



FACT SHEET #4

COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Cooking with children as an activity is not just about the finished product. Children can learn many skills while cooking, without realising it, because they are having so much fun. Cooking experiences should be about the process, from choosing the recipe, preparing shopping lists, discussing the ingredients, health and nutrition, hygiene, the utensils needed and the preparation, not just the final product.

Benefits of cooking for children

- **Numeracy skills** - including counting, weighing, measuring and simple calculations when doubling recipe ingredients.
- **Literacy and communication skills** - through reading the recipe, discovering new words and discussions about healthy eating and food safety.
- **Chemistry and science skills** - including discovering food groups, making predictions, experimenting, how food grows, how food changes while cooking, the five senses and sensory exploration.
- **Cultural awareness** - through discussion of where food grows and preparation of different cultural recipes.
- **Social skills** - through working together, sharing, taking turns and problem solving. Children working together to complete the task.
- **Fine motor skills** - through chopping, whisking, kneading, pouring, mixing, cutting and rolling.
- **Self-esteem and self-confidence** – through cooking experiences, children are accomplishing a task, learning something important and contributing to the program.
- **Building relationships** - take the time to cook with children and they will have memories that they, in turn, can pass on to their families. It may take a bit longer to get the meal or snack done but the moments with the children will be priceless. Remember to have patience and don't worry about flour on the floor or the spilt milk.
- **Nutrition and healthy eating** – through cooking experiences and conversations with the children, the nutritional content of food choices can be discussed with healthy food options being encouraged. Children will be more likely to try healthy options if they have helped to make it.
- **Creativity and imagination** - Cooking experiences are a great way for children to express themselves and enjoy their creations. Particularly when making biscuits or muffins as a variety of ingredients can be included to make them individual.