

TIPS FOR GETTING KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

1. Start from a place of zen. I can't emphasize this enough. If you start out stressed, you're in for a rough time. But, if you go in accepting that things will be unpredictable, and take a nice deep breath, little mishaps won't faze you.

2. Dedicate some kitchen space to a play area. A play area in the kitchen gets the kids right up close to the action, and helps them get used to the sights, sounds and smells of the cooking process.

3. Fill bottom cabinets with safe items. Kids always find their way into the cabinets. I put lightweight, inexpensive pots and pans on the bottom shelves.

4. Get kids involved in the cooking process. Yes, it can be messy and chaotic, but it opens them up to new flavors. When the kids help make something, they're excited to taste it, even if it's a brand new food. Plus it allows them to be creative and gain a greater understanding of where food comes from.

5. Use cooking as an opportunity to learn how to: follow directions - Following a recipe helps reinforce ideas about following directions, doing things in order, being patient, and stay safe-Taking a proactive approach can prepare kids for the everyday dangers of the kitchen. Basic concepts like: ovens are hot, knives are sharp, etc., can be lifesavers later on.

6. Prep ingredients beforehand. Kids will start pouring and mixing faster than you can whip out a measuring cup. I measure out all ingredients beforehand. That way, we can get to the fun, active stuff faster.

7. Embrace mistakes. There's no way around it; mistakes will be made. You might end up with a bit of eggshell in your omelet or a lop-sided layer cake, but that's a-ok. No one's trying to be Martha Stewart here. It won't be perfect, but it will be worth it.