

TEN TOP TIPS TO GET YOU COOKING



1. START WITH A SIMPLE RECIPE

It doesn't have to be cakes or biscuits but a lot of children start with these because they are simple and have a few easy steps. Soups, salads, risottos, stirfrys, mashed potatoes, omelettes and even ice cream can be just as fun. Try and start with vegetable or fruit recipes rather than meat, particularly if you are cooking with younger children.

2. GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME

If you are trying something new or cooking with children expect it to take a bit longer than usual. A good rule of thumb is to double the preparation time it says in the recipe.

3. JOBS FOR THE KITCHEN HANDS

Washing, grating, peeling, cutting, mixing, sifting, whisking, measuring, pouring, stirring.. Even simple dishes can involve lots of different activities. Try to make sure everyone has a go at something. After all it's far more fun to be doing than just watching. And don't forget tasting for everyone!

4. SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY

The whole point of cooking is to enjoy eating what you've made - preferably together with family or friends. So why not make something that can be eaten for breakfast, lunch or dinner? Cakes are fun, but serving your family one of their main meals will put a smile on everyone's face. And imagine how proud young chefs will feel when they feed the whole family.

5. HAVE A CLEAR, CLEAN KITCHEN TO WORK IN

Clear the kitchen table and make some room on the counter tops. An uncluttered space will help keep you calm and focused and will make clearing up afterwards much easier.

6. GET SOME INSPIRATION

Whether it's opening a recipe book, going on-line, shopping for ingredients, watching a TV chef or asking somebody you know who loves to cook, it helps to pick up as many tips as you can. Think about what you fancy eating and find a photograph of the finished dish to get your mouth watering.

7. BE ORGANISED

Cooking is fun, but stress levels can rise if you're not organized. If you are using a recipe, make sure you read it through at least twice before starting to cook anything. Ingredients need to be prepared before they go anywhere near a hot pan, so line up everything you need so that it's all chopped up and ready to go.

8. GIVE YOUR OVEN TIME TO HEAT UP

If you need to use the oven, turn it on to the right temperature before you do anything else. It takes about 20 minutes to get an oven to temperature and often the recipe won't remind you to turn it on!

9. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Unless you are baking, most dishes won't suffer from in-exact measurements. A "handful" of something is a guideline for many dishes, so if you add a little too much or a little too little don't throw it all away. Be careful with the salt though - as once you've put it in, you can't take it out. Taste as you go and add salt and pepper at the end.

10. SERVE WITH A FLOURISH!

Presenting your dish well can make all the difference. Find a nice serving dish, lay your table ready for your guests, wipe any splatter marks off the edges of plates with a damp piece of kitchen towel and present with a flourish. A sprinkling of chopped herbs can make savoury dishes look pretty professional.

COOKING IDEAS

