



How to involve kids in the kitchen

100 ways to get them working with food, organized by skills required

No reading, coordination, sharp safety or heat safety skills required

(apart from reasonable adult supervision)

1. Wash hands before cooking
2. Count out produce into a bag at the store
3. Help find items at the grocery store
4. Pick out a vegetable or fruit to buy and try
5. Name different foods/ingredients as you cook
6. Taste, smell, or touch ingredients (safely of course, avoid handling raw meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or foods with these as ingredients)
7. Taste a dressing/sauce to see if it needs more salt/sugar/pepper/garlic/etc.
8. Describe different ingredients: appearance, texture, smell, taste, category (vegetable, fruit, meat, grain, protein, canned, frozen, etc.)
9. Choose dressing or toppings for a salad
10. Find an appropriately sized container for leftovers
11. Count out ingredients
12. Play with non-breakable bowls and spoons

When I was a toddler, my mom had one low cabinet that had the metal mixing bowls and pots that I was allowed to play with and I totally thought a two piece bundt/angel food cake pan ([like this one](#)) would make a great snowman costume if I put the pointy part on my head like a top hat and wore the round part around my neck as a...scarf? I'm not sure what I was thinking. But I definitely got stuck in the round part and panicked and my mom had to help me get out and it's one of my earliest memories

13. Suggest a meal or side dish
14. Choose a meal or side dish
15. Look through a cookbook or cooking magazine together and choose some recipes to try
16. Choose a recipe from a cooking show to try (even if it is just used as an inspiration)
17. Follow a video tutorial together

Some limited physical coordination required

Many of these tasks can be done by very small toddlers who have an adult helper. Very small kids probably won't be able to complete the task by themselves, but they will be able to participate, which is the important part. (check out the ADORABLE Chef Kobe here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAGr4CjhQGU/> for some visual proof that toddlers can do these types of tasks)



18. Sprinkle toppings on a salad
19. Sprinkle cheese or breadcrumb topping
20. Rinse lettuce leaves
21. Add pre-measured ingredients to a mixture
22. Mix spice mixtures/sauces/batters
23. Mix meatballs
24. Put ingredients in a pot to cook
25. Collect bowls/measuring cups/measuring spoons
26. Move dirty dishes from the table to the counter or dishwasher
27. Get out toppings/condiments and put them on the table
28. Scramble eggs
29. Mash potatoes, bananas, or squash
30. Scrub potatoes
31. Shake a jar or container of dressing or seasonings to mix it (just make sure it is fully closed!)
32. Shake a jar of [overnight oats](#) or [chia seed pudding](#) to combine (Add recipes here)
33. Rinse or scrub veggies, fruits, or herbs
34. Put ingredients into a slow cooker
35. Throw skins/peels/package wrappers in a garbage bowl, trash, or compost bin
36. Carry dirty dishes to the counter/sink/dishwasher
37. Wipe off a table or a counter
38. Toss veggies in oil and seasonings by shaking them in a closed container
39. Cut out dough with cookie cutters
40. Decorate cookies with sprinkles/frosting
41. Top pizzas with cheese and toppings

Somewhat higher coordination or level of strength required

They will still usually require an adult helper and definitely an adult supervisor at first

42. Help put away groceries
43. Find and collect ingredients as you read them from the recipe
44. Measure ingredients
45. Put away ingredients as they are used
46. Remove husk and silk from corn on the cob
47. Pull garlic cloves from a head of garlic
48. Peel garlic cloves that have been smashed
49. Use a garlic press to press garlic
50. Use a measuring cup or pitcher to add water to a pot
51. Press buttons on a mixer, blender, or food processor
52. Knead dough



53. Crush nuts or bread crumbs in a plastic bag with a rolling pin, pot, fists, or Hulk hands if you want to make it extra fun
54. Put plates, cups, silverware, and/or napkins on the table
55. Peel an orange or banana
56. Section oranges
57. Snap asparagus
58. Use a lettuce spinner to dry lettuce
59. Dry lettuce by spinning it in a towel or mesh bag
60. Tear up lettuce leaves
61. Toss a salad
62. Toss veggies in oil and seasonings for roasting using a bowl and spoon/fork
63. Use a cookie scoop to portion out cookies/biscuits/meatballs
64. Shape meatballs, rolls or other doughs
65. Turn on slow cooker
66. Peel an onion that has been cut in halves or quarters
67. Put spreads on bread or toast
68. Put dirty dishes in the dishwasher or sink or on the counter

Reading skills required

69. Preheat the oven
70. Read recipe out loud
71. Read the ingredients list out loud
72. Find a recipe
73. Write ingredients on a grocery list
74. Search for and add foods to an online grocery order
75. Read the grocery list and cross items off the list as they are bought
76. Follow directions to prepare microwave food
77. Write and decorate a menu (although, they can just decorate a menu and “write” if they don’t actually know how to write. No one actually needs to read it 😊)
78. Find a recipe that they want to try in a cookbook
79. Search for and find a recipe to make online
80. Follow a simple recipe

Sharp safety skills required

Use your best judgment as a parent

81. Grate garlic
82. Use scissors to cut fresh herbs
83. Use scissors to cut pizza or quesadilla that has cooled
84. Use an egg slicer
85. Use a cheese slicer



86. Use an egg slicer to cut strawberries
87. Wash and cut grape bunches with scissors
88. Put vegetables/meat on skewers
89. Add ingredients to a food processor or blender
90. Press the buttons on a food processor or blender

Kids can start to learn knife skills earlier than you might think! Here are two really great resources on how to start helping kids use knives safely and in an age-appropriate way (superhealthykids.com and happykidskitchen.com/) Might as well start teaching them safe skills early! (Besides, the earlier they learn, the earlier they can help!)

91. Chop lettuce with a lettuce knife
92. Chop soft vegetables or fruits (banana, cucumber, zucchini)
93. Chop dough (to section for rolls)
94. Chop or slice vegetables

Heat safety required

95. Steam frozen veggies in the microwave and then season
96. Make toast
97. Make a microwaveable food
98. Stir a pot or pan
99. Add ingredients to a pot or pan on the stove
100. Follow a simple recipe that involves using the oven or stove

Please note that these are ideas meant to empower you to involve your kids in the cooking process. You are the one who best knows your child's abilities. Use your best judgement to choose activities that will be appropriate for your child. Please make sure you supervise your children during these activities, especially those that involve heat or sharp blades!

Interested in a meal plan just for your family that includes built-in instructions for involving your kids? Learn more at www.nutritionforrealhumans.com/learning/