



Healthy Options that  
Promote Excellence

## Youth in the Kitchen

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**Life skills such as meal planning, shopping at the grocery store, and meal preparation are essential tools for youth.** In the United States, the childhood obesity epidemic is a serious issue. Obesity among children and adolescents is at an all-time high. In 2019-20 Louisiana ranked number three with 22.2% of youth ages 10-17 who were deemed obese.

**Early exposure in the kitchen allows youth the opportunity to lead a healthier lifestyle through family bonding, self-sufficiency, and a hands-on learning experience.** It also teaches life-long lessons and increases knowledge and skills. Topics include food safety, math, science, cooking terms, how to read, follow instructions, and prepare nutritious meals and snacks. Youth will be more willing to try new and different recipes when they have had a hand in cooking the food items.

**There is no age limit on when youth can start assisting in the kitchen.** Allow your adolescents and youth to be your Sous Chefs to help prepare meals. Be sure to establish kitchen rules, provide frequent reminders, and keep childproof latches on drawers or cabinets with sharp tools and objects.

**Finally, HAVE FUN!**







## KITCHEN TASKS FOR YOUTH

### AGES 2-5

- Wipe tabletops
- Wash fruits and vegetables
- Tear lettuce or greens
- Break cauliflower or broccoli into pieces
- Carry ingredients from one place to another
- Knead and shape dough
- Mix or pour ingredients
- Shake liquids in a covered container to mix them
- Apply soft spreads
- Put things in the trash

- Peel oranges or hard-boiled eggs
- Mash bananas or cooked beans with a fork
- Cut parsley and green onions with kid-safe scissors
- Set the table
- Measure ingredients

### AGES 6-8

- Use simple kitchen equipment
- Make their snack
- Use the microwave
- Rinse items

- Create an easy recipe
- Write out the grocery list

### AGES 9 AND OLDER

- Prepare simple recipes
- Use a knife to cut foods with parental guidance
- Place leftovers in containers and refrigerate
- Use a timer or thermometer
- Knead the dough and let it rise
- Use an oven or stove with parental guidance
- Plan a menu

References:  
Childhood Obesity Facts | Overweight & Obesity | CDC  
Obesity Rates for Youth Ages 10 to 17 - The State of Childhood Obesity  
Parent Tips: Getting Kids in the Kitchen (nih.gov)

Kids in the Kitchen - Minnesota Department of Health (state.mn.us)  
[https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/cooking\\_with\\_children.pdf](https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/cooking_with_children.pdf)  
Kids in the Kitchen: The Benefits of Cooking with Children (thegrowingroom.org)



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