

Edible Education - Teaching Kids Healthy Eating Habits for Life

Written by Sharon McCormick; Photo: PhotoXpress.com



If you want to teach your kids healthy eating habits that will stick with them for life, it's simple... teach them to cook. Research shows that if kids are involved in the whole process – from picking out the groceries, helping chop and make the meals - they are much more likely to have an appreciation for healthy food and carry these eating habits into adulthood.

Here are six simple steps to get your children involved in edible education – from gate to plate – to learn more about where our food comes from and how to prepare healthy meals:

- 1. Take your kids grocery shopping.** Pick a recipe and have fun shopping for the ingredients together.
- 2. Cook together.** Choose one night a week when your children can help with the meal prep. Start simple - let little ones peel carrots or potatoes, measure the ingredients or do the mixing. Older ones can be responsible for helping chop vegetables and reading recipe directions.
- 3. Make eating an adventure.** Introduce your kids to new styles of food or a new recipe. Set the table with candles, eat on the floor picnic-style or make faces and shapes out of their food such as using meatballs for eyes and pasta for hair. A little effort goes a long way to make mealtime fun and enjoyable.
- 4. Enjoy dinner together.** Research also shows that not only is what you eat important but also how you eat it. Kids who sit down with their family for mealtimes are healthier - not to mention you get to spend some quality time together.
- 5. Take a cooking class together.** There are a number of cooking classes out there for your aspiring young chef and taking a class together is not only a good way to learn how to make healthy meals together, it's also a delicious and nutritious way to spend time with your kids. There are parent/child culinary classes offered in Calgary and area. For more details, visit www.poppyinnovations.ca.
- 6. Grow your own food.** Plant fruits and vegetables in your back yard, or if you don't have space, use planters or participate in a community garden. Children can take pride in watching their plants grow and

have fun trying some new foods fresh from the garden.

Chef Jess is the co-owner of the Bees Knees Café in Heritage Pointe. Here is a kid-friendly recipe from Chef Jess from the class, Cooking with Kids, for you to try at home:

Potato & Leek Soup

3 Tbsp. canola oil

2 leeks (white and light green parts only), thinly sliced

1 celery stalk, diced

1 carrot, diced

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. dried thyme

¼ tsp. white pepper

2 large potatoes, peeled and chopped

3 cups chicken stock

3 cups water

Garnish

¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese

2 Tbsp. chopped parsley

In large stockpot, heat oil over medium-high heat; sauté leeks, celery, carrot, salt, thyme and pepper until softened, about 8 minutes. Add potatoes, stock and water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Let cool slightly.

In blender, purée soup in batches until smooth; strain into clean pot and reheat gently. Sprinkle each serving with cheese and parsley. Serves 6.

Sharon is the founder of Poppy Innovations, a new social venture that provides a range of interactive education and fun programs across the food spectrum, from gate to plate. Empowering individuals and families to be actively involved in producing their own healthy food through gardening and cooking will pave the way for making healthy food choices.