

## GET THE KIDS INVOLVED WITH MEAL PREP AND FUN!

Having children around the kitchen may seem like a scary and messy task! However, there are so many benefits to having children in the kitchen that it deserves a second chance!

### Benefits of involving children in the kitchen:

- Increased likelihood of trying new foods;
- Practice with reading recipes, handling foods and using utensils;
- Experience working with others and sharing;
- Exposure to safe food handling practices (e.g., washing hands and dishes);
- Quality time that the whole family can participate in;
- Learning skills and information about foods and meal planning;
- Saved time for parents and caregivers.

### Simple tasks children can do in the kitchen:

- Help with cleaning vegetables and fruits;
- Measuring out ingredients with cups and spoons;
- Spreading or pouring batters or mixtures;
- Tearing, shredding or crumpling foods with their hands (e.g., lettuce);
- Mashing certain soft foods (e.g., potatoes, bananas);
- Add ingredients to a bag with their spices or herbs and let children shake it up!

Lastly... **Make it special!** Get them their own apron, set of measuring cups or a personalized cutting board and watch them get *EXCITED* about cooking! Getting kids involved in the kitchen will help create healthy habits for the future.

## Hands-On Recipe Ideas:

- **No-Bake Granola Bites** (for recipe, see <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/foodinchildcare/recipes.html>): Let children measure and pour ingredients into the mixing bowl; encourage them to use their hands to form individual balls. This can get messy, but they'll love getting in on the action!
- **Ants on a Log:** Practice spreading cream cheese or peanut/nut butter on a piece of celery or carrot. Add dried cranberries or raisins as ants on their logs! This is a snack kids can help with when you're in a rush!
- **Open-Faced Sandwiches:** Allow children to use different colors of vegetables or condiments to make faces, shapes and images on toast. Use egg salad or hummus as a base. This is a great way to try new foods!
- **Cookie Play Dough:** Skip the cookie cutters and let children use their hands to shape cookies into their favorite animals, letters or geometric shapes. Older children can use forks or dull knives to add texture and detail to their cookies!
- **Explore the Kitchen:** For the younger kids that can't help much around the kitchen, introduce them to different objects every week. Simply describing measuring cups, spatulas and pots and pans can promote interest in cooking and being in the kitchen!

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