



THE FAMILY KITCHEN: COOKING UP LIFELONG HEALTHY HABITS TOGETHER *60-minute lesson*

GOAL

Encourage caregivers to work together with the kids in their care to make healthy meals and snacks that everyone will enjoy.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Discuss ways to help kids develop good eating habits through caregiver role modeling.
- ✓ Discuss safe, age-appropriate tasks for kids in the kitchen.
- ✓ Practice preparing meals or snacks with child-friendly steps.

KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ They learn from watching you – eat healthy foods and your kids will too!
- ✓ Make your job easier. Kids are more likely to try new foods when they help choose and prepare them.
- ✓ Start young. Kids can help in the kitchen as early as their toddler years.
- ✓ Keep calm and cook on – working with kids in the kitchen may be messy. The more you practice, the better you'll get at figuring out what kitchen jobs are right for each of you.

MATERIALS

Flip chart or white board • Markers/pens • Name tags • Ingredients and equipment for your chosen recipes • Materials for kids' activity (if using - optional)

KIDS' ACTIVITY OPTIONS

We have provided a booklet of activities that can be used with kids. The following are suggestions for specific activities that may be complementary to what caregivers are learning in this lesson. **You are not limited to this list** – feel free to use whatever activities are most appropriate for your situation.

Note that some activities are written for the whole family, but can be easily modified for an activity with only kids.

- For younger kids:
 - Imaginary Cooking, page 6
 - Food Group Relay Race, I-62
 - Any of the coloring sheets on pages 21-32
- For older kids:
 - Serve a Healthy Plate, page I-56
 - Filling Up My Plate, page I-61
 - Activity Ball Toss, page I-68

CAREGIVER HANDOUTS

We have provided a comprehensive set of handouts for each lesson that can be 1) used as references for the instructor to prepare for class 2) referenced verbally and/or visually during class to guide discussion 3) provided as take-homes for caregivers to reinforce what they learned in class and encourage further learning. **You are NOT required to provide all of these handouts as take-homes** (though you may if you wish). Feel free to pick and choose which you feel are most helpful and appropriate. However, we ask that **at a minimum you provide a printed copy of the recipe(s) you prepared in class, as well as the Making It Work at Home handout.**

Check off the handouts you plan to reference during class

- Kids in the Kitchen
- Mealtime: It's a Family Thing
- Set a Healthy Example
- Raising a Healthy Eater
- Shopping with Kids
- Making Mealtime Peaceful
- Portions for Kids
- Making it Work at Home**



Prep for Success: Determine the age of the kids prior to the lesson and use this to guide the recipe selection. If most participants will be holding or caring for an infant during the lesson, consider prepping recipes in advance so it's mostly assembling.

RECIPE OPTIONS

Choose **at least 1 snack to prepare in advance for the tasting and at least 1 meal or side dish to prepare during the lesson** (or as many as time allows) for the hands-on cooking. The following chart provides some ideas. You may use other recipes if you wish – see CookingMatters.org/recipes for more ideas. If you are not using a Cooking Matters recipe, please be sure it contains only ingredients that are affordable and accessible for low-income caregivers, does not require fancy cooking tools, and follows healthy eating guidelines.

Snack Ideas: Use any snacks with steps kids can help with or ingredients they can adjust to taste.			
Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Pineapple Carrot Muffins	Prep time: 15 minutes Cook time: 25 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	<p>“Depending on their age, your kids can use this recipe to practice math while measuring, they can grate carrots, or they can help mix the batter.”</p> <p>“This recipe is a great option for sneaking in whole grains and you can make a big batch and then freeze them for an easy snack throughout the week.”</p>
Make Your Own Fruit Smoothies	Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	<p>“Smoothies are a great healthy food for adapting to your kids’ specific tastes. You can buy ingredients that you know they like or ingredients covered in your WIC benefits.</p> <p>“Kids love to help out with recipes like smoothies – they can measure, add ingredients to the blender, and make the blender go “VROOM!” Another plus is that smoothies are usually a very well contained mess.”</p>

Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Peanut Butter and Banana Pockets	Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 15 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	<p>“Particularly with picky kids, giving them a choice for what fruit they want to include in a favorite snack can help encourage them to eat more fruits in general.”</p> <p>“These pocket style snacks are very easy for older kids to assemble independently, which gives them a sense of ownership and a tendency to eat more of them.”</p>
Fruit Tarts	Prep time: 30 minutes Cook time: 10 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	<p>“Kids can practice measuring and mixing – or they can roll out the bread for the tarts. If you do not have a rolling pan, kids will have fun just pressing the bread as flat as possible with a plate, cup, sauté pan, or just their hands!”</p> <p>“Sub in any fruit you like – one of the greatest things about this snack is how nice it looks, and it will look even nicer to your kids if topped with fruits that they like to eat.”</p>
Yogurt Parfait	Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	<p>“Sub in any fruit you like – one of the greatest things about this snack is how nice it looks, and it will look even nicer to your kids if topped with fruits that they like to eat.”</p> <p>“These parfaits are very easy for older kids to assemble independently, which gives them a sense of ownership and a tendency to eat more of them.”</p>

Meal or Side Dish Ideas: Use any with steps kids can help with or ingredients they can adjust to taste.

Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Black Bean and Vegetable Quesadillas	Prep time: 25 minutes Cook time: 20 minutes	<p>Grate cheese and cut veggies in advance.</p> <p>Spend the lesson time assembling and discussing where kids can be involved.</p>	<p>“This recipe is a great example of how kids can be involved in food decisions. You can follow the directions and prepare the filling as suggested or your kids can choose their favorite veggies and healthy proteins. If this recipe is a hit, you can make a bigger batch of it and freeze the quesadillas to reheat for an easy, kid-approved meal.”</p> <p>“You can involve older kids in grating ingredients and younger kids in spooning filling into the tortillas before they get cooked.”</p>

Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Stove Top Macaroni and Cheese	Prep time: 20 minutes Cook time: 20 minutes	Cook noodles in advance. Grate cheese in advance. Focus lesson on making sauce and ways to involve kids with the recipe.	<p>“This dish is such a comfort food, which can make it easier to couple vegetables with when serving to your kids. If your kids are not ready to see the veggies in their macaroni and cheese, you can just add pureed squash to the cheese sauce – the orange of the cheese conceals the squash and your kids may not even know it is there!”</p> <p>“Depending on their age, your kids can use this recipe to practice math while measuring, they can grate cheese, or they can help mix the sauce.”</p>
Mini Pizzas	Prep time: 25 minutes Cook time: 25 minutes	Make pizza sauce in advance. Cut veggies in advance. Preheat oven. Focus lesson on assembling and discussing ways kids can be involved.	<p>“Pizza is such a comfort food, which can make it easier to couple vegetables with when serving to your kids. If your kids are not ready to see the veggies on their pizza, you can just add grated carrot to the tomato sauce – the red of the tomato conceals the carrot and your kids may not even know it is there!”</p> <p>“Depending on their age, your kids can measure the spices, rip up spinach for topping the pizza, or they can help stir the sauce.”</p> <p>“This recipe is a great example of how kids can be involved in food decisions. You can follow the directions and prepare the toppings as suggested or your kids can choose their favorite veggies to top the pizza.”</p>
Super Salads	Prep time: 10 – 20 minutes Cook time: 0 minutes	Have veggies prepped in advance. Focus recipe on kids helping to make homemade dressings as well as assembling the salad.	<p>“Depending on their age, your kids can measure ingredients for the dressing, or rip up lettuce for the salad.”</p> <p>“Salads are a great healthy food for adapting to your kids’ specific tastes. You can buy ingredients or make dressings that you know they like.”</p> <p>“Use a plastic zip bag or jar to allow the kids to shake the dressing or “mix” the salad.”</p>

CLASS TIME

PAPERWORK (5 MINUTES):

As caregivers arrive, have them complete the demographics portion of the participant survey and sign a waiver.

MAIN COURSE: LESSON TOPIC (50 MINUTES):

INTRODUCTION: (5 MINUTES)

1. **Welcome caregivers.** Introduce instructors and any other volunteers or helpers.
2. **Set expectations.** Explain that caregivers will learn how to help their kids develop good eating habits by involving them in preparing meals or snacks, with the added goal of saving them time and money in the long run. We'll also discuss age appropriate tasks for kids in the kitchen.
3. **Get acquainted.**

ASK

"What are you looking forward to learning in this session?"

- Write their responses on flip-chart paper and try to cover as many of their questions as possible.

TASTE TEST, HANDS-ON COOKING, AND DISCUSSION (45 MINUTES)

1. **Begin by having kids and caregivers eat the pre-prepared snack together.**

- Have kids and caregivers serve themselves the snack.

***NOTE:** If you have a helper to lead children, this is a good time to pull kids into a separate activity of your choosing while caregivers continue the discussion. If not, identify a specific age appropriate activity for them to work on while the adults talk or give them a designated area for independent play.*

- As they eat the snack, discuss with caregivers why it's important to them that their families eat healthy. Point out that one of the most important things caregivers can do to encourage healthy habits is to model the behaviors they want kids to adopt – both in the kitchen and at mealtime.

ASK

"What does it mean to be a role model for your kids around healthy eating? How are you doing this already? In what ways might you be modeling unhelpful behaviors or attitudes towards food?"

- Validate caregivers' thoughts and opinions using a white board or chart paper. Affirm the many positive things caregivers are already doing.
- Refer to the Set a Healthy Example handout. Point out other simple modeling behaviors and encourage caregivers to circle or write down ideas they'd like to try.
- Remind caregivers that modeling is a long-term strategy. Just like so many other milestones in early childhood development, children need to see skills modeled many times in order to learn how to do themselves. Patience works better than pressure.

ASK

"When you were first presented with the pre-made snack or sample, did you want to eat it? Why or why not? How would it make you feel if I told you that you had to eat it? What are some ways you might present this to your family in a way that would be exciting for them and that models positive mealtime behaviors?"

- Point out that an adult rarely orders something at a restaurant without understanding what all the ingredients are, yet we often expect kids to eat new foods with no questions asked! Allowing your kids to ask questions about the food they eat or to participate in making it or choosing ingredients can help them develop healthy habits. Their buy-in can also save you time and money.

2. Next, have kids and caregivers prepare a meal or side dish together.

- If kids and caregivers have been separated, bring them back together for cooking time. Have kids and caregivers wash hands using proper technique.

***NOTE:** Because this lesson is about involving kids in the kitchen, we strongly encourage you to have kids working alongside caregivers for the food preparation! If that's not feasible, they may continue doing a separate activity.*

- Review the recipes together and identify places where kids can help based on what's appropriate for their age. Refer to the Kids in the Kitchen handout for age-appropriate ideas. Use this as an opportunity to delegate age-appropriate tasks to the children and the caregivers.
- While kids and caregivers are working:



"How do you feel about your kid... scrubbing and peeling veggies? Cracking eggs? Reading you the recipe? Helping you gather ingredients?" [NOTE: Adjust your questions based on the recipes you have selected to prepare.] "How would you feel about allowing them to do these same tasks at home?"

- If caregivers mention concerns or challenges with getting kids to help in the kitchen, take time to discuss challenges and possible solutions. Choose 1-2 challenges from the chart below to discuss. If time permits, address additional challenges.

GETTING KIDS IN THE KITCHEN TO HELP	
Challenge	Talking Points
I don't want the kids using knives. It's not safe.	"Check out our Kids in the Kitchen handout to find age-appropriate tasks for kids. There are lots of knife-free ways that kids can help."
I am afraid that my child might mess up and then we will have to throw all of the food out.	"Start with simple steps that would have minimal impact on the meal as a whole. For example, it won't be a big deal if kids don't snap the green beans perfectly in half. Let them work up to bigger jobs, and give them plenty of supervision to start. You might want to have a gentle hand on the egg they are cracking if it's the only one left to make the meal!"
There's more mess to clean up.	"It might be messy in the moment, but involving kids builds their competence which will free your time down the line. Imagine your kids getting their own breakfast so you can sleep in! You can also involve them in the clean up – most kids love having a "job" that is all theirs to be responsible for."

GETTING KIDS IN THE KITCHEN TO HELP	
Challenge	Talking Points
It takes too long and I just need to get the meal made.	<p>“Child involvement doesn’t have to be big at every meal. Giving the child a small task or “job” can help you, even if it’s just a little. It also does not need to happen every night—it can be a tradition on your least busy night of the week, to start.”</p> <p>“Helping in the kitchen doesn’t have to just be about cooking. Think of a task or two that your child can own, like setting the table, putting a napkin or paper towel on each plate, or adding ice to glasses. Does that seem doable? What other non-cooking kitchen tasks can you think of?”</p> <p>“It can actually make clean-up faster if everyone pitches in. Start with small jobs like wiping the table with a sponge or sweeping up flour spilled on the floor.”</p>
My child complains that it takes too long and wants to eat now.	<p>“Offer a small snack while you work together. Often when kids have more of an appetite they are more likely to try new foods, too, so this could be a great time to offer a taste or preview of what dinner is going to include (for example, if you’re making stir-fry, offer them tastes of fresh celery, carrots, etc.)”</p> <p>“Cooking together is a way to spend time together as a family; it’s sometimes even special one-on-one time with a parent/caregiver. Just make sure you have a snack on hand while cooking!”</p>

3. If kids and caregivers have been separated, bring them back together for eating time.

- As kids and caregivers eat:



“How might you react if you involve your children in the preparation and they still won’t eat the food?”

- Acknowledge that feeding young children can be really challenging! Sometimes, no matter your best effort, your family won’t eat or enjoy the foods prepared. Have caregivers share ideas for how to handle this challenge. Add these two ideas to the discussion as needed.
 - Ideas #1: Have children taste-test the components of the meal instead of offering everything at once. Maybe they’ll eat everything but the sauce you put on at the end. Congratulate them on trying new tastes and add just the components they enjoy right now to their plate.
 - Idea #2: Make sure that you always include a healthy food you know the child will like in the meal. This way they can try new foods, but there is always a “safe bet.”



“I’d like to hear from the kids. What were your favorite things to try? How did it feel to try something for the first time? If you didn’t like it, would you be willing to try it with a different ingredient, like your favorite vegetable?”

CLOSING (5 MINUTES):

- **ENCOURAGE:** Encourage caregivers to choose one thing they learned today that they will commit to trying at home this week. Have them share aloud if they are willing.
- **ASK:** Model mealtime conversation starters between families by asking kids to share with their caregivers their favorite part of today's session, the best food they tried, and/or something they want to try helping with at home.
- **TAKE:** Share handouts for caregivers to take home, as well as any incentive items you are providing. **Caregivers must complete the participant survey questions and return the forms to you before receiving their take-home items.**

###