

In the Kitchen

With the holiday's right around the corner, you can turn cooking with your children into fun with reading and writing. Here are some different learning experiences you can embrace while your kids are in the kitchen:

Reading – Even before children can read for themselves, it is important for them to understand some different ways language is used. Reading a recipe aloud is an excellent way to demonstrate the purpose of an instructional text. Just keep it simple for young ones. *“Let's read the recipe. It will tell us what we need, and what to do. It says we need sugar, flour...”*

Measuring – There are so many opportunities for measuring when cooking. Talk about the different items you use to measure ingredients like cups, teaspoons and tablespoons. Show your child how the scales work when you measure weight. You can even talk about measuring time and the way the oven or microwave timer counts backwards.

Singing – We love to sing while we bake. Our never-fail song that we sing while doing pretty much anything is:

*“This is the way we...
sift the flour, sift the flour, sift the flour
This is the way we sift the flour
To ... make a yummy cake.”*

You can change the words to suit whatever you are doing at the time.

Story telling – Some children love narrating their world, and will delight in acting out the story as you tell it. *“One day, Mummy and Lily decided to bake some cookies for afternoon tea. ‘We will need some eggs,’ said Mum. So Lily got the eggs. ‘We will need some milk,’ said Mum. So Lily got the milk...”* Older children might like to narrate the story themselves! You could also tell the story of The Gingerbread Man.

Building vocabulary – There are lots of opportunities to talk about new words when you are cooking. You might talk about interesting ingredients, like golden syrup or cinnamon. You might talk about processes too like creaming the butter and sugar, or whisking the eggs. Use new words a few times so that your child can hear how the word sounds in context. For example, *“Now we need to whisk the eggs. Do you know what whisking means? We need to mix the white part of the egg and the yolk part of the egg together and beat some air into it too, like this. Would you like to try whisking the eggs...? Great whisking! It looks like those eggs are all whisked now.”*

Predicting – Let your child make predictions about what should happen next. This is a good way of helping them to understand about following a process. If your child has cooked with you a few times before you might like to be a little “forgetful” in order to allow them to teach you. For example, forgetting to crack the egg before putting it into the bowl. Or attempting to put the bowl into the oven without putting mixture into the tins.

Exploring senses – Help your child to taste, smell and touch different ingredients before they go into the mixture. Vanilla essence always smells wonderful, but doesn't taste so great!

Role play – Pretend you are chefs cooking in a restaurant. Make menus while the food is cooking. Alternatively you might imagine you are bakers, and make a shop with pretend money to sell the baked goods!

The most important thing though is that you enjoy your time in the kitchen together. Don't try too hard to make the learning happen – it should flow naturally out of what you are doing. Oh, and make sure you let your little helpers taste the rewards for their efforts (preferably while they're still warm). Mmmm....

This article is written by Catherine Oehlman who is a mother, teacher, writer, picture book lover and award winning blogger (<http://squigglemum.com>).

Reading books with young children is important in developing early literacy skills.
Here are some great Thanksgiving books to consider:

The Story of Thanksgiving by Nancy J. Skarneas, illustrated by Stacy Venturi-Pickett
My First Thanksgiving (Board Book) by Tomie dePaola
1, 2, 3, Thanksgiving! by W. Nikola-Lisa, illustrated by Robin Kramer
Albert's Thanksgiving by Leslie Tryon
Arthur's Thanksgiving by Marc Brown
The Berenstain Bears' Thanksgiving by Stan Berenstain, Jan Berenstain
Cranberry Thanksgiving by Wende Devlin, Harry Devlin
Disney's Winnie the Pooh's Thanksgiving by Bruce Talkington
Franklin's Thanksgiving by Sharon Jennings, Paulette Bourgeois, Illustrated by Brenda Clark
Gracias, the Thanksgiving Turkey by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Joe Cepeda
How Many Days to America? : A Thanksgiving Story by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Beth Peck
Molly's Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen, illustrated by Daniel M. Duffy
Pilgrims of Plymouth by Susan E. Goodman
Pilgrim's First Thanksgiving by Ann McGovern
The Pilgrims of Plimoth by Marcia Sewall
Silly Tilly's Thanksgiving Dinner by Lillian Hoban
The Story of the Pilgrims by Carolyn Croll (Illustrator), Katharine K. Ross
Thanksgiving at Obaachan's by Janet Mitsui Brown
Thanksgiving at the Tappletons' by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Maryann Cocca-Leffler
A Turkey for Thanksgiving by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Diane de Groat
Twas the Night Before Thanksgiving by Dav Pilkey
1621 A New Look at Thanksgiving by Catherine O'Neill Grace, Margaret M. Bruchac
The First Thanksgiving by Jean Craighead George, illustrated by Thomas Locker