



FIVE LESSONS FOR KIDS IN THE KITCHEN



If yours is a home where an adult typically handles the food preparation and clean-up, involving the kids will be a big change. Kids and adults both respond well if the new and unfamiliar job of preparing the meal is broken down into manageable pieces, and if you thank them for their help. Keep the environment fun and let everyone experience how good it feels to work together. Encourage children to touch, taste or smell ingredients as you prepare foods. Help children feel like chefs by having a special apron that they get to wear while they help you, or their own set of cooking tools that are stored in a special drawer or kit!

LESSON 1: AN ADULT SHOULD ALWAYS BE PRESENT TO SUPERVISE.

While you are introducing kids to the creativity and fun of cooking and preparing meals, it is also important to make sure that they are safe. As they age, kids require different levels of supervision, but when it comes to sharp knives, hot stoves and raw foods, an alert set of adult eyes and a no horse-play rule are necessities for a safe and healthy kitchen.

LESSON 2: EVERYONE SHOULD WASH THEIR HANDS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER MEAL PREPARATION.

Regardless of the food that you are handling and preparing, frequent hand washing is a necessity. Take the opportunity to teach kids that a clean set of hands in the kitchen helps everyone in the family stay healthy. You might consider making hand washing a ritual that you all take the time to do together before, during, and after you prepare your foods.

LESSON 3: LEARN HOW TO HANDLE RAW FOODS.

Certain raw foods like poultry, meat and seafood require special handling because they often contain harmful bacteria which are killed when the food is cooked properly. Teach kids to wash their hands before and immediately after handling these foods and to also wash with hot soapy water any kitchen surfaces or tools that they touched or that came into contact with these foods.

LESSON 4: TEACH THEM HOW TO USE A KITCHEN KNIFE.

Learning how safely to use a kitchen knife is an important lesson for older kids (9 - 12) as they learn to cook and prepare foods. It is also a great way to graduate them to more responsibility in the meal preparation process. A good question to consider when determining whether your child is old enough for a lesson in how safely to hold and use a knife is whether they are tall enough to stand with their feet firmly planted on the floor and work comfortably and safely on your countertop.

LESSON 5: TAKE CARE, HOT STUFF!

From liquids to foods, pans to surfaces and open flames to hot coals and steam, there is usually plenty of heat in the cooking and meal preparation process, and everyone needs to be cautious. Teach kids of all ages how to behave around hot objects, foods, and liquids and what not to touch. Try to keep kids under nine away from the hot objects, but allow older children (9 - 12) to gradually assume more responsibility as they safely demonstrate to you their ability to accomplish small tasks around the hot stuff in the kitchen. Until kids are ready, there are plenty of other opportunities for them to help out in or around the kitchen. As always, your supervision is key!

