

Cooking With Young Children

The brain research tells us that when children are happy and are allowed to experience the world through their senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling) they will learn. A well planned and implemented cooking experience holds children's interest and allows them to learn through the use of all five of their up front sense. When the adult embeds meaningful language, and is constantly counting and discussing the changes in the materials as they are cooked or mixed the children will learn new concepts, words, and skills.

The cooking experiences should be planned and materials gathered in advance. The adult should never leave the table to get a missing item. Pre-scaffolding the environment by having everything needed is vital to a successful experience for all.

Wash and disinfect the cooking surface. Wash everyone's hands and faces before the experience begins and throughout as needed.

Remember—talk, talk, talk and count materials whenever the opportunity arises. Number concepts must have meaning in order for them to be learned and used appropriately. Introduce each ingredient and activity with enthusiasm, complete delight. The children will mirror your emotional state.

Granola Bars

Materials needed:

1 ½ sticks butter

1 cup dried apricots or cranberries, raisins, etc.

1 ½ cups oats

1 cup flour

1 cup brown sugar

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp cinnamon

1 ½ tsp vanilla

measuring spoons

measuring cups

large bowl

spoon for stirring

9 inch pan lined with greased aluminum foil and greased

Procedure:

- Introduce each item and let children taste.
- Let children help add each ingredient to the large bowl.
- Let children help stir mix in the bowl.
- Pour into a pan to bake in oven. Talk about heat and oven. (Bake 40 min. at 350)
- Let cool and cut into squares to eat.

Burritos

Materials needed:

block of cheddar cheese
head of lettuce
fresh tomato
ground meat (turkey)
can of refried beans without lard
mild salsa
taco seasoning
sour cream
small corn or flour tortillas
tongue depressors
paper plates,
electric skillet
spatula
cheese grater

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Talk about how they are going to build a burrito
- Plug in skillet and add seasonings to cook. Talk to the children about how hot it is and how it is cooking. If you cannot cook have these prepared in advance.
- Let each child take turns using the cheese grater to grate cheese into a bowl with the help of the adults hands
- Let children pull off a leaf of lettuce and rip it up and set it on their paper plate

- Slice a tomato then give each child a slice and a tongue depressor or serrated plastic knife to cut it up.
- Give children a piece of a tortilla and let them spread the refried beans, and put the other ingredients they choose on. (meat, sour cream, tomato, salsa, lettuce, and cheese on it.) Roll it up and eat away. **Remember this is their experience. Let them make and eat it their way.**

Egg Salad Sandwiches

Materials needed:

mayo

mustard

one hard-boiled egg for each child & one for demonstration

1 uncooked egg

pickle relish

bread cut into quarters

tongue depressors

paper plates

small bowl for each child and 1 for demonstration (you can also use a cookie cutter to cut the bread into a shape that matches your theme)

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Talk about eggs shape, texture, (break a raw egg into a bowl so you can show the difference between it and the cooked egg.)
- Give each child a bowl with a boiled egg and a tongue depressor. Let children cut up their egg with the tongue depressor.
- Let each child add other ingredients that **they like** to eggs. (mayo, mustard, pickles.) Each child may have different tastes and that is ok!
- Give them time to mix everything together.
- Give each child two-pieces of bread and have them spread the egg mixture on it. (If you are using a cookie cutter let the children use it at this time to cut the sandwich into a shape. You will probably need to help push their hand down to cut through the bread)
- Now eat, but if they eat any or all before it is made that is fine.

This is their experience. Do not be too controlling.

Fruit Salad

A good book to read with this experience is "The Hungry Caterpillar"
by Eric Carle

Materials needed:

honey (children must be over the age of two to consume honey)

vanilla yogurt

a variety of soft fruit (examples: banana, melon, kiwi, strawberry, pineapple,
etc.)

tongue depressors

small plates and bowls for each child

big bowl

mixing spoon

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients (yogurt and honey) and let each child taste and smell them.
- Let children mix yogurt and honey to the sweetness you like in a big bowl. Set aside.
- Talk about fruit colors, texture, size, shape, sweet, sour etc..
- Give each child a plate, bowl and a tongue depressor.
- Give each child one piece (2 inches of banana, peeled ¼ of an apple etc.) of fruit at a time to cut up (if you have a banana let them peel it).
- When they finish with one, have them put it in their bowl. (Each child may like different fruit, encourage them to taste but let them choose what they like.)
- Continue to let them cut the fruit until they have all the different kinds of fruit in their bowl.

- Let each child add a little of the yogurt mixture to their salad. **It is fine if they don't want any.**
- Now eat but if they eat any or all before it is made that is fine. **Remember this is their experience.**

Heart Shaped Toast

Materials needed:

one slice bread for each child

red food coloring

milk

jelly

small cups

plates

small paint brushes

heart shaped cookie cutter

tongue depressors

toaster

small pitcher

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Talk about toaster and heat.
- Mix milk and food coloring in a small pitcher to desired color
- Give each child a piece of bread, paintbrush, small cup with milk mixture
- Let children paint bread.
- Toast bread
- Let each child cut out heart shape with cookie cutter.
- Give each child a plate with heart toast, dollop of jelly, and tongue depressor.
- Let children spread jelly on toast.
- Now eat but if they eat any or all before it is made that is fine.

Pasta Salad

Materials needed:

mayo

mustard

cooked pasta (any interesting shape)

chopped celery

shredded carrots

olives

shredded cheese

bowls

tongue depressor

a few pieces of uncooked pasta.

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Let children have a piece of uncooked pasta and talk about what happens when it is cooked.
- Give each child a bowl
- Let children add pasta.
- Let each child add other ingredients that they like to the pasta.
- Give children a tongue depressor and let them mix all the ingredients together.
- Now eat but if they eat any or all before it is made that is fine.

Individual Pizzas

Materials needed:

1/2 of English muffin for each child

pizza sauce

shredded cheese

can of sliced black olives

chopped up pepperoni

plates

tongue depressors

sheet pan

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Give each child a plate, 1/2 of English muffin, a dollop of pizza sauce, and a tongue depressor.
- Let children spread sauce on muffin.
- Give each child some cheese to sprinkle on the top.
- Give each child olives and pepperoni to put on pizza if they like.
- Put pizzas on a sheet pan, bake about five minutes. (Talk about heat and what will happen to the pizzas).
- Let the children eat their pizzas, but if they eat any or all before it is finished being made it is ok.
- If a child doesn't want a certain ingredient that is fine. Remember, this is their experience.

Green Salad

Materials needed:

various colors, sizes, and shapes of lettuce,

1 cucumber

1 or two ripe tomatoes

shredded carrot pieces

ranch dressing

a bowl or each child a plate

a plastic serrated knife.

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Give children a leaf of washed lettuce and show them how to tear it into small pieces. Continue to tear pieces until each child has enough in their bowl for a salad.
- Give each child a peeled piece of cucumber (2 inches) to cut with their knife. Let them cut however they can.
- Give each child a piece of tomato to cut with their knife.
- Let each child take a little shredded carrot for their salad.
- **Remember, this is their experience and if they don't want try an ingredient do not push...encourage only.**
- Give each child a plastic spoon or fork. Show them how to **gently** toss their salad in the bowl.
- Offer dressing
- Now eat but if they eat any or all before it is made that is fine.

Three Bears Porridge

Materials needed:

bowl and spoon for each child

small package of instant plain oatmeal

raisins

dried cranberries

brown sugar

1 large bowl and spoon

hot water in a safe container

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Let each child open a package of the oatmeal and pour it into the large bowl. Offer only help when needed.
- Add hot water and stir carefully. Allow the children to see and smell as the ingredients begin to cook.
- Give each child a bowl, spoon
- Serve them a portion of the oatmeal in their bowl
- Offer the brown sugar, raisins, etc. Let them stir, add a little milk if they want.
- Eat up! Remember, this is their experience. Let them make and eat it their way.

Apple Sauce

Materials needed:

1 half steamed soft apple for each child

apple juice

brown sugar

cinnamon

measuring spoons

measuring cup

bowls

spoons

tongue depressors

blender

large spoon

paring knife

one uncooked apple

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Demonstrate how to peel the apple and give each child a slice of uncooked apple.
- Talk about how the apples were cooked to make them soft.
- Give each child a bowl, tongue depressor, and half an apple.
- Let children cut apple with tongue depressor.
- Talk about blender and the noise it will make
- Pour **3/4 cup** apple juice in blender first (let children take turns)
- Let each child put cut cooked apple into the blender. Now mix. (add more liquid if needed)

- Let them taste sauce without sugar. Talk about sour and sweet.
- Add **4 TBS** of brown sugar to sauce and blend.
- Pass out sauce in bowls and let them sprinkle cinnamon on top.

Banana Pudding

Good Night, Gorilla is a good book to read with this experience.

Materials needed:

baggie for each child (bag must close tightly)

1/2 banana for each child

box of instant banana pudding

vanilla wafers

milk

large bowl

spoons

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Let children pour the box of pudding mix in bowl and add milk.
- Allow each child to have a turn to stir mixture. Set pudding aside.
- Let each child peel their half of banana. Cut a slit in the peel lengthwise to make this easier
- Give each child a baggie to put their banana in and help them to seal the bag.
- Have the children mash the banana in the bag.
- Add some pudding to each child's baggie and let him mash it together with the banana.
- Give each child a plate and squeeze the pudding from the bag onto the plate.
- Give each child some vanilla wafers and eat. If they eat any or all before it is made that is fine.

Fruit Smoothies

Materials needed:

a baggie for each child

three different kinds of fruit (some can be frozen)

ice cream or sherbet or yogurt

milk or juice

blender

a cup for each child

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Give each child a baggie with some of each fruit in it.
- Let children explore bag of fruit, talk about cold and different flavors
- Talk about blender and noise it will make
- Pour liquid in blender first (let each child have a turn)
- Let each child put some fruit in blender.
- Show them the ice cream, yogurt or sherbet and give each a taste.
- Add sherbet, yogurt or ice cream to mixture and blend.
- Continue to add ingredients to get desired thickness (juice liquefies and ice cream, yogurt or sherbet thickens)
- Now pour into cups and drink.

Truck Sandwiches

Materials needed:

one slice of bread per child

peanut butter or cream cheese mixed with jelly

Ritz bits sandwich-crackers or other small round cracker

raisins

stick pretzels

small paper plates

tongue depressors

truck shaped cookie cutter or other vehicle.

Procedure:

- Talk about ingredients and let each child taste and smell them.
- Give each child a plate, two 1/2 slices of bread, a dollop of peanut butter or the cream cheese jelly spread, and a tongue depressor.
- Help each child cut the vehicle shapes out of the bread
- Let the children spread the cream cheese or peanut butter on their bread.
- Let them put the other slice on top.
- Give each child four sandwich crackers for wheels
- Show them how to glue wheels on car with peanut butter or cream cheese spread. Put two on one side and two on the other so that the car stands up on end.
- Give each child some raisins and pretzels to decorate
- Now eat but if they have eaten any or all before it is made that is ok. Remember, this is their experience.

Bear Mix Bars

Materials needed:

baggie for each child
three kinds of cereal
chocolate chips
marshmallows
raisins
coconut
large bowl
cooking pan
large spoon

Procedure:

- Give each child a baggie to put samples of each item into.
- As you introduce each item let them have a small amount for their baggie. They can pretend to be a bear collecting food.
- Let children help add each ingredient to large bowl
 - 1/2 cup mini marshmallows
 - 1/2 cup Cheerios
 - 1/2 cup Golden Grahams
 - 1/2 cup Rice Krispies
 - 1/4 cup chocolate chips
 - 1/4 cup raisins
 - 1/4 cup coconut

- They can eat or shake up their own mix in the baggie.
- Let children help stir mix in the bowl.
- Pour into a pan to bake in oven. Talk about heat and oven.

Bake 5 min. in a 250 degree oven.

- Sing a bear song or read a book while baking.
- Let cool and cut into squares to eat.

Play Dough

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

4 teaspoons cream of tartar

2 tablespoons cooking oil

2 cups water

food coloring

large mixing bowl

large spoon

skillet

plastic knife for each child

assorted cookie cutters

Procedure:

- Stir together all ingredients, allow children to take turns helping stir
- Pour into skillet, stirring constantly — Discuss the concepts of hot and temperature with children
- Cook over medium heat until completely cooked through, scraping from bottom like scrambled eggs — Talk to the children about liquid and solid
- Pour out on clean dry surface
- Knead until cool and give each child a piece to knead, cut, and shape