

Getting kids involved in the kitchen

Cooking can be a fun family activity and there are many ways to get kids involved, no matter how old they are. Helping out in the kitchen is a great way for children to build healthy eating habits as well as develop skills such as fine motor coordination, maths and literacy concepts, colour recognition and creativity.



Top tips for cooking with kids

- **Involve them in the whole process** - from choosing recipes to grocery shopping for ingredients. Kids are more likely to enjoy the experience when they have some ownership in the process.
- **Keep things simple** - Focus on simple dishes and the fun behind cooking. Teach your kids to clean up as they go.
- **Safety first.** Teaching safety is a top priority as there is a lot of potential danger in the kitchen. Keep younger children away from hot surfaces and sharp utensils. Give them tasks that only require safe tools. Teach older children the proper way to handle knives.
- **Hand hygiene.** Make sure everyone washes their hands before starting and regularly throughout the cooking process.

Kitchen activities based on age[^]

0 – 18 Months

- Let them observe you cooking
- Set them up in a safe place such as a highchair
- Give them safe kitchen equipment to play with (i.e wooden spoon, plastic bowls)
- Let them feel different fruits and vegetables

18 Months – 3 Years

Children are often ready to help out with simple tasks including:

- Pouring dry and liquid ingredients into a bowl
- Rinsing fruit and vegetables
- Picking herbs off a stem
- Tearing lettuce
- Stirring
- Rolling balls
- Sprinkling herbs and spices

4- 5 Years

Introduce slightly more complex tasks like:

- Cutting soft foods with a plastic knife
- Kneading pizza or bread dough
- Juicing lemons
- Cracking and peeling eggs
- Whisking ingredients
- Measuring and levelling dry ingredients

6-9 Years

If your child has been involved with cooking, they may be ready to try these more complex tasks:

- Using a small paring knife
- Using a can opener
- Peeling fruits and vegetables
- Grating ingredients
- Whipping cream with a hand beater
- Scooping batter into muffin cups
- Threading food onto skewers

[^]Children require supervision all times when in the kitchen. Every child has a differing competence levels regardless of their age.

Muesli Fruit Balls

Try this simple, hands on recipe with only five ingredients. The kids will love rolling these delicious snacks into ball shapes. They can be prepared in advance and kept refrigerated until needed.

Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups toasted muesli
- 1 cup pitted prunes or dates
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon or mixed spice
- ¼ cup rice bran oil (or 50g melted butter)



Directions

1. In a food processor, process 2 cups of muesli, prunes, honey, spice and oil/butter until well combined.
2. Place remaining muesli on a plate.
3. Roll level tablespoons of mixture into balls, then roll in remaining muesli.
4. Refrigerate until firm (about 1 hour) and store in the fridge until ready to serve.

Growing herbs and vegetables from kitchen scraps

Did you know, it is possible to grow vegetables from kitchen scraps that would normally end up in the bin! This can be an interesting and budget friendly activity to involve the kids in.

Basil

- Take a stem of basil that is about 10cm in length and place in a glass of water with the leaves well above the water line.
- Leave the glass sitting in a bright area but not in direct sunlight.
- Roots should begin to form in a few days and when those roots reach about 5 cm, you can plant the basil stem in soil.

Spring onions

- Take a few spring onions that still have the roots intact. Trim the tops of the onions leaving about 5cm of onion above the root.
- Place them in a clear glass Fill with water leaving 2cm onion above the water line.
- Keep the glass near a sunny window and change the water at least once every 2 days.
- It won't take long before new shoots begin to grow and can be trimmed and used for cooking.