

# Cooking with Kids: Make it an Adventure!

*The journey through your kitchen can be filled with exploration and excitement if you invite your kids to travel with you and learn along the way! For a successful adventure, keep the following tips in mind:*

1. Be a risk-taker ... but not with your health! Clean hands, clean cutting surfaces and proper food handling will help keep food safe to eat.
2. Plan your journey. Let your child help decide the menu, shop for ingredients and assist you in the kitchen. When kids can take credit for helping, they will enjoy the meal more and may even try a new food or two.
3. Be a boredom-buster! Assign your child only one or two food prep tasks at a time and be sure to vary the tasks each time they help. (They learn new skills that way, too.)
4. Kids need navigation skills to maneuver through the kitchen. Take the time to teach your child the basics such as reading recipes and using measuring cups and spoons. Show children how to drain, mix and chop different foods.
5. Dare to enjoy yourself in the kitchen! When you approach cooking as creative and fun-filled, your child won't think of food prep as a "chore."
6. Uncover your child's unique kitchen talents. An artsy child will enjoy arranging fruit on a tray while a math whiz can quickly calculate recipe adjustments.
7. Explore your child's age and stage of development and assign tasks accordingly. Preschoolers love to help measure, pour and stir while older children can learn how to safely use equipment such as can openers, knives, blenders and the microwave.
8. For a real thrill, declare it **"Kids Rule!"** one night a week. Once kids have grasped basic cooking skills, put them in charge of planning and preparing the evening meal.
9. Challenge older kids and teens to be kitchen dare-devils! Allow them to experiment with different food combinations and cooking techniques. Remember to praise more than criticize if you want to keep them cooking.
10. Jump-start kitchen clean up by breaking it into easy-to-do steps. Instead of nagging kids to "clean up the kitchen," give specific instructions such as "put the food in the refrigerator," "rinse off the cutting board" or "wipe the counters" Better yet, write these down and post the list on the refrigerator.

