

# MOMMY/DADDY & ME

## COOKING DEMO

WITH YOUR FLIK CAFÉ DIETITIAN

### FAMILY MEAL TIME

Family meal times are much more than sitting around a dinner table and eating food together. Research shows that enjoying more meals together as a family offers numerous health benefits – physical, mental, and emotional – to children.

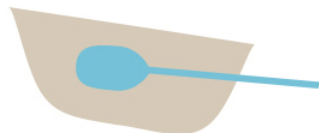
Public Health experts like that of the American Heart Association and American Dietetic Association recommend family meal times to help children eat right and feel right. While no study has revealed the exact number of family meals that are necessary for benefits, research suggests that it takes more than two family meals per week, and that five or more meals per week are probably best for children. However, when family schedules are too crazy for everyone to sit down together parents should not feel guilty – practice eating meals together as much as your schedules allow and know that eating meals as a family gets better with practice.

“Most parents look for ways to give their children an edge, but many miss an easy and often inexpensive recipe for success: eating together.”

**Sally Squire**, Lean Plate Club columnist, The Washington Post, May 2007

### COOKING WITH KIDS

Cooking with kids offers the opportunity to teach many things far beyond food and nutrition skills, such as, culture (different people enjoy different foods), real life math (doubling or halving a recipe's ingredients), organization (getting everything ready), and following directions (reading a recipe). Use these five tips to get kids involved with family meals.



## Get Kids Involved in...

### Planning Fun Meals and Snacks

Although most of us view cooking as a daily chore, kids see the kitchen as an exciting place. Everyone loves to be involved in choosing favorite dishes for meals and foods for snacks. For small children, eating becomes something more special when “I got to pick it out” – and even better when “I made it myself.”

All children need adult supervision in the kitchen. Give frequent reminders about what is okay to touch and which items could be dangerous. Talk about which kitchen tasks are for grown-ups and which are for kids. Establish kitchen rules, like always washing hands before cooking, never touching a hot stove, and using knives properly.

### Kitchen Safety

### Shopping for New Foods

Food shopping with children works best when they are rested and not hungry. Use your trip through the aisles to talk about possible meals and different ways to prepare various foods. Play games like “I spy” in the produce department or at a local farmer’s market. Encourage children to choose a new whole foods item that appeals to them– like fresh fruit or vegetables.

Children can manage different kitchen tasks at different ages. A preschooler can stir ingredients that have been pre-measured; an elementary age child can read a recipe and do the measuring and mixing themselves; tweens can learn to cut, chop and dice safely; and teens may be able to try challenging techniques from a TV cooking show.

### Preparing Tasty Recipes

### Setting an Appealing Table

Children are justifiably proud when they make even simple dishes, like a fruit salad or a sandwich, themselves. You can reinforce their success (and desire to try cooking again) by making the table setting special as well. Put their creation on a ‘fancy’ plate, light a small candle, use colored napkins, or put some flowers in a vase.