



Age-Appropriate Cooking Tasks

Kids love to help prepare food. In addition, the more involved they are in harvesting and preparing healthy foods, the more likely they are to eat them. Of course, the ways kids can be involved will depend on their dexterity, their ability to follow directions, and their age and experience.

The following is a list of age-appropriate food preparation tasks brainstormed by teachers attending Life Lab workshops. These are all recommended for supervised groups of about six children at a time.

Grades K-2

- Cracking eggs
- Crumbling
- Cutting soft items (with scissors or nylon Curious Chef knives; you can parboil carrots and other hard veggies to make them softer)
- Grinding
- Juicing
- Kneading
- Mashing
- Measuring (you can pre-measure and then have each child measure part, knowing that the entire amount will eventually get mixed in)
- Picking off stems
- Presentation (decorating with flowers, for example)
- Pushing buttons (on a blender, for example)
- Rolling/Wrapping
- Scooping
- Spinning salad
- Spreading
- Sprinkling
- Squeezing
- Stirring
- Tearing leaves, etc.
- Using an apple peeler
- Using an egg separator
- Using a food mill
- Using a mortar and pestle
- Washing (you can give each child 1-2 leaves)

Grades 3-6

- Blending
- Chopping, slicing, dicing, and mincing with round-tipped steak knives
- Collecting compost
- Doubling or tripling recipes
- Grating
- Reading recipes
- Sautéing
- Seasoning
- Washing

Grades 7-12

With appropriate supervision and instruction, children in this age group are generally capable of just about any task described in a recipe. Cooking with this age group also provides us with excellent opportunities to teach or reinforce their learning of math skills, such as adding or multiplying fractions or graphing food waste over time. For on-going cooking instruction, children this age can start to improvise in the kitchen or use their own ideas to improve upon recipes.