

# Cooking with Young Children

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Cooking with young children is a great way to teach nutrition basics and encourage a lifelong interest in healthy eating. Children learn best through active involvement in something that interests them. Shopping for foods, cooking, and cleanup teach life skills that help children grow to be self-sufficient later in life.

## Helping in the Kitchen

### Builds basic math and language skills

Counting and measuring ingredients, learning names of unusual fruits or vegetables, and following step-by-step instructions helps cognitive development.

### Helps children experience all five senses

- Seeing, smelling, touching, tasting, and hearing are all involved in preparing a recipe.
- Listening to beaters mixing cookie dough, watching butter melt, pulling apart lettuce leaves for salad, smelling cookies baking, and tasting the final product helps integrate learning through the five senses.

### Helps boost confidence

- Children thrive on feeling successful in tasks they tackle.
- Children feel pride in their accomplishment when they can share in meal preparation for the family.



## Ideas for Involving Children in the Kitchen

- Mixing ingredients, such as cookie dough, muffin or cake batter
- Spreading peanut butter on crackers or whole wheat bread
- Wrapping potatoes in foil for baking
- Rinsing and tearing lettuce and other greens for salads
- Measuring dry and liquid ingredients or moving premeasured ingredients from one place to another
- Beating eggs with a whisk or eggbeater
- Peeling bananas, oranges, or hard-cooked eggs
- Forming round shapes for baking, such as meatballs or balls of cookie dough

## Tips for Getting Started

- Look at the recipe and match your child's task with the appropriate skill level.
- Select an easy recipe with few steps. Ten minutes may be the maximum attention span for a preschooler's involvement.
- Gather the recipe's ingredients, measuring cups, spoons, and other utensils so that everything is ready for use.
- Supervise at all times when your child assists with food preparation.



**This cookie recipe uses whole grains, fruit, and has no added sugar for a healthy and tasty**

## Banana Oat Cookies

### SOURCE

What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

Prep time: 15 minutes, 25 minutes with child

Bake time: 35 min Makes: 25 small cookies

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup banana, mashed (use overripe banana)
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1/2 cup yogurt, low-fat plain
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup raisins (optional)
- 1/2 cup sunflower seeds (optional)
- spices (to taste, optional)

### PREPARATION:

1. Wash hands, make sure utensils and counter top are clean.
2. Mash bananas, mix with yogurt and water.
3. Add quick (not instant) oats. Mix well.
4. Add optional add-ins if you wish. Keep them minimal.
5. Add spices, to taste (optional)
6. The batter should be thick and easy to spoon.
7. Grease a baking sheet. Place a tablespoon of dough on the sheet, thin out to a flat disk. Repeat with remaining dough. Refrigerate if any is remaining in bowl.
8. Bake at 350-375°F for 20 minutes. Flip and bake on other side 15 minutes to make crisper



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