

Toddlers

As babies grow into toddlers, they will be ready to help out a bit more. Take advantage of their natural curiosity by getting them interested in kitchen tasks. Allow your toddler to assist you by:

- washing fruits and veggies
- ripping greens into bite-size pieces
- removing herbs from stems
- stir the pancake batter
- sprinkle in the spices
- use a pastry or basting brush (not with hot foods)
- load and unload spoons and forks in the dishwasher
- wipe counters with a soapy rag
- hold the dustpan for you

Preschoolers

At this age, kids will be developing their fine motor skills. They have a strong desire to do it themselves! You may hear, "Mommy! I do it!" Allow them to help you with supervision, here are a few suggestions:

- Set the table
- Mix things
- Learn to use a plastic knife for lettuce, bananas, avocados and other soft foods
- Peel eggs (after they've cooled to the touch!)
- Load dishwasher with unbreakable items
- Measure dry ingredients and level
- Put icing on a cake
- Start using a rolling pin for pie crusts, and cookies

Elementary Age

- Help put away the groceries, what goes in the freezer, fridge, or pantry and how to store food items.
- Use tools such as garlic press and can opener.
- Slice bread or cut into cubes, grate cheese, peel cucumbers and carrots, thread food onto skewers, and grease baking dishes.
- Use a mixer and cook on the stove with supervision.
- Load and unload the dishwasher, run a sink of soapy water, wash dishes by hand.
- Shape meatballs or burgers by hand.
- Make simple dishes like blondies, brownies, grilled cheese, scrambled eggs, or mac-n-cheese from a box
- Put things on the table. Yes, children have been setting the table for centuries, but also have them take the condiments you'll need, a pitcher of water, etc.
- Toss a salad together. If you buy bagged lettuce they can dump it in a bowl, top it with some cherry tomatoes, or whatever you like and put that on the table, right? Even if you buy whole head romaine, kids can rip it up into a bite-sized salad without help.
- Put ingredients away. After we measure out our baking soda, salt or whatever, the energetic little people can carry them back into the pantry.

Teenagers

- Learn to make a grocery list including items that need to be replenished and items for upcoming meals
- Plan a meal or meals
- Create a meal plan and grocery list according to a budget (older teens)
- Look for health recipes and follow instructions to create a dish
- Have a "signature dish" maybe Teriyaki Chicken or a particular Lasagna dish
- Know how to read a food label and determine which foods are healthiest and which are junk food