

# Chapter 4

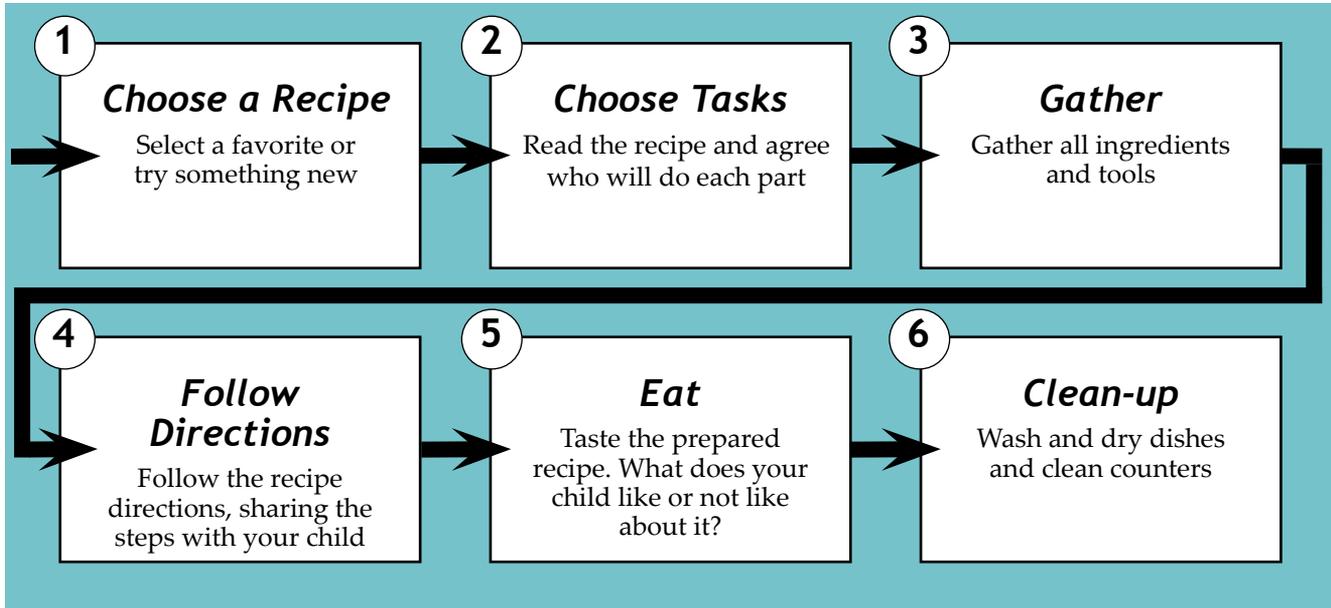
# Getting Started Cooking



# Why Cook?

Cooking is a rewarding experience. Planning your meals and budgeting your time makes it even more so. Although this book's focus is on preparing delicious, nutritious lunches, this chapter will help make cooking any meal easier. Directions for cooking basic foods such as rice, beans and pasta are at the beginning of the recipe chapter. (See pages 54-66.)

Using whole, nutritious foods and cooking from scratch will cost less and be healthier for you and your family.



# How Can Kids Help with Cooking?

When children help plan and cook, they are more likely to enjoy the results.

Recipes in Chapter 5 include icons showing the level of difficulty. The levels are explained in detail in the recipe chapter.

 Recipe is appropriate for children working by themselves.



Recipe requires adult assistance until the child can handle a knife, electrical appliances and hot items.



Recipe requires an additional level of skill.

There are many ways that even the youngest child can help.

## Getting Ready

- Help plan the menu
- Help shop
- Gather ingredients and tools

## Prepare Ingredients

- Wash vegetables and fruit
- Peel vegetables and fruit
- Wash and dry lettuce
- Tear lettuce
- Toss a salad
- Measure ingredients (learn about fractions)

## Help with Cooking

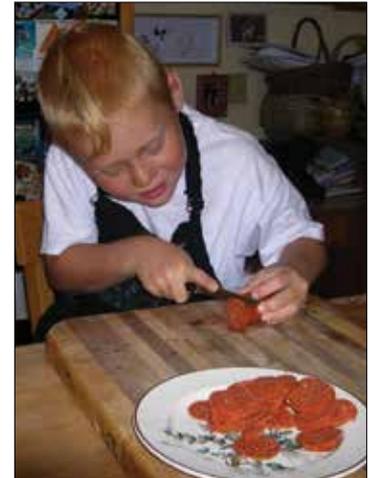
- Add and mix ingredients
- Knead dough
- Roll out dough
- Cut out cookies
- Oil pans and baking sheets
- Put cookies on a baking sheet
- Pour batter into baking dishes

## Serve and Cleanup

- Wash utensils as meal is being prepared (except for knives and other sharp tools)
- Set table
- Clear table and wash dishes

## As kids gain skills they can:

- Use a blender or food processor
- Chop and prepare more ingredients (see Kitchen Safety, page 43)
- Use the stove top to boil, sauté and fry
- Use the oven to bake



# Kitchen Hygiene

## Before you begin:

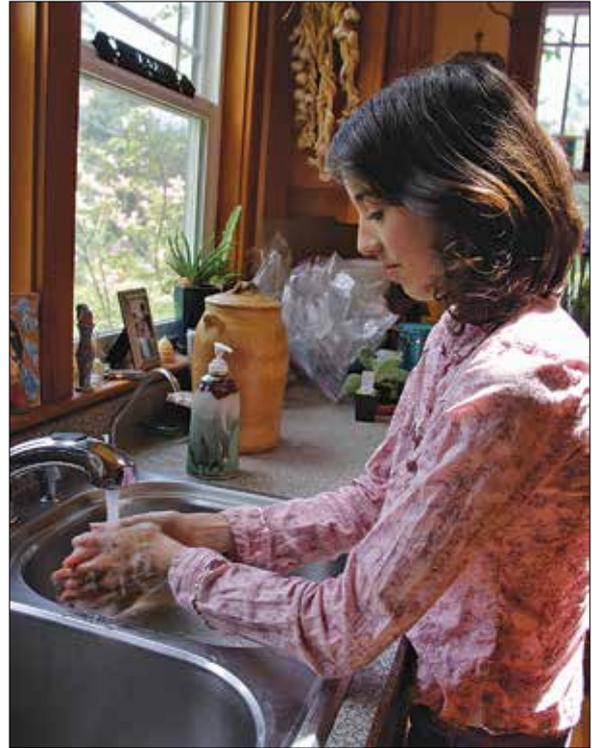
- Wash your hands with soap and water. And wash them as often as needed during cooking.
- Tie back long hair.
- Wear an apron.

## Keep It Clean

- Wash ALL produce before peeling, cutting or eating. Bacteria can linger on the skin of fruit and vegetables and be transported to the inside of the food when it's cut or peeled.
- Keep all surfaces, counter tops, cutting boards and utensils clean, to prevent illness.
- Put the sponge into the microwave for two minutes every day and replace it every two weeks. Sponges have the most bacteria of anything in the kitchen.

## Handling Meat and Poultry

- Keep meat in refrigerator until ready to use.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables.
- Wash hands after handling raw meat.
- Sanitize all surfaces with a mild bleach solution after contact with meat or fish, and particularly after contact with poultry. Use 1½ teaspoons of bleach in 2 cups of water.



# Kitchen Safety

## Knife Safety

- Always point the knife away from you.
- Keep knives sharp—a sharp knife is easier to use and safer than a dull one.
- Always use a cutting board, secured by a rubber mat or wet towel
- Use a knife that fits your hands.
- Hold the knife by the handle (not the blade).
- Hold the item you are cutting with your other hand.
- If the item to be cut is round, cut it in half or cut a little bit from one edge so that it lies flat.
- Curl your fingers under so they don't get cut.

## Other Safety Tips

- Have pot holders by the stove.
- Use a dry pot holder to pick up hot pots or pans. A wet one will transmit the heat to your hand and burn!
- If a child is too short to reach the sink or counter, have them stand on a sturdy stool or a chair (with its back against the counter).
- When cooking on a stove top, turn pot handles toward the side of the stove (and not over a hot burner) so you don't accidentally knock the pot off the stove.
- Make sure your hands are dry when you plug or unplug an electrical appliance.



# Techniques for Preparing the Ingredients

Knowledge of simple food preparation and cooking techniques is important. Special tools make many techniques easier. Food processors chop, slice, grate and shred. Blenders are useful for soups and smoothies. But all preparation can be done by hand.

## Slice



To cut across food in one direction. For larger round objects, it is easier to cut food in half, turn the flat side down, and then slice.

## Chop



To cut food into approximately equal-sized pieces. Cut in one direction, then crosscut. When foods such as lettuce or cabbage are chopped, it is often called **shredded**. Food chopped into very small pieces is called **diced**, or into tiny pieces it's called **minced**.

## Pare or Peel



To remove the skin from fruit or vegetable. Do this with a vegetable peeler, moving it away from you.

## Grate



To convert solid food into small shreds. Done with a grater or special food processor disks. Be careful not to scrape your knuckles and fingertips with the grater!

# Techniques for Preparing the Ingredients

## Whisk



To lightly whip ingredients, using a round-and-round motion. Round whisks incorporate air into eggwhites or cream; flat whisks are used to stir sauces. A fork can also be used to whisk food.

## Strain



To separate liquids from solids. Place strainer over an empty bowl and pour mixture through the strainer. Sometimes the liquid is kept; sometimes the solids are kept. For larger foods like pasta, a colander is used.

## Measure Dry Ingredients



Fill a dry measuring cup with dry ingredient; slide a straight, flat utensil across the top to level. Do not pack (Note: you **do** have to pack brown sugar).

## Measure Wet Ingredients



Set a liquid measuring cup on counter and fill to the desired level. Hold the cup at eye level and look across the cup to get an accurate measure.

# Cooking Techniques

## Steam



To cook food in a perforated container over a small amount of steaming water. The pot must have a lid to keep in steam. Inexpensive steamer baskets fit into different sized pots. Caution: When lifting lid, lift away from you.

## Sauté



To cook food in a small amount of butter or oil in a skillet, usually over medium heat.

## Simmer



To cook ingredients in liquid over a low heat. The mixture will show slight bubbling.

## Boil



To heat liquid on a stove top or in a microwave oven until it is vigorously bubbling.

# Basic Ingredients

Cooking is easier if the kitchen is stocked with basic ingredients and tools. Accumulate the items for the pantry as you need them as buying them all at once may be a big expensive.

Staples	Sauces, Oils and Condiments	Baking Ingredients	Dried Herbs and Spices*	Dairy & Eggs
Salt (Kosher or sea)	Olive oil	All-purpose flour	Allspice	Butter
Pepper	Vegetable oil	Whole wheat flour	Basil	Cheese
White sugar	Sesame oil	Baking soda	Bay leaf	Milk
Brown sugar	Vinegar	Baking powder	Chile flakes	Eggs
Bread crumbs	Soy sauce	Baker's yeast	Chile powder	Yogurt
Rice	Mayonnaise	Vanilla extract	Cinnamon	
Beans	Ketchup		Cumin	
Pasta	Mustard		Curry Powder	
Peanut butter	Jam or jelly		Dill	
Raisins	Margarine (optional)		Ginger	
Nuts			Nutmeg	
Tuna, canned			Oregano	
Tomatoes, canned			Parsley	
Soup broth or stock			Sage	
Garlic			Thyme	
Onions			Turmeric	



\*Instead of buying packages of spice mixes such as taco seasoning, make your own. Buy from bulk bins if possible—the spices are usually fresher. See the spice mixes for Cajun, Mexican, Chinese, Indian and Italian on page 193.

# Basic Cooking Tools



Bottle Opener



Can Opener



Liquid Measuring  
Cups



Dry Measuring  
Cups



Measuring Spoons



Paring Knife



Chopping Knife



Vegetable Peeler



Grater



Kitchen Scissors



Cutting Board



Spatula



Mixing Spoon



Slotted Spoon



Wooden Spoon



Tongs

# Basic Cooking Tools



Mixing Bowl



1, 2 and 3-quart  
Saucepans



8 and 12-inch  
Frying Pans



10-quart Soup Pot



Steamer



Colander



Strainer with  
Handle



Loaf Pan



Muffin Tin



Pie Pan



Covered Baking  
Dish



9 x 13-inch Baking Pan



8 or 9-inch Square  
Baking Dish



Rimmed Baking  
Sheet



Meat Thermometer  
“Instant-Read” is  
easiest to use



Pot Holders

# Nice-to-Have Tools



Serrated Bread Knife



Knife Sharpener



Potato Masher



Pizza Cutter



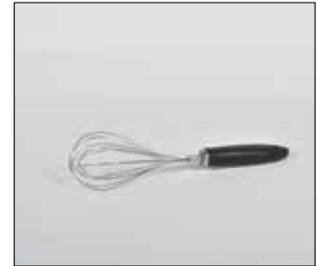
Garlic Press



Rubber Spatula



Soup Ladle



Whisk



Rolling Pin



Pastry Brush



Cooling Rack



Salad Spinner



Blender



Food Processor



Electric Mixer



Slow Cooker