



Fun in the Kitchen



Young children love to “help” in the kitchen! And, with some planning, you can make cooking or baking a language-rich experience for your preschooler.

Children who are developing their awareness of sound enjoy hearing the noise of a blender when you make a milkshake or chop food. Turn it “on” and talk about what you hear. Then turn it “off.” It’s quiet! Where is the sound? Now you have created a thinking game as your little one pushes a button and listens. Lean close to the microphone of her cochlear implant or hearing aid as you say, “on” and “off,” because the sound of your voice is just as important as the sound of the blender.

If your child is beginning to develop her speech skills, this is the perfect opportunity for vocal play. You can say, “Ooooooh” as you pour. “Mmmmm,” that tastes good! And maybe, “Oh-oh,” if you spill. Encourage her to imitate your sounds. Vocal play is fun and this is the perfect opportunity to use your voice as much as possible.

There is so much language to learn while cooking or baking. By drawing a picture chart of the steps you need for making your special treat, you can talk about “measuring cups,” “bowls” and “spoons.” The first

picture might be a bowl and two eggs. Does your child understand the concept of the number two? Having her help with baking and cooking presents a great moment for counting, too. Number concepts are very important as you think about how many cups you need to measure or how long your special treat will cook. Don’t forget to count the biscuits as you take them off the tray! Suddenly you are using some important pre-math skills!

“Mix,” “stir” and “pour” help describe the action. You use “bowls,” “spoons” and “cookie sheets.” Colors and flavors are important. Question words keep your child thinking about what you need next and where you find it. And question words help carry on a conversation as you ask, “Does it taste good?”

Time spent in the kitchen is also perfect for working on pragmatic skills. Pragmatics are the social use of language, both spoken and un-spoken. Your child is using pragmatics when she asks for information, “What’s that?” or when she makes a choice, “I want that one.” She is also using pragmatics when she initiates eye contact and smiles at you; points to something; hands you an object; or uses natural gestures. You can laugh together about inappropriate pragmatic skills if you ask her whether you should break the egg on the bowl or on your head. Your child will probably giggle as she tells you that breaking an egg on your head is silly: you always use a bowl!

Here’s a suggestion: keep your camera close by to take a few snapshots of this activity. The fun continues as later you paste each picture on a piece of paper and make an Experience Book. Your preschooler will enjoy talking with you about her special treat, and this is a perfect opportunity for her to show the book to relatives and friends while telling them about the cooking experience, too.