

# Fall for Healthy Eating: Inviting Kids into the Kitchen

It's that time of year where mornings are chilly and dewy, and we're staying in bed for an extra 5 (or 25) minutes while we adjust to darker mornings. As the seasons change, so do our cooking and eating habits. We tend to be in the kitchen more during the Fall and Winter months, as we prepare warm comfort food like soup and green chile stew.

We want to encourage folks to invite their kids into the kitchen this Fall and Winter. It's crucial to include kids of all ages in the kitchen to empower them and offer them the tools to lead a healthy life full of delicious food. Eating and preparing food is so closely linked to our memory, identity, and culture.

Just because you don't have 4 hours to spare to make tamales from scratch, or time to make your own pasta, doesn't mean that you can't include kids in the process. Even if all the kids do is rinse the lettuce and chop some carrots and tomatoes to make a salad, it is still so crucial that kids are present in the kitchen. When kids feel comfortable and welcome in the kitchen, it can help them to develop confidence and healthy eating habits they will carry with them for their entire lives. Cooking is more than just eating the finished product, it's about process, experience, and community. We've included some tips and simple ways to get your kids (of all ages) involved in the kitchen! There are two great organizations doing work to get kids involved in the kitchen: Kids Cook (Albuquerque); Cooking with Kids (Santa Fe). Happy Cooking!

## Give them Power

Try not to present cooking as another chore or something they "have" to help you with. Take out a few cook books, with relatively simple recipes to start, from the library and let them plan the meals for the upcoming week. Have them help you create a grocery list and make a plan for what nights you'll make each recipe. Have them choose which meals they're most excited to help out with.

## Create a Kid-Friendly Kitchen

By keeping age-appropriate cooking items in reach, kids will become familiar with certain items and will feel more independent being able to grab them on their own. As they get older and more comfortable in the kitchen, you can slowly start bringing new tools within their reach. Plus, by knowing where certain things go, they can help you with post-meal clean up. It's a win-win situation!

## Consistency is Key!

If finding time is really difficult due to your work schedule, try to plan just one meal a week where your kiddo can join you in the kitchen and try hard to stick to it. Kids need consistency. To make it easy you could cook a family favorite that night, and just vary it slightly from week to week. Kids can still get their hands dirty without you having to do too much planning. Each week they can look forward to that day and that special meal.

## Kitchen Tasks by Age:

2-year-olds: Rinse fruits and veggies, tear lettuce/greens, break broccoli into bite-size pieces

3-year-olds: Mix & pour ingredients, shake liquids (like salad dressing or milk) to combine them

4-year-olds: Peel things like hard-boiled eggs, mash beans, avocados, potato (cooled) using fork

5-6-year olds: Use kid-safe scissors to cut herbs like parsley and cilantro

7-10 year olds: Set the table, measure ingredients, clean up

Teens: Introduce safe knife techniques and explain the difference between slicing, and chopping. Have them start meals by lightly sauteing onions & garlic.



This Week's Local Farms:  
Vida Verde  
Silver Leaf Farms  
Rancho de Santa Fe  
North Valley Organice

This Week's Share Items:

Green Cabbage  
Watermelon Radish  
Arugula  
Cherry Tomatoes  
Avocado  
Jonathan Apples  
Nectarines  
Bonus

