

The benefits of cooking with preschoolers:

- **Social-Emotional Development:** Hands on cooking activities help children develop confidence and skill. Following recipes encourages children to be self-directed and independent, it also teaches them to follow directions and develop problem-solving skills.
- **Physical Development:** Fine motor and eye-hand coordination skills are developing by chopping, mixing, squeezing, and spreading.
- **Cognitive Development:** Cooking encourages children's thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. It also allows children the opportunity to use the knowledge they have and apply it by counting, measuring, following a sequence, following directions, and cause and effect.
- **Language Development:** Cooking offers the opportunity to develop language development by linking it to all other areas, including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Arts, and Literacy. This is done by encouraging children to talk about what they are doing, counting, and watching materials change color, texture, and medium.

What is the teacher's role?

There are many things that a teacher can do while cooking with children

- First and foremost your job is to make sure there are safety protocols in place to protect the children from harm.
- Make sure the food is handled in a sanitary way, and that proper hand washing procedures are in place.
- Engage children in conversation.
- Describe what children are doing.
- Ask questions about where food comes from.
- Pose questions to encourage children to talk about what they are doing.
- Make observations.
- Model positive behaviors.
- Ask probing questions to encourage children to think logically and problem solve.

What types of recipes are appropriate for your classrooms?

- They should be hands-on and developmentally appropriate.
- You should have all the supplies and tools needed for the cooking experience.

- You should have adequate staffing to provide close supervision of the cooking project.
- The recipe should promote healthy food choices.
- The recipe should feature seasonal and local produce that can be found in gardens or local farms.
- The recipe should be affordable for all families and use ingredients that most families have access to in their home.

Tips for introducing recipe's to children:

- Prepare a recipe chart with photos describing each step.
- Have ingredients in their raw form for children to smell, taste, and feel.
- Have all equipment, tools, and ingredients prepped and ready.
- Read the recipe aloud, discussing as you go.
- Discuss safety and sanitary measures with the children during before and during the cooking experience.
- Include children in the clean-up process.

To make sure the cooking projects are developmentally appropriate refer to the following list:

- Two-year-olds are learning to use the large muscles in their arms and are able to do the following activities:
 - Scrubbing vegetables and fruits
 - Carrying unbreakable items to the table.
 - Washing and tearing vegetable greens.

- Three-year-olds are learning to use their hands and should be able to do the following activities:
 - Pouring liquids into batter
 - Mixing batter or other dry and wet ingredients together.
 - Shaking a drink in a closed container.
 - Spreading butters or spreads.
 - Kneading dough.
 - Washing vegetables and fruit.
 - Serving foods.
 - Putting things in the trash after cooking.

- Four and five-year-olds are learning to control fine motor muscles in their fingers and should be able to do the following activities:
 - Juicing oranges, lemons, and limes.
 - Peeling some fruits and vegetables.
 - Scrubbing fruits and vegetables.
 - Cutting some fruits and vegetables with a child-safe utensil.
 - Measuring dry ingredients.
 - Mixing ingredients.
 - Setting the table.
 - Cleaning table after cooking.
 - Clearing table.

The most important thing to remember is to have fun with the children as they have those learning experiences and learn about the joy of cooking.