

Cookery and food activities as a context for development and learning in the EYFS

There are many ways in which learning about and through food can be linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. Just a single food or cooking activity can promote all seven areas of the EYFS and support children's holistic learning

Cooking, food activities and meals occasions provide opportunities for/support...

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Exploration, developing skills, confidence and autonomy
- Social and communication skills - taking turns, negotiating, learning to share
- Teamwork/ working with others
- Following a recipe or safety instructions
- Experiencing different foods and tastes (including those from different cultures) and overcoming dislikes

Physical Development

- Developing fine and gross motor skills through activities, such as stirring, mixing, pouring, shaking, using cutlery, washing up, etc.
- Developing hand and eye coordination and spatial awareness
- Learning about keeping safe whilst experiencing risks (e.g. cutting with sharp knives).
- Exploring different textures and using all senses (e.g. touch, smell, taste)
- Developing skills in using tools and equipment and learning how substances can be changed by tools, for example by whisking egg whites.
- Learning about and making healthy food choices

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Developing language (as they talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others)
- Introducing new vocabulary (e.g. when discussing and describing the taste, texture, size, look and smell of ingredients or food)
- Listening and following instructions such as recipes
- Teaching conversation and social skills (e.g. when sitting together to eat food), such as looking after neighbours

Mathematics

- Developing organisational skills and reasoning, e.g. by sorting, matching, and separating ingredients/foods into different types
- Developing numeracy skills through weighing, measuring, counting objects (such as counting fruit as you pop them in the pot!)
- Using a timer
- Doing things in a particular order – sequence
- Cooking presents a “real context” for the use of number – counting out the spoons of fruit, for example, correctly reading a number in a recipe, or placing or placing mixture into cases to experience division and one-to-one correspondence.

Understanding the world and expressive arts and design

- Learning about ingredients, the seasons, food from different cultures, where food comes from, how it is made, and life cycles, etc.
- Gaining first-hand experience of cause-effect relationships, and learning which changes are one-way and which are reversible (e.g. you can melt ice, but can't get flour and butter back from a cake you have baked)
- Learning about colours and shapes

Prompts to extend language

Use words to compare the things they see, e.g. bigger / smaller / taller / shorter / heavier / lighter smooth /rough /crunchy / gloopy

Group sets of objects depending on colour, length, size, shape – this will support children’s language development and mathematical understanding.

Encourage sustained shared thinking, problem solving, conversation, imagination by using open ended questions...

- How did you....?
- What do you think will happen if...?
- How can we...?
- Is there another way to...?
- Tell me about...?
- How did that happen?
- What would you do?

Key Words

Smell, see, taste, touch, hear, feel, senses, making marks, texture, rough, smooth, runny, gloopy, wet, sticky, dry, dusty, explore, investigate.

Language development can be supported by using signs and symbols.

Example healthy recipe and food preparation ideas, can be found via the following links...

Let’s Get Cooking at Home: <https://letsgetcooking.org.uk/lets-get-cooking-at-home/>

Phunkyfoods: <https://www.phunkyfoods.co.uk/recipes/>

First Steps Nutrition Trust: <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>