



# DEMO NOTES

## Involving Kids in Food Choices

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*Children will cook with any tool that comes to hand, but things tend to go a little more smoothly if they have tools that really fit what they're doing. Almost everything a child needs can be obtained at yard sales or the thrift store – no need to spend a bundle at Williams Sonoma for your young chef! A few of our favorites:*

### **The Child's Batterie de Cuisine**

1. **Scissors** – for snipping herbs, cutting dried fruit
2. **Food Chopper** – for cutting up onions
3. **Safety Grater** (ours is KitchenAid) – for grating cheese
4. **Old Fashioned Nut Grinder** – for nuts
5. **Old Fashioned Egg Beater** – sure, you have an electric mixer. But where's the fun in that?
6. **Cheese Wire** – for slicing cheese, boiled eggs and tomatoes
7. **Cookie Cutters** – for cookies, canapes and toad-in-the-hole
8. **Measuring Cups And Spoons** - plenty of them so you don't have to wash in the middle of a recipe.
9. **Apple Corer** – Only worthwhile if you're an apple-eating household, of course.

*Not every adult enjoys cooking with children. You can spend quality food time with your kids without cooking. Consider the following:*

### **Alternative Food Activities**

1. **Copia** – While most people think of this Napa food institute as an adult activity, it's actually great for kids. The "Fork In the Road" exhibit has a dozen or so interactive activities about food, including smelling a scent and guessing what it is, and naming candy bars from photos of them. There's a children's garden, which includes bunnies.
2. **Davis Farmer's Market** – This is a great place to play with other kids and eat ice cream, true,

but it's also a good place to talk about food and farms. Diane Madison at Yolo Bulb, Annie Main at Good Humus and Earl at Earl's Organics are all parents themselves, and great with kids.

3. **Plant An Herb Pot** – Any sort of pot will do, but be sure to plant herbs that you'll actually use in cooking. If you can't think of what else to do, plant thyme, sage and marjoram, then help your child harvest the young tender leaves to toss into a green salad.
4. **Make Food Art** – it can be as simple as pretty garnish (check any color cookbook) or as elaborate as a gingerbread castle. Joost Elfers books are wonderfully fun inspiration.
5. **Read Food Books** – Cookbooks with pictures are fun. Ingredient books offer a lot of material for discussion. One of my favorites is [The Hungry Planet: What the World Eats](#), which pictures families from around the world alongside a one-week supply of groceries for that family.

*As you've probably learned by now, small children don't process information in the same way as adults. For kids, the word and the thing are often the same, making "Toad in the Hole" a very scary dish indeed. Some linguistic tricks for parents and small eaters:*

### **Magical Thinking**

Scallions taste better than green onions.

Sweet peppers are yummy, but bell peppers are too hot.

Blood oranges are either very cool or very scary – Maltese Oranges are neutral.

If you say "Oh, you don't like that?" or the equivalent, you're making that statement true forever for a child. If you say "Oh, that's too adult for your tastes" you're leaving open the possibility that their tastes will change.

Safety precautions are crucial in the kitchen, whether your child is cooking with you or just being fed. A few that might not have occurred to you yet:

### Food & Kitchen Safety

1. Never, ever, feed a child unwashed produce. It's not a great idea for you, either.
2. Keep separate cutting boards for raw meat and everything else. Handle meat separately from other dishes; once it's safe in the marinade or pan, sanitize the work area, the utensils and the cook before handling vegetables.
3. Disregard all instructions that tell you to wash raw poultry. The Centers for Disease Control have now established that this does nothing to control food-borne illness, but does do a great job of spreading bacteria around your sink area.
4. Train everyone in the household to cook with pot handles turned to the inside of the stove. Throw a fit if necessary.
5. If you would like to eat raw cookie dough, use sterile egg whites in place of whole eggs in the recipe. Salmonella is carried only in egg yolks, making whites-only dough much safer to eat. (You'll also have a cookie that's lower in cholesterol.)
6. Everyone who is cooking should wear close-fitting clothes that cover the midriff. Princess dresses are a fire hazard, long gauzy sleeves usually end up in hot sauce, and belly shirts frequently result in belly burns. Dress up after dinner is ready!
7. Keep knives sharp, learn how to use them well, and develop the habit of putting them down in the same safe place – entirely out of reach of small hands - in between tasks.
8. And one for the Co-op, or any other grocery store: there are more than 50,000 emergency room visits in the U.S. each year for shopping cart injuries. Children should not stand in the baskets, climb over the side of the cart, ride on the side of the cart or ride under the cart.



And finally, a few tips –

### Cooking Ahead of the Curve

1. Read the recipe all the way through, together. If you have older children, this is a good place to practice reading skills. For younger kids, it's a chance to learn vocabulary. For everyone, it helps avoid surprises – kids are particularly disappointed when something has to chill for two hours, unless they know that's part of the plan.
2. Talk in advance about who will do what part of the job, and why. If your child believes she's going to use the chef's knife to chop the onion, there are going to be tears when you get to that part of the recipe.
3. Find all the ingredients and measure them out. Cooking with kids can cause even the best of cooks to leave out an ingredient. Finding and measuring the ingredients is a lot more fun when nothing is burning on the stove!
4. Most great chefs cook with their hands in everything. Wash everyone's hands thoroughly and start cooking! Don't worry about whether your child is doing things "right". He has years to learn technique; today he's learning that cooking is fun.
5. Clean up is part of cooking. Sending your child off to play while you clean up will result in a messy adult cook! Clean up together, which is more fun anyway.