

Physical development – How cooking activities support the development of fine motor skills

Cooking activities give children lots of opportunities to develop and practise their fine motor skills



Cooking is a life skill that all children should have the opportunity to learn and fun cooking activities give children lots of opportunities to practice and extend their fine motor skills through the development of co-ordination and control needed to use kitchen tools effectively. Opportunities to engage in cooking activities also help young children to experience a varied and balanced diet and to maintain a healthy weight.

Some children will come to your setting already experienced in cooking but others will have had little experience. Use your own judgement to plan activities that are suitable for each child as they progress from mastering simple actions to more complex ones. Always encourage children to work as independently as possible with adult support for hot or more complicated stages.

	Skill progression	Experiences to support development at this stage
Beginning...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washing vegetables Stirring ingredients Mashing with a fork or potato masher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage water play with a range of cloths, sponges, brushes and objects to wash. Provide different sized bowls, jugs and spoons with wet and dry resources – sand, rice, gravel etc. for children to mix and stir and opportunities to combine ingredients using a spoon. Provide forks and mashers with foam, soft jelly, playdough etc. so that children can practice using basic equipment.
Then Moving On...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cutting soft ingredients Pouring or spooning ingredients into scales Kneading, rolling, shaping and cutting dough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide appropriate knives for children and encourage them to chop a range of soft fruit and vegetables for snack time. Also provide opportunities for children to use a knife for spreading butter etc. Offer different sized measuring spoons, jugs and bowls and opportunities for children to practice pouring ingredients between them. Provide large and small sieves for children to explore during sand play and offer opportunities for children to shake flour into bowls when cooking. Provide rolling pins, cookie cutters and jelly moulds for children to use with dough.
To More Complex Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grating ingredients Rubbing in flour and butter with fingertips Beating cake mixture and folding in egg whites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular sustained time for children to become deeply engaged with the process of cooking as they further develop their coordination and control in using a widening range of equipment effectively e.g. crushing garlic using a garlic press; peeling fruit and vegetables with a vegetable peeler; arranging ingredients on a kebab stick. Provide a range of experiences which encourage different and particular skill development: making scones for rubbing butter into flour; meringues for whisking; bread for kneading. Let children practice cracking eggs, splitting the shell into two halves and dropping the egg into a bowl! Involve children in planning and preparing food for events such as family breakfasts or afternoon tea. This will demonstrate children's food preparation skills to parents and help to promote food children are enjoying in the setting.

Stories about food and cooking

- Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley
- Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert
- Handa's Surprise by Eileen Browne
- Mama Panya's Pancakes by Mary and Rich Chamberlin
- Spot's Harvest by Eric Hill
- The Little Red Hen by Byron Barton

Food related songs and rhymes

This is the way we...

('Here we go round the mulberry bush')
This is the way we pick the fruit...
This is the way we wash the fruit..."
This is the way we chop up the fruit..."
This is the way we eat the fruit..."

Five little peas...

Five little peas in a pea-pod pressed,
One grew, two grew, and so did all the rest.
They grew and they grew ...and did not stop,
Until one day the pod went ...POP!

Home learning ideas

- Families could be asked to contribute a recipe to make a setting recipe book.
- Cookery bags, containing a recipe card, basic equipment and a related story could be taken home for families to cook together
- Some family members might be willing to come and help with cookery sessions or to lead a session by cooking a recipe which is special to them.

Equipment you may need

Mixing bowls	Whisks
Measuring jugs	Scales
Wooden spoon	Aprons
Spatulas	Kitchen timers
Rolling pins	Vegetable peelers
Graters	Oven trays
Chopping boards	Tin opener
Potato masher	Plastic table cloths to wipe clean
Hand blender	Cleaning kit!

Useful websites

BBC Good food have a guide to the cookery skills children can learn by age:

www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/guide-cookery-skills-age

Families can sign up for 'Cook Together' then every week for 4 weeks they will get 2 healthy recipes – with videos, easy-to-follow instructions and a shopping list of everything you'll need sent straight to their inbox.

www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes