

Kids in the Kitchen - Keep the Kids Busy this Weekend

Looking for something different to keep the kids busy this weekend or during the school holidays? Forget video games and takeaway pizza - why not encourage them to conjure up a carrot cake or beat up an omelette?

Cooking is one of the most fun and constructive activities you can share with your child: it unleashes their creativity, sets up healthy eating habits and teaches them a valuable survival skill for the future. If you teach your kids to cook now, they will eat well for life.

When cooking with kids, design the menu according to their age and level of kitchen skills. "Children should tackle [recipes](#) appropriate for their age, both in terms of their abilities and their taste buds," says Chris Chandler, cooking guru at The Chefs Toolbox, a party plan company specialising in high quality [kitchenware](#). "With careful supervision, cooking can be just like an edible craft project. If you're looking for some ideas, you'll find some great kids' recipes on our website, www.chefstoolbox.com.au".

The most important thing to consider before letting kids loose in the kitchen is, of course, their safety. To avoid nasty cuts and burns and to make for a more enjoyable cooking experience, Chris has put together some hints and tips to help you child-proof your kitchen.

Bon appetit!

Kitchen safety tips:

- Ensure that your young chef is appropriately dressed for the experience with close fitting clothing and hair tied back.
- Only use one row of burners at one time to avoid children reaching over the hot stove top.
- Turn all pot handles inwards, towards the stove top, to prevent kids accidentally knocking over the pot or pan.
- Only fill pans half to three quarters full so they are not too heavy to move.
- Use silicone utensils for children under 12 – they are safe for kids and they won't melt in the pan like plastic does. If possible, give your young chef their own set of [kitchen utensils](#). The Chefs Toolbox makes a range of suitable kitchen tools for kids.
- Make sure you use small knives appropriate for little hands. A paring knife would be a good choice.
- Use a timer to make sure foods don't get overcooked (or forgotten!).
- Ensure that dirty knives go on the counter or drain board and never in a sink full of water.
- Make sure appliance cords don't dangle off table edges.
- Check that everything is switched off after cooking is finished.

Cooking activities by age:

Age: Three to four years

Abilities: Wash fruits and vegetables, Stir ingredients in a bowl, Grease pans, Mash foods

Food projects: Mashed potatoes, Cooked playdough, Cake/biscuit decorating

Age: Five to six years

Abilities: Measure ingredients, Cut soft foods with a dull knife, Peel oranges and softboiled eggs, Toss salads, Set the table

Food projects: Easy, no-chop salads, Cupcakes

Age: Seven to eight years

Abilities: Spoon and shape cookies, Beat ingredients with a whisk, Pour muffin and cake mixes into pans

Food projects: Baked cookies and cakes (without using the oven), Sandwiches, Pancakes

Age: Nine to twelve years

Abilities: Use an oven under supervision, Use a sharp knife under supervision, Stir sauces

Food projects: Spaghetti bolognese, Homemade pizza, Simple stirfry, Sushi, Homemade bread

About the Author

The Chefs Toolbox specialise in quality [cookware](#) and [kitchen utensils](#). For more information about The Chefs Toolbox visit www.chefstoolbox.com.au

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