

Debbie Kuening

UNL Extension Educator

“What is this?” “Do I like it?” “Why did you mix it up like that?”

Many parents will tell you that consistently finding nutritious recipes and foods that will be a hit at the dinner table is challenging. Kids typically enjoy what is familiar to them, foods they know taste good without too much guess work.

It is not a surprise that chicken nuggets are the most popular food in America!

Here are some tips to help kids get involved in the kitchen and maybe even try some new foods.

- Develop the menu with your child. Kids are generally more interested in things when they can take part in them. This is also a great time to talk about food groups!
- Find age-appropriate recipes. Look for no-cook dishes for younger kids, older children may be comfortable using the microwave.
- Involve kids in grocery shopping and have them help put the groceries away. The more familiar they are with various foods, the more comfortable they may be when the food shows up on their plate.
- Be patient with your child. Kids are very tactile and hands on and will usually want to explore

the different ingredients in a recipe. Cooking is an adventure for kids; let them have fun with it!

- Praise often. Reinforce the good behaviors your children are exhibiting and keep them excited in meal preparation and trying new things!

- Use cooking time to teach family heritage, culture and traditions. Kitchen time is a great time to connect on a different level with your kids. Talk about what recipes are popular in your family and how you learned to cook.

As always, when it comes to kids, the bottom line is to keep trying. Some activities may be total disasters at the beginning, but with time and patience can turn into quality time spent with your kids.

For more information on this topic, please contact your local UNL Extension Office or visit the UNL publication “Cooking with your Kids” at <http://ianrhome.unl.edu/home> and click on the Featured Publications option.