

News Column – Donna Krug, District Director and Family & Consumer Science Agent –  
Cottonwood Extension District

### Have Fun with Kids in the Kitchen

Kids' a Cookin' is a great web site that has been around for a number of years. With school out and a number of usual summer activities put on hold, perhaps this is the year to work with your school age kids to help them develop cooking skills.

The curriculum, complete with videos is geared toward kids at a 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The purpose of Kids' a Cookin' is to share the fun and skills of cooking with children and those who guide them. It's no secret that when you involve children in the planning and preparation of simple recipes they will be excited to try the food. Important skills include reading and following a recipe, measuring ingredients, cutting, (if they are old enough to use knives safely), stirring and serving the completed food. Kids helping with the preparation of foods promotes independence and develops self-confidence.

Another goal in cooking with kids is to expose children to healthy foods. Children may choose nutritionally sound foods if they understand the role of food in good health. Talk about such facts as "calcium rich foods make strong bones" or "fruits provide natural sweetness" while cooking to help kids make the best, most nutritious choices.

It is important to give kitchen tasks that are appropriate for each child's age so that the job that can be done successfully. Give clear instructions, show how it is done, and let your child practice. When children help with food preparation, remind them to wash hands using soap and water before and after handling food or utensils to prepare food. Expect a few spills, be patient and allow extra time for each task.

Each child has his own pace for learning a new skill. Even a young child can:

- spread soft spreads
- place things in the trash
- mix ingredients
- peel oranges
- mash bananas using a fork
- set the table

As children gain more skills they can:

- measure ingredients
- cut with a blunt knife
- operate simple appliances

Cooking provides many opportunities for using all the senses - tasting, smelling, touching, seeing and hearing.

Measuring, weighing and following sequential steps interest the child who is most comfortable with math and logic.

The picture cooking method for many recipes is perfect for the child who visualizes things in order to understand and produce them. The main point of cooking with children is to have an enjoyable time together.

I would love to hear about your fun Kids' a Cookin' experiences this summer!

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