



Strengthening Oklahoma Families

Let Kids Help Out in the Kitchen

With the holidays just around the corner, many families are planning special meals that include many traditional favorites. One way to help keep these family traditions alive is to help your kids in the kitchen with you.

Not only will your children gain an appreciation for some time-honored recipes and family traditions, they also will develop more healthy eating habits, said Jenni Klufa, assistant state specialist with Oklahoma State University Extension's Community Nutrition Education Program.

"Obesity rates are up for both children and adults in Oklahoma. Youth obesity rates are nearly 22% and the adult obesity rate is 36.5%," Klufa said. "Healthy meal preparation is a vital life skill that should take root in childhood. Fortunately, research indicates that when youth are involved in preparing meals, they're likely to eat more nutrient-rich foods. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers guidance regarding age-appropriate skills for children to help them gain an appreciation for cooking and eating healthy."

Children ages 3 to 5 will need close adult supervision since their motor skills are still developing. However, the children will feel a sense of pride being able to help out with simple tasks. Klufa said this is a great time to teach youngsters the importance of being clean in the kitchen and always using clean utensils and wiping down surfaces. Here are some ways they can help:

- Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. Try singing Happy Birthday or Twinkle Twinkle Little Star twice as they wash hands.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in the sink with cool water.
- Wipe the table.
- Stir together easy-to-make batters.
- "Paint" cooking oil with a clean pastry brush on bread, asparagus and other foods.
- Cut out cookies, but do not eat the dough.

cont. on page 2



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In this issue

Teaching Gratitude
Co-Parenting Through
the Holidays
Sweet Potato
Casserole
OHCE News

Teaching Gratitude

It has been said that when we are trying to teach something we use words. Remembering to say “thank you” is proper. However, your child is watching you: the first and most influential teacher! So be sure to live a life of gratitude. When you model thankfulness, then your child will absorb that teaching.

Make a Medley of Thankfulness

Grab a pile of old magazines. Encourage your child to look through the pages and cut out

pictures of things she is thankful for. Glue these on one page, overlapping pictures. Soon she’ll have a visual reminder of the many blessings in her life.

Pen a Poem of Thankfulness

Together, with your child, write words that rhyme with thanks, gratitude or thankful. See how many you can come up with. At any age, this can be a fun, language-learning exercise that stretches the imagination.

Practice Gratitude Permanently

Showing thanks and appreciation does not end with the season. Help your child write thank you notes for her Christmas gifts. Preschoolers can dictate their gratitude as you write, or they can draw a picture of appreciation to give to their gift-giver. Also, find opportunities during the upcoming year to reinforce your lesson.

Kids in the Kitchen cont.

Older children, ages 6-7, have more fine-tuned motor skills so they can handle more detailed work. However, they still will need adult supervision and food safety reminders. Some age appropriate tasks include:

- Use a peeler to peel raw potatoes, ginger, mangoes and other washed fruits and vegetables.
- Break eggs into a bowl and remember to wash hands afterwards.
- Scoop out avocados after sliced in half by an adult.
- Deseed tomatoes and cooled, roasted peppers with a spoon.
- Snap green beans.
- Load the dishwasher.
- Shuck corn and rinse before cooking.
- Rinse and cut parsley or green onions with clean, blunt kitchen scissors.

“There’s a wide range of skills in children ages 8 to 9,” Klufa said.

“Depending on the child, tailor tasks

to each child’s maturity level. Also, reinforce the importance of food safety and wiping down surfaces.”

Age-appropriate skills for this age group include:

- Open cans with a can opener.
- Put leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate within two hours (one hour if it’s warmer than 90 degrees).
- Pound chicken on a cutting board.
- Beat eggs.
- Check the temperature of meat with a food thermometer – it’s like a science experiment!
- Juice a lemon or orange.

Klufa said children 10 to 12 years old can work fairly independently in the kitchen, but still need adult supervision for some tasks.

“Before turning them loose in the kitchen, assess whether they can follow basic kitchen safety rules such as turning pan handles over counters to avoid bumping

into them, unplugging electrical appliances, using knives safely and using the oven or microwave appropriately,” she said.

Pre-teens likely are able to handle these tasks in the kitchen, with some adult supervision:

- Boil pasta.
- Microwave foods.
- Follow a recipe, including reading each step and measuring ingredients accurately.
- Bake foods in the oven.
- Simmer ingredients on the stove.
- Slice or chop vegetables.

“Spending time with your kids in the kitchen is a great investment. You’ll not only create great memories together, you’ll also help them develop a love of cooking and eating healthy,” Klufa said.

Co-Parenting Through the Holidays

The holidays are an exciting time that children and parents look forward to every year. However, for families who have recently experienced divorce, the holidays can be a difficult time for a number of reasons. For these families, many of their old family holiday traditions are changed dramatically, with routines being shifted, celebrations happening before or after the holiday date, and many emotions being stirred due to the multitude of changes.

The most important thing to remember during this time is not to get pulled into resentment and sadness; always think of your children and how you need to do what is best for them. No matter what is going on between you and your co-parent, you must do the best you can to co-parent successfully through the holidays. And while it likely won't be easy, it is definitely possible with a few helpful tips on how to make the holidays work:

Don't make your children decide who to spend the holidays with.

It should not be left up to your children to decide how time with each parent will be split during the holidays. Putting your children in the middle and letting them decide will only create discomfort for the entire family. You do not want to intensify your children's loyalty conflicts. You and your co-parent should make the decision of how time will be split during the holidays.

Create a holiday plan prior to the holidays.

Co-parents should create a holiday schedule prior to the holidays to negotiate how the children will spend time with each parent. Every year may look a little bit different depending on what you and your co-parent agree on. It is important to have a conversation with your children about where they will be and help the transitions remain as smooth as possible.

Be flexible and be willing to compromise

When creating a holiday plan, each co-parent will most likely need to compromise. You both won't be able to spend the entire holiday season with your child so it is important to remember that it is in the best interest of your child to spend part of the holidays with both you and your co-parent. This may mean that one parent gets to have Thanksgiving but not Christmas one year but the opposite the next year. This might also mean that you can't spend the holidays traveling like you had once planned. It is crucial to calmly negotiate the priorities of you and your co-parent and come to an agreement about the best plan for your children.

Resist the urge to compete with your co-parent

Resist the urge to measure your worth as a parent in terms of what you can or cannot provide financially to your children. Don't

compete with your co-parent to see who will spend the most or find the best present for your child. Remember that you do not need to buy your children's love. It may also be helpful to coordinate gifts with your co-parent to try to keep the number of gifts balanced and to keep from duplicating any gifts.

Validate your children's emotions

Your children will feel a range of emotions as they experience their first holiday season in two different homes. Let them know that it is okay to feel sadness or other negative emotions and be there for them. Don't make your children feel guilty about spending time with your co-parent. If they miss your co-parent, allow them to call your co-parent during the holidays.

Start New Traditions

A divorce or separation doesn't have to mean that all fun holiday traditions should be over. Instead, come up with new ones for your family to enjoy. Allow your children to help create new traditions with each parent that will help adjust to the new family holiday season. When appropriate, old family traditions may also be continued. Think ahead, when your children grow up, what memories of the holidays do you want them to have to pass on to their own children?

Food Safety Tips for the Holidays

source: www.eatright.org

Enjoying food with family and friends is one of the highlights of the holiday season and while everyone wants to join in to help, too many cooks in the kitchen can result in an increased risk of food poisoning. Foodborne illness can cause severe and even life-threatening illnesses. Easy-to-do, safe food handling practices protect everyone in the family from getting sick.

Here are some tips to avoid common kitchen blunders when preparing meals, buffets and even homemade food gifts this holiday season. Follow these simple steps to properly handle food and reduce your risk of food poisoning:

- **Defrost carefully.** Never allow foods to defrost at room temperature, on the counter or in warm water. Defrost food only in the refrigerator, in the microwave or in a cool water bath with water that is changed every 30 minutes. When defrosting food in the refrigerator, remember to cover raw meat and place it on the bottom shelf so juices won't drip onto other foods. When defrosting food in the microwave, cook it immediately afterward.
- **Wash hands before, during and after food preparation.** Proper hand-washing may eliminate a large percentage of food poisoning cases. Remember to wash hands when switching tasks, such as handling raw meat and then cutting vegetables. Wash hands thoroughly in warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- **Keep kitchen surfaces clean.** Use hot, soapy water to wash countertops and surfaces, cutting boards, refrigerator door handles and utensils. After cleaning, keep it clean by avoiding cross-contamination.
- **Use two cutting boards.** Dedicate one for raw meat, poultry and fish and the other for ready-to-eat foods, such as fruits and vegetables. Make it easy to remember by using color-coded cutting boards, one for raw meats and one for ready-to-eat foods.
- **Employ different utensils for different tasks.** Use separate spoons and forks to taste, stir and serve food.
- **Resist temptation.** When baking, avoid eating foods containing raw eggs such as cookie dough or cake batter. Raw eggs may contain harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning.
- **Buy and use a food thermometer.** It is the only reliable way to determine the doneness of your food and ensure that food is cooked to proper temperatures. (Do not rely on "clear juices" to tell that the turkey is done.)
- **Refrigerate food within two hours of serving.** This helps to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria that can lead to food poisoning. This is especially important when serving buffets. Use a refrigerator thermometer and make sure it's set at below 40°F.



Sweet Potato Casserole

Serves 16

Ingredients:

- Non-stick cooking spray
- 8 medium sweet potatoes, diced
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp ground cinnamon, divided
- 1 tsp nutmeg, divided
- 1 cup chopped pecans, divided
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 1 cup non-fat vanilla Greek yogurt

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Lightly coat a square casserole dish with cooking spray. Set aside.

2. Fill a large stockpot with water & bring to a boil. Add potatoes, cover & cook 12-15 minutes or until fork-tender. Drain.

3. In a large bowl, add potatoes & smash with a fork. Add sugar, vanilla, 2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp nutmeg & 1/2 cup of pecans. Mix well.

4. In a small bowl, add oats, 1/2 cup pecans, 1 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp nutmeg & honey. Mix well.

5. Spread potato mixture evenly in casserole dish & top with oat mixture. Bake 15-20 minutes or until oats are crispy & dish is heated through. Top with yogurt & serve.

A vertical rectangular box containing a series of horizontal lines for writing. The lines are grouped into sections by thick black horizontal bars. There are two green ovals drawn on the page: one on the right side of the first section and one on the left side of the second section.





OHCE NEWS

ABOUT OHCE

As 2020 is coming to a close, I can't help but reflect back on the year and all the challenges we have met and overcome. I hope that we will be able to meet together in 2021, and I am proud of our membership for the ability to pivot and make things work during times of full and partial isolation.

We are co-hosting the 2021 NE District HCE Meeting. The date for this meeting has been set for March 18, 2021. We have a tentative reservation with Stroud High School to hold the meeting there, but we will be deciding whether to hold this meeting in person or virtually at the planning meeting on December 7th. Please make plans to attend either in person, or via Zoom. If you do not have zoom capabilities, call me! I can help you figure out how to use Zoom or we could set up a group zoom somewhere with a limited number of members. It is so important that our Lincoln County opinion is heard- especially if we are to host it in our county.

Lastly, I hope that we will be able to get together for our Winter County Meeting on December 3rd. We will be planning for and deciding the details of this meeting on November 19th at the Executive Board meeting. The four county executive officers and an additional representative from each local club are encouraged to attend this meeting.

Sincerely,

Jessica Riggin- Extension Educator
FCS/4-H/CED, Lincoln County

Upcoming Events

November 11- Veteran's Day, Extension Office closed

November 19, 9:30- Executive Meeting & Yearbook review

November 26-27- Extension Office closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

December 3, 10:30- Winter County Meeting, location TBD

December 7, 1:30 pm- NE District Planning meeting, Creek County office and Zoom

December 24-25- Extension Office closed for Christmas

Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.



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