



# How to Cook with your Children

Involving your children in the kitchen not only allows you to teach them practical skills such as cooking and food preparation, it also contributes to reduce food waste. Cooking with your children is an opportunity to share precious moments that will last for a lifetime! With meticulous planning and creative ideas, you can turn cooking into a fun and enjoyable activity for the whole family.

Here are some winning ingredients for family cooking.

## **Include Kids in the Process from the Beginning**

Depending on their age and the time you have, kids can participate in the planning of the recipes. Before you start, plan the recipe(s) you want to cook together. When kids agree on a common project, it is easier to get them collaborating. Together, gather all the ingredients so that everything is ready when you'll start cooking. This will help your children to focus on the task to be performed, while avoiding any delay or boredom. You could even start this step by doing the groceries together. In this case, prepare the grocery list with them, and make sure to only buy what will be useful to the recipe. It is an opportunity to contribute to their understanding of the cost and value of food.

## **Set Up Workstations**

If you cook with more than one kid, it is important to set up stations where they can work independently, for example preparing ingredients or stirring something on the stovetop. This will allow them to perform tasks on their own while contributing to keep them engaged during the whole process. They will feel autonomous and proud of their work. Teach them right gestures, if you know them, even for cutting with a knife. There are also cooking utensils designed for the youngest ones. However, if you do not have such items or do not want to invest in new equipment, keep it simple and use what you have on hand.



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## Begin with Simple Recipes

When cooking with kids, it is important to start by simple recipes that do not require too many sophisticated steps or ingredients. It will contribute to sustain their interest and give them a sense of accomplishment when they will complete the dish. Each gesture matters – learning to measure flour, mixing the ingredients with no mess, cracking the eggs. Be indulgent: it's not the end of the world if there are still some eggshell pieces in the cake! It adds a bit of crunchiness! Don't forget that you are not looking for perfection, but rather to have a good time together, while instilling love of cooking.

## Make It Fun

Cooking with kids has to be a fun experience. Use colourful ingredients, let your children show as much creativity as possible and don't forget to congratulate them for their work! If you put brioche doughs or marble cakes on the menu, the young aspiring cooks will have the opportunity to create out-of-the-ordinary desserts.

## Be Inventive

To make your children want to cook, try creating new dishes together or inventing unique recipes from their favourite foods. You will have a lot of fun and create delightful memories at the same time! For example, some families will explore new exotic flavours: it gives the chance to discover new spices and textures, and to travel for very little money! To get in the mood, you can play music typical of the country from which your recipe originates. Kids are hungry for this kind of experience and they'll keep precious memories of these.



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## Clean as You Go

Keep the cleaning process on track throughout the cooking session to prevent it gets overwhelming at the end. You can even make it an integral part of the activity and involve your children in wiping the countertops and putting away the ingredients. They will get aware that cooking also includes some cleaning and tidying. Cooking is also an opportunity to teach them organization and planning, in regards of both the recipe and the session as a whole.

## Let Them (and Yourself) the Right to Make Mistakes

Even though we want to avoid food waste, let them, and yourself, the right to make mistakes. They made wrong measurements in the cake recipe? You could improvise cake pops, this kind of cake ball holding on wooden sticks. Kids love those, and it will prevent the “failed” recipe ends up in the trash. Trial-and-error is the ground for learning. Your children will gradually gain autonomy and confidence.

## Real Little Chefs

The more you'll cook together, the more your children will gain autonomy. If you see that your children really have a strong interest for cooking, why not leaving them the entire place in the kitchen? For example, you could propose them to prepare the meal for the whole family on a special occasion, while overseeing everything to ensure their safety. You could also turn the preparation of the snacks for the week into a ritual by cooking together snack recipes. [<https://tcsagim.org/category/collective-kitchen-recipes/snacks/?lang=en>] for school.



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## Taste Everything to Open Up their Curiosity

One of the biggest advantages of involving kids in cooking is that it allows them to taste everything. Discovering new flavours is crucial in the child development. In addition, when a kid participated in the planning, he or she will probably be more inclined to eat once the time comes. Smells, textures, colours, all these things are likely to become discovery and learning sources for kids.

Family cooking is an excellent way to have fun, acquire important skills and create long-lasting memories. With a good approach and meticulous planning, you can make the experience enjoyable for everyone! By following these simple advices, cooking with your children can become a fun and rewarding experience they will remember for years!

