

Cooking at home



Exploring food and cooking with your children at home At Focus on Food, we teach schools and communities to cook together and usually enthusiasm for cooking is taken home by the children and adults alike.

There are lots of opportunities to cook together at home - making quick and healthy snacks, helping with lunch/dinner, preparing a drink or even cooking for fun at children's parties. So here are some tips for you to explore food and cooking with your children at home.

Be safe

Wash hands, tie hair back, wear aprons, no licking of spoons, avoid high risk ingredients with young children, choose suitable equipment and supervise using knives, graters and scissors, keep away from the oven and hob when it is hot, use a strong step stool if children can't reach the work surface or let them sit down to cook.

More than baking

It isn't just baking that you can do with children. They will be learning to cook savoury recipes as part of their lessons in school, so encourage this at home too, with soups, salads, pasta and bread.

Develop skills

Help children develop new cooking skills - chopping, grating, mixing, peeling, sieving, whisking, stirring, cracking eggs etc.

Be healthy

Link cooking activities to healthy eating messages, e.g. eat more fruit and vegetables, less salt, more fish. The Eatwell Plate is a good model to help explain this.

Encourage exploration

Try not to transmit your food dislikes to children, especially if it's something that is good for them. Encourage them to try new things – if they don't like something you can re-try in a few weeks.



Wider learning

Practice counting, weighing, sharing, saying new words, reading recipes and food labels – all of these are good to support literacy and numeracy.

Talk about the ingredients

Shop together and ask, 'where does it come from?' and 'how has it been produced?'. Consider if you can grow things at home in the garden. Pick vegetables and then cook with them. Look at the different ingredients in markets, butchers' shops and fishmongers.

Let go

Be prepared to put up with a bit of mess and include tidying up in the activity – maybe have a tidy-up song?

Get sensory

Taste, feel and sniff ingredients as you go along (safety first of course) - encourage children to eat what they have made and share it proudly with other members of the family.

Avoid risk

There are some foods that can be of a higher risk when cooking with your family. When using raw eggs, for instance, you must remember to wash your hands and clean surfaces as you go. You can find out more online at Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk

Reduce Waste

There are a number of ways to reduce the waste when cooking. Plan your meals out and make a shopping list before you set off. Get the children to help and to suggest what they would like to prepare and eat. Try and check what you have in the house already and look to use leftovers – mashed potato can be used to make fishcakes.

