

Kitchen Activities for Kids

Simple ways in which you can have a cooking environment that creates flavor AND connection.



created by Chef Kibby

Visit chefkibby.com for more helpful information!



Mis en Place

means “everything in its place”

Recipe reads: “1 can crushed tomatoes”

What it’s really saying: “Go to the pantry and find the can of crushed tomatoes you brought home from the store the other day.”

There is a crucial step that is unstated in 99.99% of all recipes. Assuming that you are not coming straight from the store to start cooking, the ingredients you need for this recipe are stashed away somewhere for safe keeping – whether in the refrigerator, freezer, pantry, or still lying on the counter in a plastic grocery bag. This means someone – and not necessarily you – needs to gather up the ingredients.



Kitchen Gear

the other hidden mis en place

Recipe reads: “sauté until lightly brown”

What it’s really saying: “You’re gonna need a pan, a heatproof stirring implement, and a stove.”

Another critical piece of information that goes unstated in the vast majority of recipes is the list of equipment. Most of the time, it is up to you to read the recipe in advance (which is a good habit, by the way) in order to pick out what pots, pans, utensils, and other pieces of kitchen gear you’ll need to pull off the finished product.



ask them to help gather your mis

Allowing a child to help you assemble your ingredients and equipment has a game-like quality to it that can lead to lessons learned which may impact other areas of their development.

what they’re learning:

- Following directions
- Spatial awareness
- Recognition of ingredients & equipment
- Storage choices
- Task efficiency



Prep Work

getting ingredients ready to be used

Recipe reads: “½ cup of diced yellow onion”

What it's really saying: “Trim the yellow onion, dice it, then measure out ½ cup.”

Once you've gather your ingredients, you're ready to get cooking, right? WRONG! There are often other steps – some expressly stated, others assumed – to be taken before the items you have assembled in your kitchen can be included in the dish. This can present even more opportunities for a young person to get involved in a more active, immersive way.

Common prep work tasks may include:

rinsing or washing produce – counting – measuring
trimming or breaking – knife work



REMEMBER:

Involving children in the kitchen is not about making the task of preparing dinner easier – chances are, it probably won't. Instead, see it as an opportunity to enrich your relationship by offering a deeply-embodied sense of trust and felt-safety to a child who desperately needs it.



and More

other ways to get kids involved

Setting the table: arranging tableware and utensils on the table is not only a big help but is a form of pattern recognition – the foundation for math and logical thinking.

Loading & unloading the dishwasher: teaches the value of putting things back where they belong

Planning the menu: you don't have to give them complete control; let them choose between items of which you already approve. They still get to choose and feel the sense of trust placed in them.

Shopping for groceries: let them push the cart, ask them to guide you to the right aisle, make it a game.

Potential Kitchen Tasks

Arranged by age / developmental level

LEVEL ONE | NOVICE (0-3)

- Hand washing
- Mix ingredients in a bowl
- Practice counting
- Play in the sink
- "What's this?"
- "Hand me ___"

LEVEL TWO | BEGINNER (4-8)

- Rinse or wash produce
- Tie apron strings
- Set table
- Crack eggs
- Gather ingredients
- Gather utensils
- Slice soft things
- Load & unload the dishwasher
- Operate a rice cooker
- Measure & weigh ingredients
- Juice citrus
- Break broccoli or cauliflower into florets

LEVEL THREE | INTERMEDIATE (9-13)

- Peel vegetables
- Operate a food processor
- Use a box grater
- Beginning knife work
- Hand-wash equipment & utensils
- Operate a stand mixer
- Operate an oven
- Clean kitchen work surfaces

LEVEL FOUR | ADVANCED (14-18)

- Knife work
- Stovetop cooking preparations
- Taking inventory
- Operate a hand mixer
- Use a thermometer

