Fun things to do at home when cooking and preparing food
EYFS Prime areas of learning (30 – 50 months)

Cooking provides the opportunity for practical experience to develop many essential life skills. Such as following instructions, measuring, learning new words in a meaningful context and observing change. It helps children to develop fine motor skills and hand/eye coordination. To make the learning as meaningful and impactful as possible, it is really important to use what you know about children's stages of development when making suggestions of the key learning that can be supported through the activity. Equally so is taking in account the home circumstance of the family and considering how you can make this accessible as possible.

For children demonstrating learning and development behaviours noted in the left-hand column, here are some suggestions to make to parents/carers of ways they can support their child.

Communication and Language Development	**Suggested guidance to support parents/carers when cooking with their child**
Listens to others one to one or in small groups, when conversation interests them Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity)	As you are cooking with your child or children, talk to them throughout the process. Talk about what you're doing, a running commentary is good. Give your child a job to do and chat to them whilst they're doing it, for example rubbing together some butter and flour if you're making scones *(See recipe card 9)*. Whilst your child is doing a job to help, provide some more directions as they work, for example as they are rubbing the butter and flour between their palms suggest that they now rub it gently between their fingers *(See recipe card 9)*.
Understanding Understands use of objects (for example, *"What do we use to cut things?"*) Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture Responds to simple instructions, for example, to get or put away an object Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions	Talk to your child about all of the utensils you use as you engage in cooking together. Help them to know what different utensils are called and used for, for example 'a whisk helps to blend the ingredients and add air to the mixture.' *(See recipe card 5)* Ask your child to help you find all of the utensils and ingredients you will require for a recipe, for example the jug that's in the corner cupboard behind the box or the blue pan in the bottom drawer. As you cook together, ask your child why they think certain things are happening or why you need to do particular things, for example 'why do you think I'm peeling this potato' or 'what do you think will happen when we add the egg?'
Speaking Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (for example, using *and, because*) Can retell a simple past event in correct order Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks for example, *who, what, when, how* Uses a range of tenses (for example, *cook, cooking, cooked, make, making, made)* Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences	Elicit more information from your child by asking them questions about what you are doing and encourage them to do the same. For example, ask what they think you should put on top of a pizza. When they answer, ask them why...? When you are talking about deciding what to cook, talk about what you have done before and what it involved. Whilst cooking, talk about previous or similar recipes you have followed before and talk about how this one is different from the others. Compare some of the recipe cards such as Hup Soh Toh cookies *(See recipe card 8)* and Vegan Banana Oat Cookies *(see recipe card 4)*. Model using questions by thinking aloud, for example 'I wonder why that has happened?' Or 'I wonder who would like this the most in our family?' By doing this, you will begin hear your child using the same language to ask and answer questions.

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Uses vocabulary focused on objects that are of particular importance to them Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others	Remember to use the accurate names for food and utensils to broaden your child's vocabulary. Ensure you model speaking using intonation and expressions so your child will copy you. Play with language such as finding the fun in rhymes or alliteration as you chat and work for example, pass the cheese please or pepperoni pepper pizza party.
Physical Development	**Suggested guidance to support parents/carers when cooking with their child**
Moving and handling Moves freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways Uses one-handed tools and equipment Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control ***Health and self-care*** Can tell adults when hungry or tired or when they want to rest or play Understands that equipment and tools have to be used safely	During the cooking activity teach your child new skills such as grating, whisking, stirring, mixing, folding, rolling, sieving and allow plenty of time to practise. This will help to develop their hand muscles to support their writing skills. Encourage your child to make their own recipe book or recipe cards using pictures or words. Plan your meals for the day together and create a menu. Encourage your child to let you know when they are ready for a meal or snack. When teaching your child to use the kitchen utensils effectively, ensure you always talk about how to use them safely. This could be from keeping their fingers clear of the surface of a grater, to not touching anything electrical with wet hands or keeping safely away from the oven and hob.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	**Suggested guidance to support parents/carers when cooking with their child**
Self-confidence and self-awareness Can select and use activities and resources with help Welcomes and values praise for what they have done Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks Shows confidence in asking adults for help ***Managing feelings and behaviour*** Begins to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes with support from others Can usually tolerate delay when needs are not immediately met, and understands wishes may not always be met Can usually adapt behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine ***Making Relationships*** Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adult	When you have chosen a menu or recipe, encourage your child to gather the utensils and ingredients that you will need. It will be a good thing for them to learning that preparation will help everything go smoothly. Don't forget to praise your child for the things that they have been learning to do, the new skills and successes as you cook together. Allow them to have 'jobs' to do. Perhaps helping to unload the dishwasher or do the washing or drying up. Setting the table so it is ready for you all to eat when the food is cooked. All of this will help your child to feel confident. If you sometimes ask your child for help it will demonstrate that this is a positive thing and will enable them to ask for help when it is needed. Working to cook food together will help your child to share the equipment and jobs with other family members. Try to balance the things they need help with and the things they can do independently to boost their self-esteem. Your child will need to practise being patient when cooking at home. Talk to them about having to wait by possibly using a timer or a clock so that they can visually see the passing of time when cooking. Cooking at home will be a good time for your child to understand the need for certain rules in the kitchen to keep them safe. Teaching the safety guidelines mentioned before will add to this. Working together to cook is a perfect time to chat and helping your child to understand the benefits of working collaboratively.

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