

Cooking Abilities of Young Children

Helping prepare and cook foods is a great way for children to:

- learn,
- have fun, and
- try nutritious foods.

What activities your child will be able to help with will depend on her or his age. Keep the following in mind when including young children in cooking activities.

Two-year-olds are learning to use the large muscles in their arms. Try activities such as:

- **scrubbing** vegetables and fruits
- **carrying** unbreakable items to the table
- **dipping** foods
- **washing and tearing** lettuce and salad greens
- **breaking** bread into pieces

Three-year-olds are learning to use their hands. Try activities such as:

- **pouring** liquids into batter (you measure first)
- **mixing** batter or other dry and wet ingredients together
- **shaking** a drink in a closed container
- **spreading** butters or spreads
- **kneading** dough
- **washing** vegetables and fruit
- **serving** foods
- **putting** things in the trash after cooking or after a meal

Four and Five-year-olds are learning to control small muscles in their fingers. Try activities such as:

- **juicing** oranges, lemons, and limes
- **peeling** some fruits and vegetables (bananas and even onions)
- **mashing** soft fruits and vegetables
- **scrubbing** vegetables (potatoes, mushrooms)
- **cutting** soft foods with a plastic knife (mushrooms, hard-boiled eggs)
- **pressing** cookie cutters
- **measuring** dry ingredients
- **cracking** open/breaking eggs
- **beating** eggs with an egg beater
- **setting** the table
- **wiping** up after cooking
- **clearing** the table after a meal