# **Why you should cook with your child**

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For my last birthday, as a birthday gift, the boys planned and executed a three-course meal complete with a starter, main course and dessert. They planned it well in advance, researching and discussing recipes with their father and grandparents.While I was overwhelmed by the love and the effort that had gone into the meal, I couldn’t help but contemplate the learning and life skills that they had gained in the process.

When you allow your child access to your kitchen, not only are you passing on your traditions and culture, your child is also developing in the most holistic way possible.

## **It develops their fine motor skills**

Rolling, peeling, chopping, kneading, mixing and pouring are all actions that strengthen their motor control, grip and stability. These skills are useful when they are writing, drawing or painting. Keeping your child’s safety in mind, choose age appropriate activities. But, even a toddler can help in the kitchen provided that he is supervised. My two-year-old used to help me peel peas and mix cake batter.

## **It develops their language skills and vocabulary**

When you cook together with your child, you are constantly introducing new vocabulary. Whether its listing ingredients (nouns) or action verbs such as pour, mix, grind, slice or if you want to be fancy.. julienne or describing the food that you are cooking (adjectives). “The pancake batter needs to be fluffier.” Every word you use is being absorbed and stored in your child’s brain to be used at a later date.

## **It enhances their mathematical abilities**

Cooking involves a lot of mathematical concepts such as counting, addition, multiplication, ratios, fractions and measurement. “How many cups of water do we need?” “Two cups.” “If the recipe says two eggs per person and there are two of us, how many eggs do we need?” “We need to measure out 100 ml of milk.” It provides your child with excellent opportunities for real life application of mathematical concepts.

## **It introduces them to practical scientific concepts**

It encourages them to experiment, observe and reach conclusions based on their observations. “What happens when I put butter in a hot pan?” “What happens when we freeze the juice in the ice tray?” “If I mix a wet ingredient and a dry ingredient, what happens?” ” What happens if I try to put icing on a hot cake?”

**It improves their reading comprehension and literacy skiWhe**

When children read the recipe, they need to clearly understand every step and follow every instruction if they want their dish to be a success. It encourages them to slow down and read every word.

## **It improves their focus and attention**

Following and implementing a recipe from beginning to end is not easy. They need to stay on task without getting distracted. Carelessness and loss of attention can cause accidents in the kitchen.

## **It teaches responsibility**

If the cake is in the oven, I need to keep checking to ensure that it doesn’t get burnt.If I drop the cake batter, I need to wipe it up. So, I have to be careful while holding the bowl.

## **It teaches failure**

It teaches them to accept success and failure equally and learn from both. Sometimes, the same recipe produces different results. It allows us to analyse and consider what worked, what went wrong and what one can do differently next time. A key life skill that goes beyond just cooking.

## **It improves their creativity**

While cooking is a science, it’s also an art form. Once your child has mastered the basics, playing around with recipes will help unleash his/her creativity and you might even be delightfully surprised by the results. It encourages teamwork, communication and collaboration. When there is more than one person in the kitchen, they learn to communicate, take turns and follow instructions.

## **It encourages them to try new foods**

Picky eaters tend to be less picky when they are involved in the process from shopping to cooking. Children are sensorial learners. The more they touch, feel and taste, the more accustomed they will get to different types of food. It has the added advantage of teaching your child about nutrition at a young age. It’s an easy way to discuss the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, proteins and dairy and what value they bring to your diet.

## **It develops their self-confidence and self-esteem**

If they can create a dish all by themselves, it reinforces their belief in themselves. That proud feeling of “I did this” or “I can do this” is a powerful tool to tap into.

Above all, it is a great opportunity to bond as a family. It’s a fun way to spend time together and teaches them skills that will useful for the rest of their lives. And even if they don’t end up cooking, they will definitely appreciate the effort that goes into putting that meal on the table. That’s a win-win for all.