



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Kids in the Kitchen

Young children are naturally curious about food... how it tastes, smells, and feels. You have a unique opportunity to teach children about the taste, smell and texture, of different types of foods as well as new vocabulary words through hands-on cooking activities. These opportunities promote lasting, positive nutritional habits.

Experts agree that children are more likely to try different types of food if they are involved in its preparation. Other benefits of cooking together include:

- ♥ **Social-Emotional Development** – Children who have opportunities to follow recipes and use their creativity while cooking develop confidence in themselves. Being able to contribute to adult tasks helps to build self-confidence.
- ♥ **Physical Development** – Mixing, grasping, chopping, and squeezing helps to strengthen fine-motor skills and develop eye-hand coordination.
- ♥ **Cognitive Development** – Cooking offers opportunities to think and problem solve. These hands-on opportunities teach numeracy, sequencing, measurement, and scientific concepts.
- ♥ **Literacy Development** – Speaking with children and introducing new words while cooking helps to enhance vocabulary. Following recipes and matching pictures to words supports literacy development.

In this newsletter, tips on how to do cooking activities with children, including safety considerations, will be shared. Also included are some fun recipes to try!



### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

Cooking with babies? It is definitely not recommended to hold baby near a hot stove or handle sharp objects and hot foods. However, there are alternative ways to expose babies to what is happening in the kitchen. Babies learn about the world around them through their senses. Holding baby close as you talk about ingredients supports brain development.

While many cooking activities are for older children, infants can be exposed to cooking activities by:

- ♥ Feeling various ingredients that you may be using for their meal, such as carrots, potatoes, or bananas.
- ♥ Listening to you talk about the various ingredients.
- ♥ Playing with clean, empty containers. For example, letting your child roll an empty oatmeal container.

Caregivers significantly influence children's food preferences beginning as early as infancy. Modeling healthy eating habits as well as

responding to baby's cues of hunger or fullness will translate to healthier eating choices and habits.



## Activity for Infants: *Winter Squash Puree*

Adapted from from: *Love in Spoonfuls*

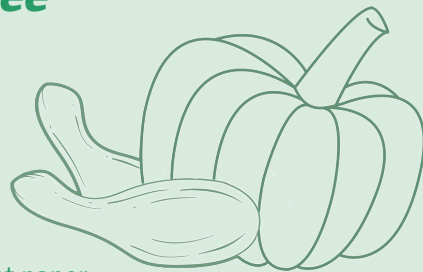
### What You Need:

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 8 oz bag fresh or frozen pre-cut winter squash
- Water, breast milk, or infant formula as needed

### What to Do:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. Line a baking pan with foil or parchment paper.
2. Toss the squash and olive oil in a large bowl. Spread the squash on the parchment paper and roast it in the oven for 20 minutes or until tender.
3. Cool and puree the squash in a food processor or blender, adding the water, breast milk or formula. Thin the puree to a smooth consistency that the baby can swallow.
4. Refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze in ice cube trays up to 3 months

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



# Toddlers

Cooking with toddlers can be a fun and educational experience with the right preparation. It is crucial to select recipes that allow for hands-on and developmentally appropriate participation. You can enhance learning by engaging children in conversation and building language skills by describing what the children are doing, by asking questions, and modeling curiosity and a positive attitude.



Here are some age appropriate cooking jobs for toddlers:

- ♥ Scrub and wash vegetables and fruits
- ♥ Mix ingredients together
- ♥ Use fingers to break, tear, knead, spread, pour, and shake ingredients
- ♥ Carry unbreakable items
- ♥ Place things in the trash

## Activity for Toddlers: *Layered Yogurt Parfait*

### What You Need:

- Plain or vanilla yogurt
- Berries or other fresh fruit
- Clear jar or cup

### What to Do:

1. Wash your hands together with soap and water.
2. Have the child scoop the yogurt into the jar or cup.
3. Next, have him scoop a layer of berries or another fruit of choice.
4. Help him create a pattern of yogurt and berries until the jar is full.
5. Point out the colors, layers, and patterns of yogurt and berries. For example, "You made a pattern! Yogurt, berries, yogurt, berries, yogurt, berries." Or "Look at the colors! White, red, white, red, white, red. That's a pattern."
6. Enjoy eating the parfait or place it in the freezer for a frozen treat!



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*



# Preschoolers

Cooking with preschoolers is a great way to teach early math, science and literacy skills. You can enhance these experiences by preparing recipes with illustrations for children to follow. Have some examples of ingredients in its raw form for children to see, touch and smell. For example, if a recipe calls for pineapple juice, providing a real pineapple allows children to observe it in its natural state.



Preschoolers can:

- ♥ Measure and mix ingredients
- ♥ Juice or mash soft fruits and vegetables
- ♥ Cut soft foods with a plastic or butter knife
- ♥ Crack and beat eggs
- ♥ Set or wipe the table

## Activity for Preschoolers: *Mashed Potatoes with Homemade Butter*

What You Need:

Potatoes  
Heavy Cream at Room Temperature  
Salt (optional)

What to Do:

1. Precook the potatoes until it is soft, then cool to room temperature.
2. Ask the child to help you mash the potatoes using a masher, fork, or the bottom of a coffee mug. Ask questions and make observations as he is working such as, "Why do you think it's called mashed potatoes? How do you think we can use this tool to make the potatoes soft and creamy?"
3. Give the child a mason jar and ask him to fill it half way with heavy cream (demonstrate where half of the jar would be).
4. Secure the lid and have him shake, shake, shake!
5. Stop after a few minutes and observe after it begins to thicken into whipped cream. Ask, "What do you think is happening to the cream?" Let the child taste the cream.
6. Secure the lid again and shake it some more. After approximately 7–10 minutes, it will begin to separate and clump. Drain off the liquid buttermilk, mix the butter with the potatoes and enjoy



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*

# How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

## Physical Development

- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination
- ♥ Use strength and control to perform fine motor tasks

## Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to cooperate with others
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

## Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Increase his observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span

## Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop early math skills like quantifying, comparing, and sorting
- ♥ Develop math concepts like numbers, sizes, and measurement



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math and science concepts, fine motor skills, and language development. As you make this recipe with your child, ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Most of all, have fun!

### Cheese Puffs

Adapted from <https://childhood101.com/cooking-with-kids-cheese-puffs/>

#### Ingredients:

- 2 sheets puff pastry
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp water
- Grated Cheddar Cheese (or cheese of your choice)

#### Directions:

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and lay out the puff pastry sheets to defrost. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Help your child crack the egg and add the water together. Have him lightly beat the egg wash.
3. Use a cookie cutter to cut shapes in the puff pastry.
4. Lay the shapes onto the parchment paper and have the child brush it with the egg wash.
5. Sprinkle a little cheese on each shape with your child.
6. Bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese has melted and the pastry has puffed.
7. Talk about how the ingredients changed and enjoy your snack together!



## Resources

### Growing Minds. *Cooking with Preschool Children*

<https://growing-minds.org/documents/cooking-with-children-in-licensed-child-care.pdf>

This article presents ways to use cooking to promote development and learning.

### PBS Parents. *Cooking with Kids*

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/food-and-fitness/eat-smart/cooking-with-kids/>

Simple guidelines designed to make cooking with children safe and fun

### United States Department of Agriculture. *Choose My Plate*

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/kitchen-helper-activities>

Tips to healthy eating for the whole family.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

#### *Eat Your Colors* by Amanda Miller

This book is filled with fun, colorful photos to introduce little ones to the basics of good nutrition.

#### *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert

This vibrantly colored alphabet book shows fruits and vegetables so juicy and alive, you'll wish they could jump off the page right into your mouth. This board book is just right for introducing toddlers to the mysteries of endive, kiwifruit and papaya.

### Preschoolers

#### *Mine!* by Susie Lee Jin

The adorable bunnies in this story debate over who the carrot belongs to. Each bunny stakes a no nonsense claim on the juicy orange veggie with a resounding "Mine!" Will the bunnies find a way to stop the madness...and share?

#### *How Are You Peeling?* by Saxton Freymann

How are you peeling? Happy? Sad? Worried? Excited? Feeling words and photographs of carvings made from vegetables introduce your child to the world of emotions.



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