

Everybody Wins When Kids Are in the Kitchen



You do your best to teach your children important life skills. But are they learning the skills they need to eat well for life?

Cooking with your children can help build their confidence in the kitchen. When children are welcomed into the kitchen, they are more likely to try new foods, eat better and have more confidence to prepare meals and snacks both now and in the future.



Which of the following describes your family?

I think cooking as a family is important, but it's too dangerous for my kids to start at this age.

The time is now! Even if your kids are young or you are nervous about allowing them to use the stove or sharp knives, you can still try many cooking activities together. Children can safely wash and peel vegetables, measure ingredients and mix for you. Over time you and your child will feel more comfortable working together in the kitchen.

I don't have the time to cook with my kids.

Your kids might be missing out on learning some key skills they'll need to eat well in the future. Invite your kids into the kitchen and give them simple tasks that do not have to take a lot of time. Soon they'll be ready to take on more cooking responsibilities, which will actually save you time!

The kids can watch me cook, and hang out in the kitchen, but involving them in cooking is not a priority right now.

You've taken an important step in helping your kids build cooking skills by letting them know they're welcome in the kitchen. Your kids have probably already picked up some skills just by watching you. But by letting them take a more active role you will help them gain more confidence in their cooking ability and ensure they continue cooking as they get older.

We cook together often. Not every night, but as often as we can.

You've created a welcoming kitchen where your kids can build all the cooking skills they need. Now that you've got your kids in the kitchen with you, help them keep things interesting and get creative.

Start Cooking With Your Kids Now

Roll Out the Welcome Mat: Chances are your kids want to cook but think you don't want them tagging along in the kitchen, so take the initiative and invite them in to learn!

Start Out Simple: Work within your comfort zone. Start out by having your children watch you in the kitchen, or let them jump right in and help you with simple cooking tasks.

Build Their Confidence: Build your children's confidence in the kitchen by letting them take on a meaningful role in making meals.

Step It Up: Once your kids have all the basic skills they need, keep things interesting by trying new recipes and learning new skills.

Make Meals a Family Experience



Connect with your kids by planning and preparing meals as a family. Set aside some time each week to connect with your kids and plan meals for the week ahead.

Explore food together. Plan family activities that are related to food and cooking together. Try making a family cookbook by getting your children to choose their favourite healthy recipes.

Eat together as a family as often as possible. Make mealtime enjoyable by taking time to connect with your kids. Remove any distractions such as the TV, gadgets, toys or phones so that everyone can focus on the food and being together.

Chicken Fajitas with Fresh Salsa

Preparation Time: 20 mins Cooking Time: 12 mins Yield: 4–6 servings

INGREDIENTS

Fajitas

- 4 skinless boneless chicken breast halves
- ½ cup (80 mL) lime juice
- ¼ cup (60 mL) olive oil
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) chili powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) garlic powder
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) cayenne pepper
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Vegetable oil
- 1 red onion, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, trimmed and minced
- 1 can (10 oz/284 mL) corn niblets, drained
- Salsa
- Canadian Cheddar cheese, grated
- 12 large corn or flour tortillas

Salsa

- 2 plum (roma) tomatoes, diced
- ½ sweet red pepper, diced
- ½ avocado, diced (optional)
- ½ jalapeño pepper, minced
- ½ cup (125 mL) shredded Canadian Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) freshly squeezed lime juice
- ½ tsp (½ mL) salt

TIP:
To boost the fibre in this meal, use whole-wheat tortillas.

TIP:
To make a vegetarian version of this recipe, you can use kidney beans or a vegetable-based meat substitute instead of chicken.

DIRECTIONS

Fajitas

- THEY CAN DO** 1. In ovenproof dish, marinate chicken breasts in lime juice and olive oil for 2 hours in refrigerator.
- YOU CAN DO** 2. Meanwhile, in large bag, combine chili and garlic powder, cayenne, salt and pepper.
- THEY CAN DO** 3. Remove chicken breasts from dish, place in spice bag and shake well to coat chicken (add more spices as needed).
- YOU CAN DO** 4. In skillet, cook chicken in vegetable oil over medium heat until done. Cut into strips and set aside.
- THEY CAN DO** 5. To prepare fajitas, place chicken strips on tortillas and top with onion, green bell peppers, corn niblets, salsa and Canadian Cheddar cheese.
- YOU CAN DO** 6. Roll up tortillas and serve with salsa.

Salsa

- THEY CAN DO** 7. Cut vegetables: dice tomatoes, red pepper and avocado (if using). Seed and mince jalapeño peppers.
- THEY CAN DO** 8. Shred cheese.
- THEY CAN DO** 9. In a medium bowl, combine tomato, red pepper, avocado (if using), jalapeño, cheese, lime juice and salt.



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Need help? You can find family-friendly recipes, engaging ideas, videos and tips from real parents about cooking with kids at FamilyKitchen.ca.

For more information on developing cooking skills and healthy eating, visit HealthyCanadians.gc.ca/EatWell or EatRightOntario.ca.