



## Learning Life Lessons and Skills in the Kitchen

MANY CHILD CARE PROFESSIONALS are aware that when children participate in daily activities and household chores, they can learn many different disciplines like math, language and science, while also developing healthy habits and even fostering success in school.



When helping in the kitchen, children exercise their sense of *responsibility* by making sure they follow directions, engage in a process and ask questions to see a task to completion. Once the task is completed, their success will inspire *confidence* which nurtures and boosts their *self-esteem*. In addition, they can develop *self-sufficiency* by understanding that cooking is an everyday activity that can be fun, relaxing and rewarding.

Children learn to make their own

decisions by choosing and combining different ingredients for taste, texture, color and nutritional value which fosters *creativity*. When handling fruit, vegetables and other produce, children use their senses of sight, taste, smell and touch. They develop their *judgement* and appreciation for real foods and ingredients instead of processed, packaged or fast foods. *Healthy habits* will become second nature and patience will develop and grow during the process of planning, prepping, cooking and cleaning.

With adult supervision and guidance, children can learn about fundamental *food safety and sanitation* such as the dangers of hot surfaces, pointy or sharp objects, slipping on wet floors, even how to avoid food born illnesses by washing hands and safe food handling. Though the kitchen may get a bit messy, with planning, practice and patience, children will experience *empowerment* and *inspiration* learning from others. Lastly, cooking together gifts us with *memories and traditions* that will be cherished for a lifetime.

Before you plan a cooking activity, take inventory of available safe, non-breakable eating and cooking utensils,

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## Healthy Hydration



### Dehydration and Active Kids

Dehydration is inadequate water in the body to perform basic functions. Dehydration can be from not drinking enough fluids, vomiting, diarrhea or both and children with severe dehydration may need emergency treatment.

Dehydration can occur during any type of physical activity and in any weather. It doesn't have to be hot! Dehydration can occur while playing in water as well as playing outside in the winter. Be sure young children have plenty of water especially in excessive heat or humidity. Drinking fluids before, during and after activities is critical.

Be alert for conditions that increase fluid loss through sweat.

**Air temperature:** The higher the temperature, the more perspiration.

**Intensity:** The harder children are playing, the more they perspire.

**Duration:** The longer the physical activity, the greater the fluid loss.

#### Signs of dehydration include:

- a dry or sticky mouth
- few or no tears when crying
- in babies, the soft spot (fontanelle) on top of the head looks sunken
- less urine production or fewer wet diapers
- crankiness, drowsiness or dizziness

Remember, children who are very physically active should take regular water breaks (about every 20 minutes) during the activity.

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- Fireworks Safety
- July 4th Recipe Ideas
- Summertime, Salad Time
- Food Funny

## Learning Life Lessons and Skills in the Kitchen

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as well as the necessary cleaning supplies to guarantee safety and cleanliness.

Do not get discouraged if you have children as young as two or three years old in your care. Contrary to what we may believe, there are many ways in which all children, can participate and feel included. Choose easy recipes at first and grow from there!

Some examples of age-appropriate tasks that will ensure everyone feels part of the process are:

### 2 YEARS OLD

- Proper hand washing—before, during and after!
- Wipe table tops
- Manipulate safe utensils
- Scrub, wash, tear, snap, break into pieces
- Move pre-measured ingredients from one place to another
- Add ingredients to a bowl

### 3 YEARS OLD

- All of the above
- Handle dough, begin kneading, simple shaping
- Pour cool liquids into mixture
- Mix dry ingredients with wire whisk or spoon in a large bowl
- Shake liquids
- Spread soft spreads
- Place things in the trash bins—sort recyclables and compostables

### 4 YEARS OLD

- All of the above
- Peel loose skinned oranges or hard cooked eggs
- Form round shapes with dough
- Mash soft fruits or cooked vegetables
- Cut with dull scissors
- Crack raw eggs into a bowl
- Set the table

### 5 – 6 YEAR OLDS

- All of the above
- Help measure dry ingredients (stir, spoon, level)
- Cut with a blunt knife (plastic or tableware)
- Use a handheld egg beater or whisk

- Crush crackers in a bag with a rolling pin
- Sprinkle ingredients on top of food

### 7 – 9 YEAR OLDS

- All of the above
- Wipe down all surfaces and refrigerate perishables promptly
- Juice citrus fruits
- Beat eggs
- Open cans with a can opener
- Put leftovers in containers and refrigerate
- Use separate cutting boards for vegetables, fruits, poultry, seafood and meats

### 10 – 12 YEAR OLDS (WITH ADULT SUPERVISION)

- Learn safe knife skills (chopping, dicing and slicing)
- Handle food equipment safely
- Adjust oven racks (while oven is cold)
- Safe operation of electric equipment (mixer, microwave, bread machine, food processor, etc.)
- Follow a recipe (measure accurately, prepare a product)
- Read ingredients and food labels
- Safely handle/store ingredients and finished products
- Plan and prepare simple meals and snacks
- Clean up (how and what to wash in dishwasher or by hand)

### 13 YEARS AND OLDER

- All of the above
- Tasks requiring multiple preparation steps or close timing
- Create new flavor combinations, shapes or decoration
- Plan and prepare whole menus for meals
- Help younger children learn about food preparation
- Enjoy cooking with peers
- Be a role model and a mentor for younger children

Cooking is a great teaching tool that offers valuable lessons and life skills that shape and serve us for our whole lives. Through cooking we pass along old family or cultural traditions and discover and expand our own capabilities. You will be amazed at how much children will learn in the kitchen!

Source: *National CACFP Sponsors Association, PrimaFoodie.com*

— *Alejandra Marín Santos*  
*Child Health and Nutrition Specialist, CocoKids*

## KIDS' HEALTH &amp; SAFETY

## Fireworks Safety

**FIREWORKS** are often used to mark special events and holidays. The only safe way to view fireworks is to attend a professional show. It is important to know that fireworks are dangerous and cause thousands of injuries each year.



If not handled properly, fireworks can cause burns and eye injuries in children and adults. The best way to protect your family is to never use fireworks at home. In addition, lighting fireworks at home is illegal in most areas.

- Kids should never play with fireworks. Even firecrackers, rockets and sparklers are just too dangerous.
- Never try to make your own fireworks.
- Steer clear of others setting off fireworks. They can backfire or shoot off in the wrong direction.
- Never throw or point fireworks at someone, even as a joke.
- Don't hold fireworks in your hand or have any part of your body over them while lighting. Wear eye protection and don't carry fireworks in your pocket — the friction could set them off.
- Don't allow kids to pick up pieces of fireworks after an event. Some may still be ignited and can explode at any time. Soak spent fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them in the trash.
- Consider your pets. Animals have sensitive ears and can be very frightened or stressed by the Fourth of July and other big celebrations. Keep pets indoors to reduce the risk that they'll run loose or get injured.

## IF AN INJURY HAPPENS

- For an eye, don't touch it or rub it, as this may cause even more damage. Don't flush the eye out with water or try to put any ointment on it. Cut out the bottom of a paper cup, place it around the eye while getting medical care.

- For a burn, remove clothing from the burned area. Do not apply butter or ointment.
- For all serious injuries seek medical attention immediately.

## DID YOU KNOW

- Sparklers account for roughly one-quarter of emergency room fireworks injuries.
- The National Fire Protection Association estimates that local fire departments respond to more than 50,000 fires caused by fireworks each year.
- Sparklers can reach 1,800°F (982°C)—hot enough to melt gold.
- Half of fireworks injuries seen at emergency rooms were extremities: hand, finger or leg. One-third were to the eye or other parts of the head. Children ages 10–14 had the highest rate of fireworks injury.
- Burns account for 44% of the 9,100 injuries treated in emergency rooms in the month around July 4th.

## FUN IDEAS WITHOUT FIREWORKS

- Use glow sticks, they glow in the dark and are a safe alternative to a sparkler.
- Noise makers are sure to make a statement. They can be found at local party supply stores or make your own.
- Have outdoor movie night with a screen and projector.
- Red, white and blue silly string is fun for all ages.
- Throw a party with July 4<sup>th</sup> themed balloons, food, games and a patriotic craft.

Enjoy fun times and make great memories celebrating the 4th of July without home fireworks and without any injuries!

Sources: [Nfpa.org/education](https://www.nfpa.org/education); *Nemours KidsHealth*



## July 4th Recipe Ideas



Independence Day Skewers



Patriotic Parfaits



American Flag Veggie Tray



Red, White & Blue Salad

## Deconstructed Salad

1. Start with greens, baby spinach or shredded lettuce. Don't expect the kids to eat a ton of greens and chop them into small pieces.
2. Add protein, try shredded chicken, soft beans, hard cooked egg, cooked salmon, nuts or seeds.
3. Add cheese, shredded cheddar, goat cheese crumbles or sliced cheese stick.
4. Add fruit, a little sweetness goes a long way. Think of sliced strawberries, grapes or blueberries, shredded apples or pears and diced peaches or plums when in season.
5. Add some texture, snap peas, thin slices of bell pepper, carrot, cucumber, tomato or avocado.
6. Add some dressing or dip and serve it in a separate dish on the side.

Some children enjoy a salad more when it isn't tossed together. Served in small piles on the same plate they can easily see each component and it is much easier to pick up pieces to try.



**Kickin' it  
in the Kitchen**

### SUMMERTIME, SALAD TIME

**TENDER GREENS** require a balance of moisture and air circulation; without it they tragically lose their crunchy freshness.

**Ready-to-eat salad greens** are convenient, but expensive and have a short shelf life. Check for furthest out Best by Dates. CDC and FDA agree it is not necessary to rewash these. Transferring greens to a larger air-tight container or opening clam shell and adding paper towels will absorb extra moisture.

**Head lettuce** (i.e., iceberg, romaine) are economical. Remove plastic and wrap heads tightly in aluminum foil. To use, remove the leaves and rewrap tightly. Head lettuce and loose greens, whether from the grocery store or the farmers' market, need to be washed prior to eating. Wash under running water or soak in a bowl draining and repeating until water is clear. No need to add chemical washes or vinegar. It's key to dry greens properly, in a colander, salad spinner or on paper towels, as wet leaves will easily wilt.

**Eat greens in order of "hardiness."** Eat delicate greens first, then heartier romaine/kale.

**Don't pack lettuce leaves too tightly.** Produce needs room to "breathe." Separate layers with paper towels and change when damp.

**Store in crisper drawer at high humidity setting.** Keep high-ethylene fruits (pears, avocados, apples, tomatoes, kiwis and cantaloupe) away from greens, as they release gases which cause premature aging.



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**Food Q.** What beverage do you drink on the 4th of July?  
**Funny A.** Liber-tea!