



Children can help with holiday meals, activities with these tips

Many of a family's best holiday memories date to a child's early efforts to "help" with holiday preparations.

Involving even young children in holiday planning and preparation can yield special memories for the child and his or her family.

Parents are encouraged to step back, take a deep breath and focus on the family, rather than trying to create a picture-perfect holiday meal or event.

Something as simple as a parade of construction-paper turkeys with feathers shaped like tiny fingers or cookie-cutter shaped holiday trees can give a child an opportunity to pleasantly report: "I made this!"

Inviting children to help in the kitchen can be a way for them to learn about a variety of foods, food safety and kitchen skills.

Guiding a child through cooking tasks can nurture the

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relationship between the child and his or her parents and the family as a unit.

Parents and children are urged to choose simpler tasks on the day of the holiday or special event. Examples might include helping to set the table, placing previously made place cards, arranging relishes in a relish dish or placing rolls in the basket.

Since the kitchen is typically a busy place immediately before a meal, parents could try to involve children in preparing foods that can be made ahead, wrapped and stored or frozen for the holiday meal.

One favorite to try is quick bread, which ranges from basic banana or pumpkin bread to more holiday-ish recipes that include a variety of fruits or nuts.

The process begins with gathering the ingredients and preheating the oven, and offers skill-building activities such as measuring and mixing before folding in holiday flavors and spooning the batter into prepared pans.

Here are some tips to help parents make time in the kitchen an enjoyable experience for their children and themselves:

- Invite children to participate.
- Choose a time when children and parents are rested and not rushed.
- Focus on make-ahead foods that will reduce mealtime pressures.
- Choose simple recipes. If following a traditional family

recipe, explain how the recipe has become a tradition.

- Ask children to help check for and/or gather ingredients.
- Practice safe food handling, such as washing hands before and after handling foods.
- Take your time, chatting along the way. Cooking together can be educational, especially when the process is relaxed with occasional tips, rather than lectures.
- Make cleaning up the kitchen or work area together part of the process.

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Sample fresh-baked or cooked flavors together. In the learning process, some products may fall short of expectations. Praise effort - and make a date to try again.

For more information about food, food preparation, nutrition and health, contact your local K-State Research and Extension Office or e-mail me at twwatts@oznet.ksu.edu.



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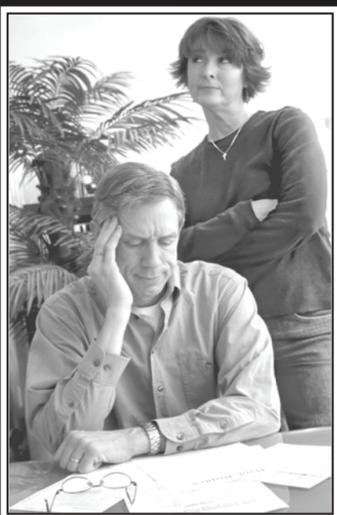
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