce can
Salsa .....	14 ounce jar

1. Kids mash beans with a fork and then mix in salsa to the desired consistency.
2. Serve with veggie sticks and crackers.

## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# Healthy Smiles

Good oral health involves healthy teeth, mouth and gums that are comfortable and functional. What we eat and drink each day plays a huge role in the development and protection of our teeth. Keeping children free of dental caries (also known as tooth decay or cavities) is important to their good health, growth and quality of life. Tooth decay is caused by bacteria living in the mouth. Smart snacking and good oral hygiene leads to healthy smiles.

- ☺ Bacteria thrive on sticky and sugary foods. The bacteria produce an acid that causes the enamel on the teeth to decay.
- ☺ Avoid giving children sugary snacks such as hard candy that dissolve slowly in the mouth, because they bathe the teeth in sugar.
- ☺ Have children brush their teeth after they eat foods that are sticky such as: peanut butter, soft breads, raisins or other dried fruits, jelly or jam, etc.
- ☺ Encourage “swishing,” the action of taking a mouthful of water and swirling it in the mouth several times to try to remove food remaining in the mouth after eating meals. This is helpful when children are not able to brush their teeth after eating.
- ☺ Help children brush and floss their teeth until they learn the proper technique.
- ☺ Encourage children to drink plenty of water.
- ☺ Serve children a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups at scheduled meal and snack times. Include plenty of fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, plain yogurt, cheese and milk.



### Early Childhood Caries Prevention:

- ☺ Take children to the dentist by age one or six months after the eruption of the first tooth.
- ☺ Never put babies to bed with a bottle or sippy cup with anything other than water in it.
- ☺ Avoid putting anything in a child's mouth that has come in contact with an adult's mouth.
- ☺ Use a washcloth or gauze to clean babies' gums before they have teeth. When teeth erupt, brush them in the morning, right before bedtime and as needed with a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste on a soft toothbrush.
- ☺ Check babies teeth for white spots, which are early signs of tooth decay and an indication it is time to see a dentist.

— *Dental Health Action Group of Contra Costa Health Services; CDE Healthy Smiles Tip Sheet*

## Baked Zucchini Sticks

Zucchini.....	3	Parmesan cheese.....	¼ cup
Egg white.....	1	Garlic powder.....	¼ tsp
Seasoned, dry bread crumbs.....	¾ cup	Salt and pepper.....	pinch
		Marinara sauce.....	1 cup

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking oil spray. In a small bowl beat the egg white. In a ziplock bag, place the bread crumbs, cheese and seasonings.
2. Cut zucchini into 3 inch by ½ inch strips. Dip the zucchini in egg white and place a few at a time in the bag with the bread crumbs. Toss to coat. Place breaded zucchini on prepared sheet and spray again with cooking spray.
3. Bake for 20–25 minutes until golden brown. Serve with marinara sauce for dipping.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable

— [www.skinnytaste.com](http://www.skinnytaste.com)

## Summer Lentil Salad

French green lentils, rinsed.....	1 cup	Bell pepper, red or yellow, diced.....	½
Brown rice, rinsed.....	2 cups	Tomato, diced.....	1 large
Onion, diced.....	½ large	Feta cheese, crumbled.....	4 ounces
Garlic, minced.....	1 clove	Olive oil.....	¼ cup
Chicken stock or vegetable stock.....	2 cups	White wine vinegar.....	2 Tbsp
Olive oil.....	1 Tbsp	Salt & pepper.....	to taste
Celery, diced.....	2 stalks		
Parsley, chopped.....	½ bunch		

1. Cook the brown rice in a rice cooker or stove top. When done, spread on a sheet pan to cool.
2. While the brown rice is cooking, heat the tablespoon of oil in a medium sized sauce pot. Sauté the onion until soft, add the garlic and sauté 1 minute longer.
3. Add lentils and stir in the chicken stock. Bring to a simmer and reduce to low. Cook lentils until tender, about 40 minutes. Spread on a sheet pan to cool.
4. Combine vegetables in a large bowl. Add cooled lentils and rice. Whisk together ¼ cup olive oil and vinegar in a small bowl with salt and pepper (about ½ tsp each to start). Pour over the salad and mix gently. Fold in crumbled cheese.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for and grains/breads and protein/meat alternate

— [formerchef.com](http://formerchef.com)

## Activity Corner

### FUN WITH FOOD

#### The Power of COLOR!

Divide children into groups based on the main color of clothing they are wearing. Each group is challenged to think of as many foods as they can that are that same color.

Note: Red, orange, yellow, green and brown are easy. Black, purple and blue are harder, so you may want to bunch them with another color.

#### Vegetables —

##### What's the Most Popular?

Tell children you will be reading a list of many different types of vegetables (fruit can be used as well). Instruct children to stand up when they like the vegetable, sit down when they don't like it and spin around if they have never tried it. Ask if anyone has a favorite you did not list.

Count the number of children standing for each vegetable to find the top 3 or 5 vegetable/fruit choices!

— *5 Minute Nutrition Classroom Activities*

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**Food Q: What fruit makes the very best slippers?**  
**Funny A: Banana peels!**