

My food toolbox

BACKGROUNDER FOR EDUCATORS

Developing confidence in the kitchen and basic cooking skills - including knife skills, food safety and recipe comprehension - is the first step to encouraging kids in preparing fresh, nutritious meals from whole ingredients. People choose food based on taste, nutritional value and time; developing basic kitchen and food preparation skills with kids enables them to create delicious, healthy meals quickly and confidently.ⁱ Also, cooking is a type of experiential learning that also promotes language development, fine and gross motor skills, cooperation, following directions, and basic math.ⁱⁱ



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Kids will become familiar with tools used in the kitchen and in the garden, learn how to properly use a sharp knife and how to follow a recipe.



SPECIAL MATERIALS NEEDED

- Chart paper, markers
- Kitchen tools & matching foods
- Cut up recipe
- Blanket or table cloth



SAMPLE TIMING AND FLOW

- 10 min** Welcome, Silly Name Game, and Answer with your Feet
- 10 min** Group Rule Creation
- 5 min** Welcome to the Kitchen
- 10 min** Kitchen Toolbox, Guess Who
- 10 min** Recipe Mashup
- 15 min** Get Chopping
- 20 min** Additional Meal Preparation
- 20 min** Garden Activity
- 15 min** Meal Sharing
- 5 min** Clean-up

ACTIVITIES

WELCOME TO PLANTS TO PLATES!

We'll be trying something new in the kitchen and the garden. Each session will have a different theme. This session's theme is "My Food Toolbox," and we will learn how to use the special tools we have in the kitchen and the garden.

SILLY NAME GAME

Stand in a circle. Have everyone introduce themselves. Ask each person to say his/her name and describe her/himself with an adjective (blue-eyed Bob, Carrot Carla, Silly Sam). Once everyone has introduced themselves, go around again, saying your own name and then the person next to you.

ANSWER WITH YOUR FEET

Take a quick survey. Here's an active way to gauge what level of experience your group has with food. Clear an open space. Explain that you will be making statements about levels of experience with food. If the statement is true for you, move to the right side of the room. If it's definitely not true, then move to the left side. If you feel that it's sometimes true, then stay in the middle of the room.

Some statements to use:

- I help my parents buy groceries at least once a week.
- I am not allowed to use the stove at my house.
- I feel really confident using a sharp knife.
- I have grown a tomato plant before.

PLANTS TO PLATES GOLDEN RULES

Try to develop rules with student input. Using suggestions below as a guide, ask the kids for help in adding examples to each category. Write your rules on chart paper, have everyone sign their name in agreement, and hang somewhere visible; review at the beginning of every session.

- 1. Respect one another:** this means listening when another participant is speaking. Focusing on the likes, not the dislikes! Respect different opinions and avoid influencing others' with comments or by making faces if something is not your favourite.
- 2. Be safe:** Knives stay at the table. Wash your hands, keep hair tied back. Practice good hygiene.
- 3. Be responsible:** Clean as you go. Care for tools. Put things back where you found them.
- 4. Be an ally:** Help each other; keep an open mind (try new things!); work together.

WELCOME TO THE KITCHEN

Familiarize your group with the kitchen.

Take a walk around and point out:

- ✓ Recycling, compost, and garbage;
- ✓ Dishes and utensils;
- ✓ Fridge and freezer;
- ✓ Pantry cupboards, spice shelves;
- ✓ Sink, drying rack, dishwasher, dish towel;
- ✓ Stove.

KITCHEN TOOLBOX: GUESS WHO?

What you'll need

- A variety of foods and kitchen tools used to process these foods (e.g., garlic press & garlic clove. Lemon juicer & lemon. Potato masher & potato).
- Arrange tools around the table and cover (use a blanket or table cloth). Place foods on top on the cloth.

What to do

- Have kids try to guess what the tools are using only their sense of touch. No peeking! Ask them if they can match the tool with the food by placing the food beside the covered tool.
- Once everyone has guessed, reveal the hidden tools and go over what each one is used for.

RECIPE READING

Knowing how to read a recipe is an important kitchen skill. A recipe is like a story. It describes how and in what order you put the ingredients together. Most recipes are laid out in similar way.

Hand out a few recipes for kids to follow along.

Ask: What is the name of this recipe? How many people will this recipe serve? How long does it take to make?

Explain that a recipe begins with a list of ingredients and how much of each ingredient is needed. There are different ways to measure these quantities. For example, cups of flour, teaspoons of spice or sticks of butter. We'll be practicing measuring over the next few sessions.

Next, we have the directions. This is the order in which you mix your ingredients. It may say mix eggs, sugar and butter. How do we know how much of each? Refer back to the ingredients list.

Confidence in reading recipes can enable you to change it!

Ask: What are different ways you can adjust recipes?

If you are missing one ingredient, then what can you use instead? If you need to feed twice as many people than the recipe is written for, then how do you adjust the recipe? What about making it less sweet? How can you adjust for special diets? What about adding more local ingredients?



TIP: FOOD SAFETY

Practicing good food safety is vitally important and should be embedded into every session. An in-depth look at food safety practices is beyond the scope of this guide but thankfully many resources already exist. Brush up on your own food safety knowledge by checking out **Health Canada's recommendations**. For ideas on how to incorporate food safety into your programming check out these programs: **Chefs! Cooking program** and **Kids in the Kitchen**.



FOOD FUN FOR ALL!

Consider cultural and economic background when choosing recipes. Try to balance between introducing new ingredients and using foods and recipes that will be relevant, appealing and realistic for kids to make in the future.



TIP

Throughout the program, encourage your group to think about how they might adjust recipes, particularly with the sample recipes you're preparing. For example: How would you use more local ingredients? Make it healthier? Make it vegetarian?

RECIPE MASHUP

What you'll need:

Printed recipe that has many steps. Cut each step out individually (keep list of ingredients together as one step). Mix steps in a bag.

What to do:

Ask the kids to try to place the steps in order. Divide kids into two groups and make it a competition! Help kids along by pointing out that ingredients are most often listed in the order they are used in the recipe!

GET CHOPPING

Pick a recipe that requires a lot of chopping of a variety of ingredients. Have one cutting board and one knife per kid. Show kids how to safely carry and **hold a knife**. Demonstrate the rocking motion by keeping the knife tip down on the cutting board while cutting. Explain that this position gives the best power. Have kids first practice the cutting motion without food. Then practice on all different kinds of ingredients.

Medium-sized, softer, straight foods will be easier for younger and more inexperienced choppers. For round ingredients like carrots or potatoes, it's best to chop them in half first to create a flat surface. Explain that when cooking, smaller pieces of food will cook faster and most often, we want to cut food into similar size pieces so it will cook at the same rate.



SUGGESTED GARDEN ACTIVITY

A great way to introduce the garden is by doing a **Garden Scavenger Hunt**.



EXTRA RESOURCES

- Foodshare's **guide to cooking and tasting** has some excellent tips on how to get younger participants excited about food.
- The Ecology Action Centre's **Facilitators Guide**, although not specific to children and youth, is also a very helpful resource when planning to teach people about food.



RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

Pick recipes that involve a lot of chopping like chicken fajitas, pasta salad, soup or stir fry.



TIPS

Try modelling the knife rules and chopping techniques by intentionally breaking them. Get kids to evaluate your skills with a thumbs up or thumbs down vote. Follow up with explanations why bad techniques can be unsafe.

If there's time, then try cutting in different ways: **chopped, sliced, diced, julienned, minced**.

