FN1534 (Reviewed Nov. 2026)

Family Meal Times

Issue 9

Invite Kids Into the Kitchen

At the Family Table

Working together in the kitchen can be a satisfying experience for parents and kids. The kitchen provides a perfect learning environment for children while providing a bonding experience for parent and child. Cooking together can be a recipe for building relationships and learning important life skills.

Benefits of Cooking With Children

Cooking with kids takes time, effort and patience, and can be very messy at times. The food may not look as attractive as when you do it yourself; however, the benefits make it well worth the effort. Kids learn some important lessons along the way:

- Basic cooking skills, including cleanup
- Reading and math skills as they read recipes and measure ingredients
- Eating healthfully
- Self-confidence
- Self-care and personal responsibility
- Following directions and cooperation



Learning is not the only benefit children receive while cooking with parents. Studies show that children also are less likely to abuse drugs in the future as a result of spending time with their parents while they are young.

Safety Comes First

Cooking is fun and safe as long as you teach your kids these tips:

- Wash hands for 20 seconds before and after cooking and after handling raw meats or uncooked eggs.
- Rinse fruits and veggies thoroughly with cool, running water before preparing or eating.
- Avoid sneaking tastes of any food that includes raw ingredients such as eggs.
- Use dry pot holders when working with warm foods or liquids.
- Closely supervise the use of knives and other kitchen tools and equipment.

Take time to follow these few tips and you and your child are well on your way to a great cooking experience.

A Memory of Family Meals

"During the holidays, my mom would always let me put red or green food coloring into the cookie batter. I loved seeing my "art" come out of the oven!"

NDSU | EXTENSION

North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota

Food and Family Q&A

Question: ***I have three great kids, ages 3, 6 and 9, who love to help in the kitchen. What are some jobs they can help do?***

When considering what jobs your child can help do in the kitchen, always consider safety. Try making a pizza such as the one in the recipe we've provided. This easy recipe gives your children the opportunity to help in the kitchen.

For example, allow your 6-year-old to start by spreading the pizza sauce onto each of the tortillas. This can be a difficult task, so remember to be patient. Next, your 3-year-old will have fun sprinkling cheese on each pizza. This could get messy, but remember to be understanding. Once they each have put on the toppings they desire, allow your 9-year-old to carefully put the pan into the oven, with your help, of course. As your children continue to grow older, you may give them more responsibility in the kitchen. Be sure that each child also gets a cleanup task. Be creative.

Quick Tip: Try a game after dinner tonight. See who can clean up his or her place setting the fastest. Dinner cleanup will be done in a snap, and you will have more time to spend with your family.

A Family Meal Recipe

These tasty individual pizzas create a great opportunity for letting your child help in the kitchen. Let each child make a personal pizza with whichever toppings they like.

Personal Pizzas

4 (8-inch) tortillas
1 (4-oz.) can tomato or pizza sauce
1 clove garlic, minced
1½ c. mozzarella cheese, shredded (part skim)
Chopped veggies of choice, such as colorful bell peppers (green, yellow, etc.) or mushrooms
1 small onion, sliced
Any other toppings (Canadian bacon is a low-fat meat option)
Italian seasoning (optional)

Preheat oven to 400 F. Lay tortillas on an ungreased cookie sheet. Spoon tomato sauce over each tortilla. Top with minced garlic. Next, sprinkle each pizza with an equal amount of mozzarella cheese. Layer the cheese with peppers and onions and any other vegetable or toppings you like. Bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly. Serve.

Makes four servings.
Each serving has 300 calories, 10 grams (g) fat, 17 g protein, 34 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 360 milligrams sodium.

Menu Idea: Personal Pizza, cucumber slices, halved bananas and low-fat milk

Developed by:

Kendra Otto, Former Practicum Student, Human Development and Family Sciences
Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist
Sean Brotherson, Ph.D., Family Science Specialist

Eat Smart. Play Hard. Together

For more information about food and families, visit this NDSU Extension.website: **www.ndsu.edu/eatsmart**

NDSU Extension does not endorse commercial products or companies even though reference may be made to tradenames, trademarks or service names.

For more information on this and other topics, see www.ndsu.edu/extension

North Dakota State University is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Requests for accommodations related to disability may be made at 701-231-1865.
Revised August 2016; web-12-21; web-11-26