

# get cooking

A pint-sized sous chef makes mealtime more fun (if a bit messier!). Here's how to keep you both smiling.

g etting kids involved in meal prep is a win-win. You'll turn them into more enthusiastic eaters now, and help them develop the cooking skills they'll need when they're older. But before your child starts tossing the salad or mixing the batter, be sure to set a few ground rules for safety: Kids should always wash their hands before touching food, and should never go near a stove or sharp tool without getting permission from you first. Now, go make something delicious!

by Marygrace Taylor  
Photographs by Nicole Hill Gerulat

# COOKING WITH KIDS, BY THE AGES

Unsure what your child can do? Every kid is different, but these guidelines are great starting points.

AGES 2 to 3

● Introduce your little one to the kitchen through play foods or utensils, and talk about what you're doing while you cook. She can help by using her hands as tools: Encourage her to tear lettuce for salads, arrange pepperoni or mushroom slices on a pizza, or sprinkle herbs over a finished dish.

AGES 4 to 6

● Enlist his assistance in counting and measuring, as well as stirring or whisking. He can also begin to cut very soft foods, like fruit or soft cheese, with a butter knife. And when a button on an appliance needs to be pressed, that's his chance to shine. (But only when you say, "Go!" Be sure to remind your child that without the magic word, those buttons are off limits!)

AGES 7 to 10

● Bring out the tools! She can use a vegetable peeler to remove the skins from carrots, potatoes, or apples, and start shredding cheese with a box grater. With your supervision, she can also begin using a paring knife to cut softer foods, like tomatoes.

AGES 11 and UP

● You can supervise while he stirs soups, sauces, and sautés on the stove. Just be sure he keeps a safe distance: "Make it a rule that he always has to stand at arms' length," says Beth Bader, author of *The Cleaner Plate Club: Raising Healthy Eaters One Meal at a Time*. You can also help your tween or teen get acquainted with larger knives: Start him with a serrated knife to slice bread or tomatoes. When he seems ready, introduce him to the chef's knife. Break foods down into manageable pieces or slices, and watch while he cuts them into a smaller dice or chop.

## Need a hand getting food on the table?

Here's how to bring your child on board when making these everyday recipes.

	PERFECT FOR KIDS BECAUSE...	HOW THEY CAN PITCH IN
<b>SALAD</b> 	It's simple: Kids are more likely to eat those good-for-them vegetables if they help prepare them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Washing veggies</li> <li>● Tearing lettuce by hand</li> <li>● Measuring and adding whole ingredients like nuts, cherry tomatoes, or pre-chopped broccoli or cauliflower florets</li> <li>● Whisking or shaking salad dressings</li> <li>● Chopping or slicing ingredients (older, more mature kids only—and with adult guidance)</li> </ul>
<b>PIZZA</b> 	There's little to no chopping needed, and the only step involving heat is sliding the pie in the oven to bake (which you can do). Plus, everyone loves to pick out toppings!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Measuring and kneading, if you're making the dough from scratch</li> <li>● Rolling out pizza dough (and giving it a toss, if they're feeling adventurous!)</li> <li>● Spreading sauce over the dough</li> <li>● Sprinkling on cheese and adding other fun toppings</li> </ul>
<b>SMOOTHIES AND DIPS</b> 	It's fun to see whole ingredients transform into something different with the help of a blender or food processor. "In my cooking classes, kids love seeing the colors and textures change when foods are pureed," says Lisa Suriano, a nutritionist who founded Veggiecation, a nutrition education program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Counting, scooping, and measuring ingredients</li> <li>● Putting the lid on the appliance and (after you inspect and say Go) pressing the "on" button</li> <li>● Using a spatula to scrape down the sides of the blender or processor, when needed</li> <li>● Transferring smoothies into serving glasses</li> <li>● Transferring dips into serving bowls and setting out dipping foods, like whole grain crackers or baby carrots, on a platter</li> </ul>
<b>COOKIES, MUFFINS, AND QUICKBREADS</b> 	What makes a sweet treat even more enjoyable? Knowing you made it yourself!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Measuring ingredients, adding them to bowls, and whisking</li> <li>● Cracking eggs and mixing with a hand- or stand-mixer</li> <li>● Pouring batter into a prepared pan, cutting shapes with a cookie cutter, and dropping cookies onto a cookie sheet</li> </ul>

### GOT A GREAT LITTLE COOK IN YOUR KITCHEN?

He or she could win big in KIWI's Next Great Young Chef contest! Enter to win thousands of dollars in prizes by May 31. Learn more at [kiwimagonline.com/chef2012](http://kiwimagonline.com/chef2012).

## Make-'Em-Your-Own Recipes

The two recipes on these pages are perfect for budding chefs: Once you and your child have mastered the basics, you can add your own ideas to make them special for your family. What else would taste great in the granola? What's in the fridge that might be fun in the quesadilla? You won't know until you try!

### honey nut granola

**Active time:** 5 minutes

**Total time:** 50 minutes

- 4 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups salted, skin-on peanuts
- ½ cup sesame seeds
- ½ cup large-flake unsweetened coconut
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup safflower oil
- ½ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups golden raisins

**PARENT:** Preheat the oven to 325°. Set out two rimmed baking sheets.

**PARENT & CHILD:** Measure the oats, peanuts, sesame seeds, coconut, and salt. Together, add the ingredients to a large bowl.

**CHILD:** Use your clean hands to toss all of the ingredients together in the bowl. Make sure you've mixed everything up well!

**PARENT & CHILD:** Measure the safflower oil in a measuring cup and add it to the oat mixture, then measure the honey and add that to the mixture, too. (Measuring the oil first will coat the inside of the measuring cup, keeping the honey from sticking when you try to pour it out.) Finally, measure the vanilla extract and add that to the bowl.

**CHILD:** Use a big spoon (or your hands, if you want to get messy!) to mix all of the ingredients. You want to make sure everything looks like it's well-coated with the oil and honey.

**PARENT & CHILD:** Transfer the oat mixture to the two baking sheets.

**CHILD:** With a spatula, spread the oat mixture so it's evenly distributed on the baking sheets. If you have any big clumps, they won't cook all the way through!

**PARENT:** Bake the granola for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lightly golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.

**PARENT & CHILD:** Transfer the granola to a large bowl. Add the raisins and mix well to combine. Eat now, and store the rest in an airtight container for up to a week.

#### Makes about 8 cups

Per ⅓ cup serving: calories 247, fat 14 g, protein 6 g, carbohydrates 37 g, dietary fiber 5 g



## cheddar-black bean quesadilla

**Active time:** 10 minutes

**Total time:** 10 minutes

- 1 10-inch whole wheat tortilla
- 1 green onion
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons cooked black beans
- 1 teaspoon safflower oil
- Salsa, for dipping (optional)

**PARENT:** Place the tortilla in the microwave for 15 to 30 seconds to warm it slightly.

**PARENT & CHILD:** On a cutting board, supervise your child while she chops the green onion into small slices with a butter knife (older kids may be able to use a paring knife). Set aside.

**PARENT & CHILD:** Measure out the cheese and black beans.

**CHILD:** Place the tortilla in front of you. Add the cheese to one half of the tortilla and top with the black beans and chopped green onion. Fold the empty half of the tortilla over the top to form a half circle.

**PARENT:** Warm a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the safflower oil, swirling it around so the entire pan is coated.

**PARENT:** Place the quesadilla in the skillet. Press firmly on the top with a spatula to help the bottom brown evenly. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, flip, and cook 1 to 2 more minutes, until both sides are golden brown. Transfer the quesadilla to a cutting board.

**PARENT & CHILD:** Supervise your child while she slices the quesadilla into 4 pieces, either with a butter or paring knife. Serve hot, alongside salsa for dipping, if desired.

### Makes 1 quesadilla

Per quesadilla: calories 316, fat 17 g, protein 13 g, carbohydrates 30 g, dietary fiber 6 g



**SAVE** Composting's super easy (and cute!) with the Ceramic Countertop Compost Container that fits neatly on your countertop. (\$65, with 10 biodegradable, compostable BioBags; \$13 for 50 extra bags, [uncommon goods.com](http://uncommongoods.com))

## Eco-tools for chefs of all ages



**RINSE** The sturdy Preserve colander has a smart design that makes it easy for even little hands to grip. It's made from 100 percent recycled plastic (and it's recyclable). BPA-free? Of course. (\$13, [preserve products.com](http://preserveproducts.com))



**MEASURE** The bamboo fibers in the Melaboo Measuring Cups will stand up to all the cookie-baking you do—but will also biodegrade in a landfill. Plus, the bright colors make it super easy to tell if kids are using the right cup to measure the flour! (\$10, [bambeco.com](http://bambeco.com))



**MIX** The Architec EcoSmart Purelast Mixing Bowls are made from a plastic alternative that's created from natural and recycled components. Kid bonus: A non-slip base that keeps the bowls from flying to the floor. (\$30 for three, [cheftools.com](http://cheftools.com))