

Kids Favorites

Getting our kids to eat healthy can sometimes be difficult...but don't give up! Sometimes kids need to try things more than 10 times before they will finally like it – keep offering your kids a variety of foods and be a good role model for them! One good way to get kids more interested in trying new foods is to have them help you in the kitchen! Make your dishes fun and kid friendly – focus on including a whole grain item, calcium rich food and a fruit or a vegetable because these are the foods kids tend to fall short on!

Spiced Up Homemade Mac and Cheese

Baked Carrot Fries

Bacon Cheeseburger Dippers

Crispy Chicken Nuggets

Meatloaf Cups

Mini Pizzas

One Pot Pizza Pasta Bake

Sandwich on a Stick

Sloppy Joe Casserole

Spaghetti and Meatball Cups

Supreme Pizza Bake

Sweet Potato Mac and Cheese

Cheesy Riced Cauliflower

Crispy Cheddar Cauli-tots

Apple Peanut Butter Treats

Granola Bars

Make Your Own Snack Mix

Frozen Yogurt Pops

Superfood – Carrots

Tips for Cooking with your Kids

Homemade Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients

8 oz Elbow Macaroni, uncooked

Cheese Sauce

2 Tbsp Butter

2 Tbsp All-Purpose Flour

½ tsp Salt

¼ tsp Garlic Powder

1 cup Milk

¼ cup Sour Cream or Greek Yogurt, plain

2 cups Cheddar Cheese, shredded

Instructions

1. Cook elbow macaroni according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
2. Mix flour, salt and garlic powder together in a small bowl. Set aside.
3. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter.
4. Add flour mixture and whisk to combine.
5. Cook for 1 minute until mixture is slightly brown.
6. Add 1 cup milk and whisk until the mixture is smooth.
7. Add sour cream or Greek yogurt and whisk until smooth.
8. Cook on medium-high heat until the mixture is thickened (about 3-5 minutes). Do not let boil.
9. Once mixture is thick (stick to the back of the spoon), reduce heat to low and add cheese. Whisk until cheese is melted and mixture is smooth. Taste and add more salt/seasoning if desired.
10. Add cooked pasta to the pot of cheese sauce and stir until the sauce is evenly distributed.
11. Let the mac and cheese cool for 3-5 minutes or until the cheese sauce has thickened a little bit and sticks to the noodles. Serve Warm!

Recipe Suggestions – Make it a one pot wonder – add some protein – chicken or beans – and some veggies – peas, broccoli, cauliflower.

Yield: 8 servings

Carrot Fries

Ingredients

- 2 Carrots – peeled and cut into the shape of fries (more carrots as needed to make desired number of fries)
- 2 Tbsp Panko Breadcrumbs (may also use crushed crackers or cereal, coconut flakes)
- Salt and Pepper, to taste
- Chili Powder, optional if you like spice
- Dash – Dry Basil
- Dash – Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp Olive Oil

Instructions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place parchment paper on a baking sheet if have or else spray baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray.
- 2 In a wide bowl add all the above ingredients and mix well.
- 3 Add the carrots and spread it. Bake it for around 14-18 minutes. Broil for 2-3 minutes or more based on the texture you prefer.
- 4 Enjoy with your favorite dip.

Greek Yogurt Ranch Dressing

Ingredients

- 1 cup plain Greek Yogurt
- ½-1 tsp Garlic Powder
- ½-1 tsp Onion Powder
- ½ Tbsp Fresh Parsley, chopped
- ½ Tbsp Fresh Chives, chopped
- ¼ Tbsp Fresh Dill or ¼ tsp Dried Dill, chopped
- ½ Lemon, small, juiced (1 ½ Tbsp Juice)
- ¼ tsp Pepper
- ¼ tsp Salt
- ½ cup Milk

Instructions

1. Put all ingredients except the milk in a bowl and mix well. Stir in a tablespoon of the milk at a time until you reach your desired consistency – if using as dip may want to keep thicker. Keep in an airtight container in fridge!

Recipe Note – start with ½ tsp garlic and onion powder and taste – add more to your liking.

Bacon Cheeseburger Dippers

Ingredients

- 2 lb Ground Beef (any ground meat will work)
- ½ cup Bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 6 oz Cheddar Cheese, sliced
- 1 tsp Black Pepper
- ½ tsp Salt
- 2 Tbsp Dill Pickle Juice
- 1 ½ tsp Onion Powder

Instructions

1. In a large bowl combine the beef, bacon pieces, pepper, salt, pickle juice and onion powder.
2. Using your hands or a spoon, mix the meat with the other ingredients until well incorporated.
3. Spread 1 tablespoon of the meat mixture evenly into bottom of a muffin tin or spread into circles approximately 2 inches in diameter on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
4. Bake for 5 minutes, or until meat is cooked through. Carefully remove from the pan and place them on a large paper towel lined dish, to catch extra grease or juices. Top with ½ of the meat patties with a 1-inch square of cheddar cheese (1/4 of a slice of cheese), then top with another patty. If the meat has cooled too much and the cheese does not melt may stick back in the oven for about a minute (time may vary on temperature of oven and burger) – watch closely until the cheese melts nicely.
5. Allow them to cool slightly before servings with the dipping sauces of your choice.

Serving Suggestions – May fill with any other favorite burger toppings – lettuce, onion, tomato or avocado.

Yield: 8 – 4 dipper servings

Crispy Chicken Nuggets

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1 c. cornflakes or other ready-to-eat cereal crumbs
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. Italian herb seasoning or seasoning of your choice
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp. onion powder

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Cut the chicken into bite sized pieces.
3. Place cereal in a plastic bag and crush using a rolling pin or can. Add remaining ingredients to cereal crumbs. Close bag tightly and shake until blended.
4. Add a few chicken pieces at a time to crumb mixture and shake to coat evenly. Discard any unused crumb mixture.
5. Place chicken pieces on greased baking sheet so they are not touching.
6. Bake until golden brown with an internal temperature of 165 F, or about 12 to 14 minutes.

Yield: 4 servings

Meatloaf Cups

Ingredients

- 1 pound Ground Turkey or Beef
- 1/3 cup Oatmeal
- 1/3 cup Parmesan Cheese
- 1 Egg
- 1 – 8 oz can Tomato Sauce – divided (may use Ketchup instead)
- ½ tsp Garlic Powder
- Salt and Pepper, to taste
- Worcestershire Sauce – several shakes
- A couple handfuls of whatever veggies you have – onions, mushrooms, chopped broccoli/spinach or carrots

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl, but only using about ¼ cup tomato sauce/ketchup in the meat mixture.
3. Press the meat into the muffin cups (you should be able to get 8-10 out of this amount of meat).
4. Top with a dollop of tomato sauce/ketchup on each one.
5. Cook for 30-35 minutes.

Yield: 5-6 servings – 2 per person

Mini Pizzas

Ingredients

4 Whole-Grain English Muffins, split

1/2 c. Pizza Sauce

3/4 c. part-skim shredded Mozzarella Cheese

Assorted chopped vegetables and meats of choice (mushrooms, broccoli, carrot strips, zucchini slices, Canadian bacon, chicken – may use any favorite pizza toppings)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Wash and chop vegetables.
3. Lightly toast English muffins in toaster or under broiler.
4. Arrange on a baking sheet and spread each muffin with one-fourth of sauce, then top with cheese and vegetables.
5. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes until cheese melts.

Yield – 4 servings

One Pot Pizza Pasta Bake

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp Olive Oil
- 8 oz Spicy Italian Sausage, casing removed (may use any ground meat)
- ½ cup Mini Pepperoni, divided (may use regular size pepperoni – cut up)
- 1 – 15 oz can Tomato Sauce
- ½ tsp Dried Oregano
- ½ tsp Dried Basil
- ¼ tsp Garlic Powder
- 8 oz Rotini Pasta
- Salt and Pepper to taste
- 1 cup Shredded Mozzarella Cheese
- 2 Tbsp chopped, Fresh Parsley Leaves (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to broil.
2. Heat olive oil in a large oven-proof skillet over medium-high heat. Add Italian sausage and cook until browned, about 3-5 minutes, making sure to crumble the sausage as it cooks; drain excess fat. Stir in ¼ cup pepperoni until heated through, about 1 minute.
3. Stir in tomato sauce, oregano, basil, garlic powder, pasta and 1 ½ cups water; season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil; cover, reduce heat and simmer until pasta is cooked through, about 12-14 minutes.
4. Remove from heat; top with mozzarella and remaining ¼ cup pepperoni. Place into oven and cook until melted and golden brown, about 2 minutes. (If don't have oven safe skillet – may transfer into casserole dish and top with cheese and pepperoni.)
5. Serve immediately, garnished with parsley, if desired.

Recipe Suggestions – May add any other favorite pizza vegetables – bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, broccoli or carrots. May use other pizza meat – Canadian bacon or bacon crumbles. May this to your liking!

Yield: 4 servings

Sandwich on a Stick

Ingredients

- 8 Whole-Wheat Bread Slices
- 8 Deli Ham Slices
- 4 Cheddar Cheese Slices
- 4 Romaine Lettuce Leaves
- 12 Grape Tomatoes
- 4 Tbsp. Low-Fat Mayonnaise (optional)
- 4 Skewers

Instructions

1. Cut crust from slices of bread.
2. Layer two ham slices, one cheese slice and one lettuce leaf on top of one slice of bread. If using mayonnaise, spread 1 Tbsp. on other slice of bread. Place slices of bread together to create a sandwich. Repeat with remaining ingredients to create four sandwiches.
3. Cut each sandwich into quarters.
4. Place four sandwich squares and three tomatoes on each skewer. Alternate between sandwich and tomatoes on the skewers.
5. Serve immediately or place in an airtight container for lunch the next day.

Recipe Suggestions – May use any choice of deli meat or vegetables that would make your favorite sandwich – could do as a peanut butter and jelly combination as well.

Yield – 4 Stick Sandwiches

Sloppy Joe Casserole

Ingredients

- 1 pound Ground Beef (any ground meat will work)
- 1 small Onion, chopped
- 1 Green Pepper, chopped
- 1 Red Bell Pepper, chopped
- 1 Garlic Clove, chopped
- 1 – 14.5 oz can Petite Diced Tomatoes
- 1 cup Ketchup
- 1 Tbsp Brown Sugar
- 1 tsp Yellow Mustard
- Salt and Pepper, to taste
- 2 cup Frozen, Whole-Kernal Corn (1 can canned Corn)
- 1 – 16 oz package Penne Pasta (any shape pasta will work, Whole Grain-preferred)
- 1 ½ cups Colby-Jack Cheese, shredded

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir beef, onion, green and red bell peppers and garlic in the hot skillet until beef is browned and crumbly; 5 to 7 minutes; drain and discard grease.
3. Stir tomatoes, ketchup, brown sugar, mustard, salt and pepper into ground beef mixture; reduce heat and simmer until heated through, about 10 minutes.
4. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil; add pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender yet firm to bite, about 11 minutes. In strainer before draining pasta – put frozen corn in strainer – drain pasta over frozen corn to warm. If using canned corn just add in beef mixture with next step.
5. Mix corn, pasta, and Colby-Jack cheese into ground beef mixture; pour into a 9x13-inch baking dish.
6. Bake in preheated oven until heated through and cheese is melted, about 20 minutes.

Recipe Suggestions – May use quinoa, riced cauliflower or zoodles in place of pasta in this dish – just follow cook directions and stir into beef mixture. May add any other combination of vegetables besides or in addition to corn.

Yield: 8 servings

Baked Spaghetti Meatball Cups

Ingredients

- 6 oz Dried Spaghetti Pasta*
- Pinch of Salt
- 1 ½ Tbsp Olive Oil
- 1 Egg, lightly beaten, optional
- 1 ½ cups Grated Parmesan Cheese, divided
- 1 ½ cups Pasta Sauce
- 12 cooked Meatballs (see recipe below)
- Basil Leaves, chopped, optional

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease a nonstick muffin pan thoroughly with cooking spray and set aside.
2. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil over high heat.
3. Cook the pasta for 2 minutes less than the package instructions, so it's firm to the bite.
4. Drain the spaghetti – return to pot and toss with olive oil until evenly coated. If using Egg, slightly beaten – add now – which will help the nests hold together after baking.
5. Chill for 15 minutes.
6. Add 1 cup parmesan cheese and toss until evenly coated.
7. Grab a small handful of spaghetti and arrange into each muffin cup, pressing down to make a nest shape.
8. Spoon 1 tablespoon of pasta sauce into each cup, and then add one meatball followed by another 1 tablespoon of pasta sauce. Repeat for remaining cups.
9. Sprinkle the remaining parmesan cheese over the tops of meatballs.
10. Bake for 20-25 minutes.
11. Remove from the oven and cool slightly. (If you take them out while hot, they may collapse)
12. Garnish with optional chopped basil.

*Instead of chilling spaghetti – you may also use your leftover spaghetti – you'll need about 4 cups of cooked pasta for this recipe.

Yield: 12 cups

Mini Meatballs

Ingredients

- 1 pound Ground Beef (any ground meat will work – pork, chicken, turkey)
- 1 Onion, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup Breadcrumbs or crushed crackers/cereal
- 1 Large Egg
- 1 tsp Mustard
- Salt and Pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Place all ingredients in a large bowl. Mix meatball mixture together with your hands or a spoon until all the ingredients are mixed together very well.
2. Once the mix is kneaded thoroughly, scoop out tablespoon-sized balls of meat. Cup the meat between your palms and roll it into a tight ball. Place the meatballs in a single layer on a lined baking sheet.
3. **To cook the meatballs in a skillet:** Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large skillet. Add the meatballs and cook until browned from all sides and cooked through, around 6-7 minutes. If your skillet is not large enough to fit all meatballs in a single layer, cook them in batches. **To bake the meatballs:** Preheat the oven to 425°F. Drizzle the meatballs with oil and bake them for around 10 minutes. Carefully flip them, then finish baking for another 5-10 minutes or until the meatballs are cooked all the way through.

Freezing Instructions

To freeze raw meatballs:

Wrap the sheet tightly with foil and freeze the meatballs until they're solid. This will take a couple of hours, depending on the freezer you have.

Then, pack the meatballs into freezer bags in the portion size you usually need. Make sure to label the bags with "Homemade Raw Beef Meatballs" and today's date!

The meatballs keep in the freezer for up to 6 months.

To cook frozen raw meatballs:

Allow the meatballs to thaw in the fridge for 12-24 hours, then cook them as you would freshly made ones.

To freeze cooked meatballs:

Cook the meatballs as instructed below, either in the oven or in a large skillet.

Drain the meatballs on paper towels and place them on clean, freshly lined baking sheets.

Allow the meatballs to cool completely.

Once the meatballs are cold, tightly cover the baking sheets with foil. Freeze the meatballs until solid before transferring them to large freezer bags. Make sure to label them with "Homemade Cooked Beef Meatballs" and today's date!

The meatballs keep in the freezer for up to 6 months.

To reheat frozen cooked meatballs:

No need to defrost, simply plop the meatballs into a simmering sauce and cook until the meatballs are fully heated through. I usually do at least 10 minutes.

Supreme Pizza Bake

Ingredients

- 4 Chicken Breasts
- 3/4 c. Pizza Sauce
- 1 c. shredded Mozzarella Cheese
- 12 Pepperoni
- 1/2 Bell Pepper, sliced
- 1/4 c. Onion, diced
- 2 Tbsp. Black Olives, sliced

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Place chicken breasts in a 8- by 11- inch pan.
3. Evenly top chicken with pizza sauce and then layer on cheese.
4. Top with pepperoni, bell pepper slices, onions and olives.
5. Bake for 30 minutes or until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 degrees F when measured with a food thermometer.

Recipe Suggestions: May top chicken with any of your favorite pizza toppings – may do a Hawaiian style – Canadian Bacon and Pineapple or add sausage or mushrooms – may it how your family likes.

Yield: 4 servings

Sweet Potato Mac N Cheese

Ingredients

- 1 medium Sweet Potato
- 2 cups Elbow Macaroni (prefer Whole Wheat)
- 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 2 Tablespoons Flour
- 2 cups Milk
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard (or garlic powder instead – same amount)
- 2 cups grated cheddar or Monterey jack cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon Black Pepper

Instructions

1. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, peel and dice the sweet potato into 1/2" pieces. Place in the boiling water and cook until tender, about 10-20 minutes. You can alternatively place the potato on a baking sheet and bake at 400 °F for 1 hour or until soft and then scrape out the flesh.
2. Mash the cooked sweet potato well and measure out 1 cup.
3. Bring a medium pot of water to a boil and cook the macaroni according to the instructions on the package. Drain and set aside.
4. While the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the flour and whisk for 1 minute. Slowly pour in the milk while whisking constantly. Cook until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 3-5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the mustard or garlic, if using, cheese, and 1 cup of mashed sweet potato. Remove the pot from the heat and stir until smooth. I didn't mash my sweet potato well enough and used an immersion blender to make it totally smooth. Add in the salt, pepper and then the macaroni.

Cheesy Riced Cauliflower

Ingredients

- 1-20 oz bag Frozen Riced Cauliflower (may rice own – 4-5 cups)
- 1 Tbsp Butter
- ¼ cup Milk
- 2 cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese
- 2 oz Cream Cheese
- Salt, Pepper and Garlic, to taste

Instructions

1. Microwave the cauliflower rice according to the package directions, only shave off a few minutes of cook time since you will be further cooking it in a pan.
2. Meanwhile, melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a sauté pan on our stove set to medium heat.
3. Add the mostly cooked cauliflower rice to the pan and stir it all up with the butter, tossing it for a few minutes. Season with rice to your taste with salt, pepper and garlic (recipe suggests – ½ tsp garlic and a little salt and pepper).
4. Add the milk, cheddar cheese and cream cheese to the pan and lower the heat to a medium-low; mix everything together until it's melted and well incorporated.

Yield: 6 servings

Crispy Cheddar Cauli-Tots

Ingredients

- 3 cups shredded Raw Cauliflower (frozen or fresh already shredded works as well)
- 1 cup Cheddar Cheese
- 1 large Egg
- 1/4 cup Cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Ground Mustard

Instructions

1. Butter a mini muffin tin and preheat the oven to 400F.
2. **If using fresh** - shred the cauliflower using a food processor or a food grater. This step is a bit messy if you're doing it by hand, but since the kids are helping in the kitchen, there's probably already a mess. Once the cauliflower is shredded, place into a CLEAN dishtowel and squeeze out the excess water. **If using frozen riced cauliflower** – thaw.
3. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well using a fork.
4. Scoop out mixture using a small scoop or a tablespoon-sized measuring spoon and press into the muffin cups.
5. Bake for 18-20 minutes, or until they begin to golden. Eat them warm.

Yield – 24 tots

Apple Slice Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 medium Apple – sliced
- Peanut Butter or Nut Butter of Choice
- Toppings – nuts, raisins/craisin, any fruit, coconut flakes, oats, cinnamon, chocolate chips or teddy grahams

Instructions

1. Slice apple – spread with peanut butter and top with toppings of choice or just enjoy with peanut or nut butter of choice!

Granola Bars

Ingredients

- 4 c. uncooked oats (not instant)
- 1 c. packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ c. raisins or dried cranberries
- ½ c. shredded coconut
- 1 c. chopped nuts (cashews, peanuts or walnuts)
- ¾ c. melted butter
- ½ c. honey

Instructions

- 1 Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
- 2 Mix well with greased hands and press into a well-greased 15.5-inch by 10.5-inch jelly roll pan.
- 3 Bake at 450 degrees for eight to 10 minutes or until light golden brown.
- 4 Cool thoroughly and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container to keep them chewy.

Yield: 32 bars

Make Your Own Snack Mix

Ingredients/Ideas

Create your own mixes by blending your favorite ingredients in a large bowl. This formulation, with all ingredients, will make about 25 (¼-cup) snacks. Experiment with your favorite healthful snack ingredients.

4 cups cereal of various shape

Examples: Whole grain or multigrain squares or rings

1 cup bite-sized cracker

Examples: Goldfish, Animal Crackers, cheese crackers

½ cup dried fruit

Examples: raisins, dried cranberries, apples, blueberries

½ cup nuts (optional)

Examples: peanuts, almonds, mixed nuts

¼ cup “treat” (optional)

Examples: chocolate chips, butterscotch chips

Instructions

- 1 Pour all ingredients into a bowl and mix.
- 2 Store in airtight container.

Quick tip: Package these in snack-size zip-top plastic bags to help with portion control. The following recipes were portioned to be 100 calories or less (1/4 cup portion).

Quick tip: For best quality, use the products before the “best by” or “use by” date on the package. Cereal-based products remain safe to eat beyond the date, but their quality (flavor, etc.) may decline.

Easy Frozen Yogurt Pops

Ingredients

- 32 oz container of Vanilla Yogurt – plain or Greek
- 2 cups fresh or frozen Fruit
- 2-3 Tbsp Honey (optional)

Instructions

1. In a blender add yogurt, fruit and honey. Blend until well combined.
2. Pour into molds and place on lid.
3. Place yogurt pops in the freezer for 5 hours or until frozen.

Recipe Suggestion: Want bits and pieces of fruit in yogurt pops - roughly chop half the fruit and stir it into the yogurt, fruit and honey mixture after it's been blended. Want more smooth pops – blend everything together until you get desired consistency.

Yield: 6 Pops – will vary depending on size of mold.

Superfood: Carrots

Carrots are root vegetables that were first grown in Afghanistan around 900 AD. Orange may be their best-known color, but they also come in other hues, including purple, yellow, red, and white. Early carrots were purple or yellow. Orange carrots were developed in Central Europe around the 15th or 16th century.

This popular and versatile veggie may taste slightly different depending on the color, size, and where it's grown. The sugar in carrots gives them a slightly sweet flavor, but they also can taste earthy or bitter.

Carrots are a great source of important vitamins and minerals. A half-cup can give you up to:

- 73% of your daily requirement of vitamin A
- 9% of your daily vitamin K
- 8% of your daily potassium and fiber
- 5% of your daily vitamin C
- 2% of your daily calcium and iron

Carrots have a wealth of antioxidants and offer many health benefits. Here are the highlights:

They're good for your eyes. This is probably the best-known carrot superpower. They're rich in beta-carotene, a compound your body changes into vitamin A, which helps keep your eyes healthy. And beta-carotene helps protect your eyes from the sun and lowers your chances of cataracts and other eye problems.

Yellow carrots have lutein, which is also good for your eyes. Studies have found that it can help with or prevent age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in the U.S.

They can lower your risk of cancer. Antioxidants have been proven to fight off harmful free radicals in your body, and that can make you less likely to have cancer. The two main types of antioxidants in carrots are carotenoids and anthocyanins. Carotenoids give carrots their orange and yellow colors, while anthocyanins are responsible for red and purple coloring.

They help your heart. First, all those antioxidants are also good for your heart. Second, the potassium in carrots can help keep your blood pressure in check. And third, they have fiber, which can help you stay at a healthy weight and lower your chances of heart disease.

Cooking with Kids - Did You Know?

- Only about one-third of families eat together at least once a day.
- Frequent family mealtimes are related to better school performance in children.
- On average, about 29 percent of kids make their own dinner at times.
- Children who help prepare a snack or meal are more likely to try it.

Benefits of Cooking with Kids

Depending on the age group, letting your children cook or help you cook has many benefits!

- Cooking builds self-esteem. Children develop confidence, responsibility and independence when they can help you prepare a snack or meal. When they get more practice, they will be able to prepare more foods on their own.
- Cooking teaches! When kids begin to cook, they can help stir, pour, shake and tear. As they become more experienced, they can move on to spread, mix and knead. Later they can cut, grate and measure with supervision! Kids can develop math and language skills when they measure ingredients and read recipes.
- Cooking gives kids a sense of accomplishment. They have a sense of pride when they finish cooking and get to share what they have made with their family.
- Cooking helps kids make smart food choices. Rather than choosing ready-to-eat snack or meal options, they know how to make healthier snacks themselves. They are able to make informed decisions to eat nutrient-dense foods.
- Cooking builds creativity! Preparing foods allows kids to show their artistic side. They may have new ideas about methods of preparation, combining different flavors or how the dish is presented when it is served.

Age-appropriate Tasks

Around age 5 to 7, kids should be able to perform the following tasks with supervision:

- Helping collect ingredients from the cupboards, refrigerator and freezer
- Pouring
- Stirring and mixing ingredients by hand
- Assisting in measuring ingredients
- Setting a timer

Around age 8 to 10, they may be able to help perform tasks such as:

- Preheating the oven to the correct temperature
- Using the microwave
- Using a blender with assistance
- Using a knife to cut, slice or dice with supervision

These age-appropriate tasks will be different for each child, depending on how much experience he or she has in the kitchen.

Safety First

Many parents are hesitant to allow their children to cook because of the many hazards in the kitchen. The following are some steps to keep you and your kids safe!

- Tie long hair back. Wear short sleeves or roll up long sleeves.

- Wash your hands, scrubbing for 20 seconds or longer.
- Run a sink full of warm, soapy water and clean all cooking surfaces. Remember that countertops will be too high for kids to reach. Use a surface that is lower, such as a dining room table.
- Teach your children about what surfaces and objects in the kitchen will be hot and what they need to avoid. Show them which utensils are sharp and need supervision to use.
- Be cautious about cords. Young children can pull appliances off countertops.
- Turn handles of pots and pans on a hot stove inward to prevent burns.
- For food safety, spoons used for taste testing should be put in the sink of warm, soapy water, not back in the bowl.
- Make kids aware that produce, raw meat and cooked foods should remain separate from each other to prevent the family from getting sick due to food poisoning.
- Wash sharp knives right away instead of letting them soak in the sink.

Healthy Recipes Using Whole Grains, Calcium-Rich Foods and Fruits

Kids often fall short on whole grains, calcium-rich foods, fruits and vegetables in their diets. Kids should be eating at least 6 ounces of grains (including at least 3 ounces of whole grain foods), 3 cups of milk or dairy products, 1½ cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables daily. When cooking with your kids, choose recipes that incorporate these food groups to help them meet their daily requirements.