

# A Letter to Families About Cooking

Dear Families,

Cooking is an important part of our program. When children cook, they have opportunities to learn about nutrition, to be creative, and to prepare their own healthy snacks. Cooking teaches a lot of academic skills, too. When children learn to follow picture recipe cards, they develop skills for reading and writing. Measuring ingredients gives them a lesson in math. Whipping egg whites and melting cheese are lessons in science.

When children cook, we talk a lot about what they are doing and why. They are scientists, observing what happens to flour when they add water to it and predicting how high we should fill a muffin tin so the batter doesn't overflow.

When we prepare the special foods of each family, your child learns to appreciate the cultures of everyone in our class. Perhaps you have some favorite family recipes that you would like to share with us. Please give them to us at any time. We will like it, too, if you come to our Cooking area and introduce the class to your child's favorite foods.

Cooking is a very special part of our program. It is one of the few activities children get to do that is also done by adults. In their dramatic play, children pretend to be grown-ups who make and serve meals. They also read books and sing songs about food, but while cooking, children actually behave as grown-ups.

## What You Can Do at Home

Cooking is already a part of your home life, and involving your child does not have to be difficult. Including your child may take extra time, and there may be more of a mess than when you cook alone, but there are many rewards. Your child will be learning literacy, math, and science skills by helping you. In addition, cooking sets the stage for lifelong healthy eating habits. When children help prepare their meals, they tend to eat better.

Start your child on simple tasks like stirring batter, squeezing lemons, adding spices, or shaping meatballs. Discuss what you are doing together while cooking. Ask questions like these:

“What happened to the butter when we heated it?”

“How should we get the flour into this cup?”

“Did we get all the juice out of that lemon? Let's push down on the lemon together and see what happens.”

The beauty of cooking with children is that they learn skills and have fun at the same time that you are attending to a household task. What could be better than that?