



## Cooking and Preparing Food

### EYFS Development Matters Statements - Prime areas

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 think about your child's individual ability and key learning that can be supported through the activity.

Here are some suggestions of ways you can support your child during your cooking activities.

#### Communication and Language Development

##### Suggested guidance to support you whilst cooking with your child

- 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*).
- Talk to your child about all 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?'
- 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 to hear your child using the same language to ask and answer questions.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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*)
- 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.
- 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.

## Physical Development

### Suggested guidance to support you whilst cooking with your child

- 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.
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### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

#### **Suggested guidance to support you whilst cooking with your child**

- 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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