

Holiday Food Preparation with Young Children

What better way to spend time with your family during the holidays than in your kitchen? Making tasty holiday treats with your children can be fun and educational! To ensure children have fun, yet safe time in the kitchen, check out these tips in the chart below from USDA. Tips provided are general and depending on the child, tasks may be completed at different ages.

Age-Appropriate Tasks for Cooking with Kids

2 year-olds	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds
Wash fruits and vegetables	Add ingredients	Peel eggs	Measure liquids
Break cauliflower and broccoli into smaller pieces	Scoop and mash potatoes	Help set the table	Cut soft fruit with a dull or plastic knife
Gather ingredients	Squeeze citrus fruits	Crack eggs	Use manual eggbeater
Throw things in the trash	Wipe down table and counter tops	Peel fruit like bananas	Help measure dry ingredients



Holiday Fruit Parfait

½ cup of red and green fruit such as green grapes, kiwi, strawberries, raspberries, etc.

½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Rinse fruit and pat dry with paper towel.
3. Cut fruit up into small pieces, ½ inch or less, safe enough for children under 5 years old.
4. Layer yogurt with fruit in a plastic glass. If desired, drizzle a teaspoon of maple syrup for an added touch of sweetness. Makes one serving containing 140 calories, 2g fat, 85mg sodium, 27g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 7g protein.

Choking Hazards

We need to make sure when younger children are helping that we take safety precautions. Here are helpful and simple tips to avoid potential choking hazards:

- Always keep an eye on children. Parental supervision while eating is especially important and can prevent many choking incidences.
- Have children sit down before they start eating. Walking and running while trying to eat increases the risk of choking.
- Cut your child’s food into ½-inch pieces or smaller. This will allow for easier chewing and swallowing, preventing food from becoming lodged in their throat and blocking the airway.

Sources:

1. Preschoolers, USDA's MyPlate: <https://bit.ly/3UDLUeW>
2. Choking Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://bit.ly/2EN31OZ>
3. Getting Kids in the Kitchen, WeCan Program, National Institutes of Health: <https://bit.ly/376ODxI>

This article has been peer reviewed and was updated in 2025. Check out the Food Fun for Young Children website at: <http://go.unl.edu/food-fun>