

Creative cooking for kids

Want to boost the odds that your child will eat healthy foods? Do kid-friendly activities like these.

Play with shapes. Let your youngster use cookie cutters to make shapes from food. He might be more apt to eat spinach and mushroom quesadillas if they're shaped like dinosaurs. Or maybe he'll try cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches if he gets to cut them into star shapes.

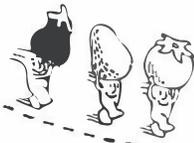
Add color. Does your child hesitate over whole grains? Try this. Ask him to squish



raspberries or blueberries in a colander and strain the juice into a bowl. Now let him stir the berry pieces, along with some whole berries, into batter for whole-grain pancakes or muffins. Be sure to save the "dye" so he can use a pastry brush to paint his cooked treat with the fruit juice!

Make pictures. Suggest that your youngster create a masterpiece on his plate. Offer a few healthy foods—including some he enjoys and others he's not as keen

on. He might make low-fat cottage cheese "clouds" and a pineapple "sun" shining down on a field of "flowers" with green bean "stems" and strawberry "petals." 🍓



PARENT TO PARENT

Smart swaps

During the spring and summer, we took fewer trips to the grocery store, which meant we didn't always have the ingredients we needed. The good news is, I learned to swap in different ingredients, and sharing my discoveries with my son Blake has helped him be more flexible about what he eats.

I asked Blake to make a chart labeled "Don't have that? Use this!" For example, when we ran out of butter to bake oatmeal raisin cookies,

I used an equal amount of mashed over-ripe bananas instead. When we didn't have pasta or ground

beef, I made couscous, stirred in pasta sauce, and heated up frozen turkey meatballs to put on top.

Each time we substitute an ingredient, Blake adds it to the chart so we remember for next time. We often discover that foods taste just as good—and sometimes even better—with a creative swap. 🍓



ACTIVITY CORNER

Aim and throw

Help your youngster get exercise and improve her throwing skills with these backyard games.

Materials: 10 beanbags (or balled-up pairs of socks), empty recycling bin or other large container

- 1. Underhand, overhand.** Have your child stand 10 feet from the bin, and set a timer while she throws the beanbags underhanded into it. Throw back to her any that land on the ground. She must catch them and throw them into the bin—this time throwing overhanded. How quickly can she sink all 10 bags?
- 2. Throwing challenges.** Ask your youngster to write five challenges on separate index cards. Examples: "Use the hand you don't normally throw with." "Lift one leg and throw under it." "Throw backward over your shoulder." Take turns selecting a card and using that motion to throw a beanbag into the bin (from 10 feet away). The first person to complete all of the throws wins. 🍓



IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For an easy, healthy approach to dinner, get the whole family involved. Just cook a batch of brown rice, and try these build-your-own rice bowls.

Put an egg on it

Add: raw vegetables (shredded carrots, baby kale leaves, diced cucumbers, thinly sliced scallions) and a sunny-side-up egg

Top with: sesame seeds and a drizzle of low-sodium soy sauce

Burrito in a bowl

Add: cooked black beans, halved pitted black olives, and low-fat shredded cheddar cheese

Top with: avocado chunks and salsa

How about some hummus?

Add: mixed oven-roasted vegetables, such as brussels sprouts, broccoli, butternut squash, and sweet potatoes

Top with: hummus sauce (slowly whisk warm water into hummus until it's the consistency of salad dressing) 🍓



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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