

A LETTER TO FAMILIES ABOUT COOKING

Dear Families,

Cooking is an important part of our Curriculum. When children cook, they have an opportunity 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 they need to read and write. Measuring 1 cup of flour and pouring 1/4 teaspoon of lemon juice into batter gives them a lesson in math. Whipping egg whites into meringue and melting cheese under a broiler 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 we 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'd like it, too, if you could 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. Children pretend to be grown-ups making meals in their dramatic play. They can read books and sing songs about food. But in cooking, children can actually behave as grown-ups.

What You Can Do at Home

Since cooking is already a part of your home life, think about involving your child. Including your child may take extra time, and there may be more of a mess than if you cooked alone, but there are many rewards. Your child will be learning literacy, math, and science skills just 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 put it in the microwave?

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 you are attending to a household chore. What could be better than that!