

BEGINNING TO COOK

Skills Progression by Age*

Cooking with kids has loads of benefits that carry way beyond the kitchen. It helps builds self-esteem, teaches them the importance of following directions, and puts them on the path to a lifetime of healthier eating habits. Plus, involving kids in what happens at mealtime can be a powerful tool in overcoming picky eating.

Little littles (2 years and under)

Touch ingredients

Smell herbs and spices

Mash bananas and avocado

Spin salad greens (with help)

Wash the sturdier produce (potatoes, citrus, apples, broccoli, etc.)

“Play cook” with their child safe cooking equipment

- Uses spoon
- Helps feed self
- Helps scrub fruits and vegetables, tears lettuce or greens, snap green beans, dip foods
- Wipes table
- Lifts and drinks from a cup
- Places items in recycle bin or trash



Storybook
NUTRITION

BEGINNING COOK

Toddlers (3 to 5 years)

Pick herb leaves from stems

Measure ingredients (with help)

Crack eggs

Stir ingredients

Shake spices

Spoon cookie dough or muffin batter onto tray

Push on/off buttons on blenders, microwaves, food processors (with supervision)

Count ingredients or quantities of ingredients (cups, spoonfuls, etc.)

Describe the taste and texture of food and ingredients

Look at pictures of recipes and help choose what to make

Age 3, when medium hand muscles develop

- Spears food with fork
- Feeds self independently
- Serves self with some supervision
- Adds ingredients to pancake batters, cookie recipes, salads or other mixed dishes
- Helps pour, mix, shake, stir, or spread foods
- Helps crack pistachios or peanuts

Age 4, when small finger muscles develop

- Uses all utensils and napkins
- Helps roll, juice, or mash foods
- Helps measure dry ingredients
- Cracks egg shells
- Helps make sandwiches, toss salads
- Peels food such as bananas or eggs
- Clears plate after a meal

Age 5, when coordination of fingers & hands develops

- Can make a simple sandwich (like peanut butter and jelly or turkey and cheese)
- Measures liquids
- Helps grind or grate veggies with supervision
- Starts to cut soft foods with dull / plastic knife
- Uses hand mixer with supervision
- Sets kitchen timer
- Refills own water
- Portions food onto own plate

*Note: Ages are relative. It's never too late to learn to cook. Just start with the simple skills and work your way down this list until you have mastered them all.