Fun things to do at home when cooking and preparing food
EYFS Prime areas of learning (40-60 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**
Listening and Attention Maintains attention and concentrates Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span	When you are cooking together maintain your child's listening and attention by talking about what you are doing and what you need to do next together. Focus their attention to the changes in the mixture as the ingredients are added. Chat with your child as you cook and prepare food together. This will naturally encourage them to continue with their task whilst having a conversation at the same time.
Understanding Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion	When you are cooking together, give your child an instruction with two parts. For example, 'get the jug from the cupboard and fill it with water' or 'get two potatoes and put them on the board.' Talk to your child throughout the cooking process. Share your ideas about who might like the food and ask for their thoughts to promote a conversation. Listen to their responses and expand on what they say.
Speaking Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words	Encourage your child to use the correct name for equipment and ingredients. An example may include the names of dried fruits for example, sultanas, raisins, currants, mixed peel, cherries rather than the generic name of 'dried fruit'. This will help to broaden their vocabulary. When selecting food items for a recipe, encourage your child to find those starting with the same initial sounds. Introduce names of new food items that your child may not be familiar with. *(See recipe card 6)*
Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention	Allow children to play with utensils from your kitchen to support their pretend play. If they have a favourite restaurant or café that you go to, you could have a go at creating that and pretending to visit. Remind them of the things they have done when you have cooked together and repeat some of the new words/names of equipment and utensils they have learnt.
Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events	Encourage your child to talk through the processes you have undertaken when cooking together. Have a go at making a book about your cooking, this will allow the opportunity to talk about what you did together and the order of the cooking sequence.

© 2020 Herts for Learning Ltd

Physical Development	**Suggested guidance to support parents/carers when cooking with their child**
Moving and Handling Shows increasing control over an object Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials Handles tools, objects and malleable materials safely and with increasing control Shows a preference for a dominant hand Begins to use anticlockwise movement Begins to form recognisable letters Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters most of which are correctly formed	When you are cooking together, teach your child how to use new utensils such as whisks and graters *(See recipe card 5)* or how to use a fork effectively to beat an egg, *(See recipe card 8)* rolling pastry out then using a cutter to make shapes *(See recipe card 1)* or pressing cheese into sticks of celery. Make a recipe book, cooking diary, posters or menus about the cooking you have done together. Encourage your child to make marks or write independently if they are able, alternatively, you could scribe *(write)* their words for them. If they are forming letters, watch how they are doing this and encourage them to form these letters correctly.
Health and Self-Care Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food Shows some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health Shows understanding of the need for safety when tackling new challenges, and considers and manages some risks Shows understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely Practices some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision	Whilst cooking and preparing food, talk about which foods are healthy to eat and why. *(See recipe cards 3 and 2*) Food hygiene will become a natural part of what you do together, ensuring hands, food and surfaces are all clean. Teach your child about safety in the kitchen. If you feel they are ready, teach them how to use knives and other equipment with care. *(See recipe card 3)* Show your child how to carry and handle equipment and utensils safely.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	**Suggested guidance to support parents/carers when cooking with their child**
Self-confidence and self-awareness Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions Can describe self in positive terms and talk about abilities	After cooking with your child, ask them to share what they have been doing with another family member. This could be with someone at home or by telephone/video call with those that do not live with you. Encourage your child to talk about what they enjoyed doing the most and any part that they found tricky.
Managing feelings and behaviour Aware of the boundaries set, and of behavioural expectations in the setting	Before you start cooking, always remind your child of the safety and hygiene expectations. As you do more cooking with your child, see if they can remind you of what to do.
Making relationships Initiates conversations, attends to and takes account of what others say	Spend time chatting with your child throughout the cooking activities to promote their confidence and conversational skills.

© 2020 Herts for Learning Ltd