

Get Kids in the Kitchen This Summer!

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The month of June has been a blur as we have been hosting youth cooking classes throughout the Southwind Extension District (which covers Allen, Bourbon, Neosho, and Woodson Counties). These classes provide an excellent hands-on opportunity for youth to build their confidence in the kitchen. The summer is a great time for you to invite kids into the kitchen to cook healthy meals together at home!



The benefits of cooking together include building children's self-esteem, helping them develop small muscle skills as they complete kitchen tasks, and creating time for bonding with your children. Cooking together also helps children practice math and reading skills as they read and interpret recipes, work with fractions, and measure ingredients. Research also suggests that youth who cook have healthier dietary habits.

So, how can you get your kids in the kitchen this summer to experience some of these same benefits? Keep these tips in mind:

- **Remember that meals will likely take longer to prepare.** Do not try to cook together when you are in a hurry.
- **Teach children about handwashing.** Before cooking, you should always wash your hands with clean water and soap for at least 20 seconds. This is roughly the same amount of time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- **Have children complete age-appropriate tasks.** For example, tasks for 2-4 year old children could include using measuring spoons or pouring liquids, while tasks for 8-11 year old children could include using a vegetable peeler or whisking. To find a more complete list of age-appropriate tasks from Illinois Extension, visit bit.ly/Cooking-With-Children.

For more information, please contact me at clarawicoff@ksu.edu or 620-365-2242.