

Food Families

COOKING WITH AND FOR YOUR KIDS

ELECTIVE MODULE

This module was developed in collaboration with



COOKING WITH AND FOR YOUR KIDS

Module Component	Details
Topic:	Cooking With And For Your Kids
Time Required:	120 minutes
Objective:	The objective of this module is to provide parents with the encouragement, confidence, and skills to cook in healthy ways for their children. The module will also provide parents with age appropriate ways to include children in the food prep process.
Learning Outcomes:	By the end of this session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize their kitchen to prepare for cooking with their children • Identify age appropriate ways to include their children or other family members in the food preparation process • Introduce new ways to encourage their children to try healthy recipes • Cook at least one new recipe
Materials Required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipe ingredients and cooking utensils and equipment
Preparation Required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare foods for Ice Breaker activity • Choose two or three recipes and prepare the food for the cooking activity
Budget Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator – \$30/hour for cooking/consulting • Recipe ingredients – \$200.00
Handouts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How To Organize Your Kitchen Like A Chef • Age Appropriate Tasks In The Kitchen • Fun And Delicious Recipes You Can Make With Your Kids • Tips For Getting My Kids To Try New Food
Sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Chefs • Ad Hoc At Home • Eat Right Ontario • Cook Smarts • Familykitchen.ca



Module Component	Details
Summary Instructions: A = Activity P = Presentation Q = Question(s)	P Welcome (5 minutes) A Ice Breaker Activity (15 minutes) P Organizing Before You Cook (15 minutes) P What Can My Kids Do To Help? (15 minutes) A Preparing Kid-Friendly Recipes Together (40 minutes) P Tips For Getting My Kids To Try New Foods (20 minutes) A Evaluation And Wrap-Up (10 minutes)



MODULE CONTENT

Part 1 – Presentation: Welcome And Agenda (5 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slide 3-4 – Welcome the group to the Cooking With And For Your Kids elective module.

- Ask the group questions about their most recent module and whether they have been able to implement what they learned. Let a few share their examples and stories of success.
- Share the agenda for today’s session
 - Ice Breaker
 - Organizing Your Kitchen Before You Cook
 - What Can My Kids Do To Help?
 - Cooking Together
 - Tips For Getting My Kids To Try New Things

Part 2 – Activity – (15 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slide 5 – For this activity, you will want to make sure your participants don’t have a phobia for trying new foods. If anyone is afraid to get involved in the activity or has a certain food allergy (e.g. nuts), please encourage him or her to participate by watching or helping. You want everyone to engage in the activity as much as possible. Don’t let them off the hook if they don’t have a legitimate reason to not be involved.

Objective Of The Activity: To have participants eat and identify new foods.

How to play:

- Transition the group into pairs (people they are comfortable with).
- Set up chairs in two straight lines, with the one line of chairs facing the other line so the pairs will be able to see each other and work together.
- Provide blindfolds for one person in each pair. All blindfolded participants should be sitting in the same side/line of chairs with their partners sitting directly in front of them facing them (with no blindfold).
- Once the participants have their blindfolds, provide the other part of each pair with a plate of food that they will offer their partner.
- One food item at a time, the facilitator of the game will encourage the sighted partner to provide their blindfolded partner with the specific items on the plate. Encourage the sighted partner to place the food item in the hand of the other partner.
- Have each blindfolded person eat the same thing so the entire group is experiencing the same thing at the same time.
- Ask the blindfolded participants if they know what they are eating.



- Have glasses of water, napkins, and a couple of garbage bags/bins available.
- Once the first group has finished their 4 or 5 items, switch and have the other partner put on the blindfold.
- Provide a new plate of different foods for the second round.

Here is a list of some items you may want to include on the plates:

- Pistachios
- Edamame (basically an under ripe green soybean)
- Dried plums
- Apricots
- Pumpkin seeds
- Jerky
- Kale chips
- Smoothie drink (put in small cups)
- Protein bars
- Cucumber
- Carrots
- Chick peas
- Baby spinach
- Plain Greek yogurt
- Dark chocolate (be careful if they have a caffeine concern) – you may be able to get more authentic dark chocolate at a local market. The less processed the better.

ASK:

- How did you feel when you knew you were going to be trying foods without knowing what it was?
- How many tried a food item that was brand new for them today?
- Was there anything you didn't enjoy with your first taste? Would you try it again?
- How do you think your children feel when you place new food in front of them?

Script:

Children thrive on consistency, and this is especially true with food. One of the reasons most kids enjoy fast food is because they know exactly what to expect each time. A McNugget meal at McDonald's is the same in every city, every time they order it. Any little difference for a child, or anything new can create a negative feeling or response. Something as "simple" as the carrots being cut bigger than the last time can throw them off and make it something they don't like or don't want to try.



Do your best to set your child’s expectations as early as possible. Surprises at the dinner table might just create the fight you don’t want. Throughout the course of this module, we are going to begin to provide a number of ideas and tips on how to begin to involve your children in the kitchen as early and as often as possible, while also working to get them to be open to trying new and healthy foods.

Part 3 – Presentation – How To Organize Your Kitchen Like A Chef (15 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slides 6-8 – Being organized before one cooks is an important part of making sure the cooking process goes well. The following part of this module will outline a number of ideas and concepts to consider and implement before you cook with your kids. It will be helpful to teach them these rules as well.

ASK the participants why they think it is important to be organized before they start cooking.

- Everyone will be able to focus more carefully if there is no clutter or mess.
- With clearer focus, food gets seasoned properly and food will be less likely to over cook, burn, or boil over.
- You will cut down on unplanned trips to the grocery store in the middle of your cooking because you will already know which ingredients you have or need.
- Being organized creates a level of calm, which will help when working with your children.
- Cooking will be more efficient, easier, faster, and more successful if you prepare in advance.

Give the Organizing Before You Cook handout to each participant and walk through the handout.

Script: When you cook, do you ever find yourself running to the fridge or pantry continuously looking for ingredients? Does your kitchen look like a tornado has ripped through it after each meal? Here are a few tips that will help you and your family members clean up your act and get dinner on the table a bit faster every night.

1. **Run your home kitchen like a restaurant kitchen** – Restaurants can only successfully prepare hundreds of meals each day because they have a plan, functional workspaces, and an assembly line approach. And many restaurant kitchen spaces are not much bigger than your kitchen.
 - a. Clear out your dirty dishes so you have a washing station.
 - b. Have your prep station, where all the chopping happens, as close to the washing station as possible.



2. **Start with a clean kitchen** – Piled up dishes, potato peelings, packaging from food, and random items spilling all over the counters can create a level of stress and frustration. Take some time to clean up so you don't feel like running away from your kitchen. It can also be dangerous to have a dirty kitchen when you begin to cook, as disease can be spread in many different ways. Protect your family by making sure all your kitchen utensils, equipment, counters, and cutting boards are clean.
3. **Use prep bowls** – Prep bowls will help you keep everything separate, allow you to know where to find everything when you need it, and allow you to transport it to the washing station should your kitchen space not allow you to chop items right beside the sink. As you move through the various parts of the recipe, you will have all the ingredients at your fingertips.
4. **Gather everything you need before you start** – Running back and forth to the different areas of the kitchen is not a productive or effective way to use your time or keep you focused on the appropriate steps of your recipe. Gather all the ingredients, spices, and tools (e.g. cutting boards, knives, pots, pans) you will need and have them within reach.
5. **Re-organize your kitchen to optimize stations** – Having what you need readily available when you need it will make cooking for you and your kids a much more pleasant experience. You will want to have your prep bowls near the prep station, so you can easily access them if you need more. At your "make" station, you should have your drawer of tools, including tongs, spatulas, and wooden spoons. You might also look to have your main seasonings and spices sitting on the range or in a close cupboard so you can easily grab what you need without any hassle.
6. **Find ways to use fewer dishes** – Most people don't love doing dishes, so do everything you can to reuse dishes or look for ways to minimize the use of dishes. Instead of seasoning your soon-to-be roasted potatoes in a separate bowl, move them right from the cutting board to the foil lined baking sheet (which of course will be right there ready to go). Once they are on the baking sheet, season them there. You will have saved yourself one more bowl to wash and have one less bowl in the way.
7. **Have a trash bowl/bag at your prep station** – Place a large bowl, plastic bag, or compost container at your prep station. All food trash can go right into it so you're not running back and forth between your trash can and your prep station. This will save lots of time. Be aware of any food items you may be able to compost and items you might be able to recycle before throwing them out.



8. **Clean up as you go** – There is often time during the cooking process when you're waiting for a pot to boil or the onions to soften. Use those spare minutes to return items to their home, deposit dishes or utensils in the sink or dishwasher, and wipe down counters.

ASK the participants if they have any additional tips for organizing their kitchen for cooking.

Part 4 – Presentation – What Can My Kids Do To Help? (15 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slides 9-13 – This section of the module is all about helping parents understand that there are many opportunities for children to play a role in the kitchen. The goal is to provide some age appropriate tasks that can be implemented into everyday use in the kitchen.

Script: How comfortable would you feel as a parent if your four year old child, who had never been in the pool before, was put in a swimming class with teenagers? You'd be scared. You'd be angry. You'd wonder what the instructor was thinking. It doesn't even make sense. Four year olds couldn't possibly do the same things in the pool that 15 year olds could.

It's exactly the same in the kitchen. Children of different ages have different capacities and abilities. It is important to know what your children should be capable of doing, while finding tasks and activities they will enjoy and with which they can find some success.

ASK the participants to share the ages of their children.

ASK the participants to share some of the ways their children already help in the kitchen.

- Do you think some of the tasks are too difficult for your children?
- Which tasks do they seem to enjoy the most?
- Do they typically eat more of the dinner if they have helped prepare it with you?

Provide the handout of age appropriate kitchen tasks and highlight the various elements of the document.

Cooking with kids at any age can be fun and easy. If kids start having fun in the kitchen from an early age, chances are, they will keep up these habits as they grow older. The more a child participates in the kitchen, typically, the more open they will be to tasting and trying new foods. Within each of the age categories, tasting has been included, as this is an important part of a bigger process.



Here are some of the main highlights of tasks that children should be able to do while working in the kitchen:

1. **Cooking With 0-1 Year Olds** – For the first few years, the best way to involve the little ones may be by having them observe and be with you as you cook.
 - a. Bring them in the kitchen while you cook
 - b. Set them up somewhere safe (e.g. in a highchair or playpen)
 - c. Let them play with a few utensils like wooden spoons or measuring cups
 - d. Let them smell and touch some of the ingredients and tell them what you are cooking
 - e. Once old enough, let them taste some of the ingredients

2. **Cooking With 2-3 Year Olds** – Children of this age like to explore using their senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. They are also quick to let you know they can do it themselves. They will need lots of instruction and supervision, but will do most tasks with great enthusiasm. Be ready to let them try some of the following:
 - a. Wash fruits and vegetables in the sink
 - b. Add items to dishes (e.g. cheese to the omelet)
 - c. Smell different spices and seasonings as well as different foods (e.g. lemons, squash)
 - d. Help find ingredients in the fridge, pantry, or cupboards
 - e. Put paper cups into muffin tins
 - f. Pour dry and liquid ingredients into bowls
 - g. Scrub potatoes
 - h. Brush oil or butter with a brush
 - i. Sprinkle salt or herbs
 - j. Mash vegetables
 - k. Stir batter in a bowl
 - l. Sweep the floor or hold the dust pan
 - m. Put dishes in the dishwasher or sink
 - n. Taste ingredients as you cook, along with eating the cooked dish



3. **Cooking With 4-5 Year Olds** – This age group is quickly learning to use their fine motor skills, so this is a good time to advance the opportunities and give them more detailed work. They will likely still need lots of help and supervision, so be patient. You could have them:
- Cut soft foods with a plastic knife
 - Roll out and knead pizza or bread dough
 - Juice lemons and limes
 - Crack an egg
 - Measure and level dry ingredients with a straight edge
 - Spread butter and jam
 - Set a timer
 - Whisk a vinaigrette
 - Peel a cooled hard-boiled egg
 - Set the table
 - Rinse dishes that aren't too heavy
 - Clean the countertops
 - Taste ingredients as you cook, along with eating the cooked dish
4. **Cooking With 6-8 Year Olds** – By this age, children have learned a lot of the basics and are ready for more complicated tasks, and ready to try out some of the kitchen equipment. Each child is a bit different, so only you will really know when your child is ready to use a small knife or the stove. This is also a good time to have your child reading the recipes with you. Try some of these tasks:
- Use a small paring knife
 - Cook with you at the stove
 - Use a can opener or garlic press
 - Peel fruits and vegetables
 - Grate cheese
 - Whip cream with a hand mixer
 - Grease a baking pan
 - Scoop batter into muffin cups
 - Scrape down the mixer bowl
 - Make simple cold spring rolls or tortilla wraps
 - Toss salad ingredients together with a dressing
 - Write the grocery list
 - Put their own breakfast together
 - Slice bread
 - Help put the groceries away
 - Load and unload the dishwasher
 - Taste the ingredients as you cook, along with eating the cooked dish



5. **Cooking With 9-12 Year Olds** – Kids at this age are more coordinated and able to understand appliances. Try letting your kids:
 - a. Cut cooked meats, cheese, and tofu
 - b. Use the microwave with your help
 - c. Make their own school lunch
 - d. Make a fresh fruit platter to go with dinner
 - e. Use the stove to make basic recipes like pancakes, soups, or grilled cheese
 - f. Decide what is needed to balance out a meal so it has food from each food group
 - g. Taste the ingredients as you cook, along with eating the cooked dish

Part 5 – Activity: Prepare A Recipe (Or Two) Together (40 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slide 14 – This activity is an opportunity for the parents to prepare a few recipes that will be quick and easy and could be prepared with their children. You may want to have two or three stations set up and have the group rotate through. You should be able to do these in 15 minute increments if you choose three recipes and have some of the ingredients already prepared.

Provide the Fun And Delicious Recipes You Can Make With Your Kids handout

- Let the group know we are going to try a few of these recipes together.
- As the facilitator, you can decide which recipes might be easiest to work on together.
- Have fun with it and show the parents how they can involve their children.
- Be sure to enjoy some tasty food.

Many people learn by “doing,” so this activity will provide your participants with greater confidence to try these particular recipes at home with their kids.

These specific recipe options may be some of the easier ones to do with the group:

- Apple Blueberry Muffins
- Baked Parmesan Zucchini
- Personal Pizzas

Part 6 – Presentation: Tips For Getting My Kids To Try New And Healthy Food (15 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slide 15-16 – Every parent has, at some point, dealt with a battle at the kitchen table. This next section of the module is all about providing parents with a number of tips that can be used to find ways to get their children to try new food and eat more than just chicken strips and French fries.



ASK the participants:

- What did you used to do as a child to make sure you didn't have to eat something you didn't want?
- What story can you share of a food battle you have had or are having with your child/children?

ASK the participants:

- What tips or tricks have you used to try and encourage your children to try new foods or to eat the healthy options?
- Which ideas have had the most success?

Provide the Tips For Getting My Kids To Try New Food handout and go through the ideas with the group.

The following are the tips/tricks that are included on the handout:

1. **Try to stay calm** – The more worked up you become, typically, the more frustrated they will become. Try not to make the dinner table a war zone... that is no fun for anyone involved. Keep in mind that as much as you may want your child to eat their broccoli or brussel sprouts, you probably also want to make your family dinner time a happy place, not a nightly fight.
2. **Reduce snacking before dinner** – Most would believe that a hungry child is more willing to try something new or eat the healthy food they may have turned their nose up at in the past.
3. **Don't make them eat an entire serving** – When bringing new foods to the table, it is important to introduce variety, cultivate curiosity, and encourage healthy eating. It is less important with new food to worry about whether or not the child ate an entire serving. Encourage them to try one bite. In many houses, the rule is to try at least one bite or there will be no dessert. Don't make a big deal of it either way.
4. **Make it a habit** – Be intentional and plan to regularly introduce new foods to your children. They are more likely to open up and try new things if it is presented to them often. If they only see a new vegetable once every few months, there is a greater chance you'll have a fight on your hands.
5. **Let them help** – If children help in the kitchen and in the garden, they are more excited and willing to try the food they have helped prepare or have helped water and harvest from the backyard. Kids take on a real sense of ownership and enjoy being a part of the process. They may even encourage others around the table to try new foods because they have a vested interest in the process.



6. **Don't offer substitutions or make special kids meals** – This is a challenging one, and one that many parents may struggle to give up. If your child knows there is plain pasta waiting for them if they don't eat the "new stuff," there is very little incentive or motivation to try what they don't know. Many parents also worry their children will go to bed hungry if they don't give in and give them something before they go to bed. Kids will eat when they are hungry, so do your best to not default to the yogurt or peanut butter sandwich.
7. **Eat new foods and enjoy them yourself** – Eating new foods is contagious. Be sure to set a good example for your kids, even if the cooked carrots make you a bit nauseous. Have a few bits and be appreciative for all the food on the table.
8. **Start at the store** – When your children are still young, find a way to get them interested and engaged in the produce aisle at the grocery store. Show the kids the different colours, describe how different vegetables and fruit grow, and let them put some things in the cart. Introducing it at the store will make it easier to put it on the table at home.
9. **No complaints rule** – If there are older children at home, look to enforce a no complaints rule. The younger children will learn by example and follow everyone else at the dinner table.
10. **"I don't like it" rule** – Along the same vein as the no complaints rule, the "I don't like it" rule says that no one is allowed to say they don't like a certain food until they have tasted it at least 5 to 10 times. It is not unusual to be a little wary the first time you eat something. By trying it multiple times, children may begin to enjoy the taste. Don't let them off the hook after one bite. Ultimately, let your children know that it's okay to not enjoy a certain food, but remind your children that it is also okay to eat food when you are hungry that may not be your favourite item.
11. **Try soups** – Some parents swear by this technique for getting their kids to try new foods. Purees are good ways to introduce new flavours and it's easier to throw in a few small bits and bites of something new. Chicken soup with a taste of zucchini might just do the trick.
12. **Invite an adventurous friend to dinner** – Peer pressure can get such a bad rap... why not use it for good things? Sometimes all it takes is for a friend to grab a piece of broccoli for your own child to be willing to give it a try. It's also interesting what your kids will try to eat at other people's houses. Work together with the parents in the neighbourhood to get all the kids eating in a healthy way.



13. **Let them pick it off your plate** – Children are more inclined to eat foods if they see their parents eating it first. Having them graze off your plate may be a great way to get them started.
14. **Hide the veggies** – This is actually easier than most parents can imagine. It is amazing what a food processor can do to help you include healthy items in your regular everyday food. Mashed potatoes with cauliflower or a hamburger that is actually only half a hamburger is a nice way to get healthy foods into your picky eater. When hiding the veggies, you may want to keep the sizes smaller as the food is less likely to overpower the overall taste of the recipe.
15. **Set your child's expectations** – Not all fish sticks are created equally. When a child hears that you are having chili for dinner, they may have a certain idea in their head about what that looks like and how it should taste. If the fish sticks or chili are different than what they thought, you may have trouble on your hands as you sit down at the kitchen table. Don't just surprise your kids with something new or different. Try to have a short conversation with them before dinner about what they can expect. You might say, "This chili is a bit different this time because I added a few carrots" or, "These fish sticks don't have the same batter on them that you are used to, this is more of a sauce." These simple conversations before their plate is set in front of them can make all the difference in how your children respond.
16. **Taste while cooking** – Close to the time of your recipe being ready to eat, invite your children into the kitchen for a quick taste. This process helps set expectations, but can also provide an opportunity to make a few adjustments. Don't ask your child if they liked it, but ask for their advice. "Is it too sweet?" "Is it too salty?" Let your kids add a little something to the recipe to adjust the taste slightly. They will typically be much more excited about dinner, or at least willing to give it a shot, if they have played a small role in the process.
17. **Talk to your kids** – As your children get old enough to have logical conversations, you may decide to have a short talk with them about how taste buds can mature and grow and be "stretched" to enjoy new foods. Just like you can't begin playing hockey at a high level until you learn how to skate properly, children (and adults) need to exercise their taste buds over time so they can begin to enjoy new flavours. Paint the picture for your kids of thinking about trying new foods a few times as taking skating lessons so you can one day play hockey.



18. Keep as much routine as possible – Children do love routine. Routine can make children feel comfortable and put them at ease. If everything in their life is chaotic or unpredictable, they may be less willing to try new foods because what they really want to eat is what they know. Try and have dinner around the same time each evening. Sit together at the table. Listen quietly to some music they may enjoy. Let them sit at their favourite spot at the table. All of these elements can bring a sense of peace, which may open up their mind for something new on their plate.

Don't read these as individual "magic bullets." Many of these ideas work well when used together. Every child is different, and what works for one of your kids may not work for another. It may take a bit of trial and error, but do your best to stay consistent and try not to give in too easily.

Part 9 – Activity: Evaluation And Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Instruction: PP Slide 17 – Answer any questions the participants might have and hand out the weekly evaluation for them to complete.

Ask the group to share one idea they learned today that they would attempt to implement with their children in the next week.

Remind the group of announcements related to upcoming modules and have them complete the weekly evaluation.

