

Look Who's Cooking!

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We know that these days it's hard for busy parents even to take time out to make three square meals a day for their kids, let alone find the time to teach them basic cooking skills and techniques. And we know that including the kids in cooking meals requires time, patience, and some extra cleanup, especially when they are younger. But many experts – ours included! – think you'll find it well worth the effort.

Some key benefits of spending time together in this way:

- It can encourage your kids to try healthy foods.
- Your kids know they are accomplishing something and contributing to the family.
- You get to spend quality time with your kids.
- It's time that your kids aren't spending in front of the TV or computer.
- And our favorite: you can involve your kids in meal planning, budgeting, and shopping for the food, so they learn about costs, ingredients, sales, coupons, and so on.



Read on, and soon you'll be ready to take on a fun meal planning and cooking night with your kids!

When To Do It

Weekend day when you have time to enjoy the full experience

What To Do

Host a cooking show together

1. Decide with your kids on a menu or a dish to prepare. Some ideas:
 - Pizza and salad
 - Tacos and salsa
 - Mac and cheese
 - Grilled cheese sandwiches
2. Work together to write the shopping list and locate any available coupons.
3. Give your kids a budget to cover the costs of the needed foods. (Tip: Be sure to check the pantry to see whether you already have any of the needed items.)
4. Take the kids shopping for the food, and if they prove to be prudent and savvy shoppers and have money left over, let them keep it!
5. Assemble all the ingredients for the dish in advance in small bowls.
6. Help your kids follow the recipe/your instructions to complete the chosen menu/dish.
7. Enjoy the finished product(s)!

If you can:

- a) Dress your chef assistants in aprons and chef hats! You can make chef hats out of paper plates, napkins and sheets of paper. Cut a circular hole in a paper plate to fit over each of your little ones heads. Then add the cylinder piece by attaching a sheet of paper (legal size or big drawing paper) to the paper plate. Finally top the cylinder with a napkin to make the poufy top.
- b) Come up with a name for your family cooking show.
- c) Encourage your young sous chef to talk to the camera (imaginary or real) as you prepare the meal together. If you do choose to record the "show" do replay it for friends and family.

What You Will Need

Recipes or cookbooks

Ingredients

Paper and pencil to make shopping list

Coupons

Bowls, aprons, hats, cooking utensils

Napkins and paper plates for making chef hats, optional

Camera or video camera, optional

Talk About It

What was your kids' favorite thing about the cooking show? Did they find it hard to make the food? What was the easiest part? Did they find it hard to stay on budget while shopping for the food items? Did they succeed in making a good meal or dish?