Cooking is an educational experience for children

With the cold, damp weather, many children are looking for activities to do indoors. Cooking with your child is a great way to spend quality time together and it is a great educational experience.

When children are directly involved they can learn a lot about their world, said Deana Hildebrand, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension nutrition specialist.

Before getting started, make sure your child has a sturdy stool to stand on at the cabinet, or prepare foods at a low table. Keep in mind that an adult needs to be present at all times to provide supervision and ensure safety.

Cooking allows children to use all five of their senses. Using descriptive words to talk about what you see, feel, hear, smell and taste can help expand a child’s vocabulary. Talk with your child about the colors of foods, especially colorful fruits and vegetables. Foods often have different textures, so be sure to talk about foods that are bumpy, soft, hard and squishy.

Give the sense of smell a workout by comparing the smell of vanilla, cinnamon and garlic. Enhance listening skills by listening to the sounds of corn popping and eggs cracking. Energize the taste buds to see if foods are sweet, tart or salty.

Cooking also provides children the opportunity to develop motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Help your child feel successful in the kitchen by engaging them in age appropriate tasks.

Two-year-olds can scrub potatoes and vegetables, wash and tear lettuce, break bread into pieces, stir thin liquids such as pancake batters and gelatins, shake a drink in a closed container, clean the cutting board and put waste in the garbage after cooking.

Three-year-olds are really learning how to use their hands, so ask them to help pour liquids from measuring cups into bowls, pat brown sugar in the measuring cup, spoon flour out of the bag, spread butter or other spreads, knead dough and peel bananas. Juice citrus fruits, peel hard boiled eggs or onions, cut soft foods with a plastic knife, measure dry ingredients, press cookie cutters into dough and set and clear the table are skills geared toward four and five-year-olds.

Showing children how to read recipes from top to bottom and left to right is a way parents can help develop pre-reading skills. Measuring and counting develops math skills. In addition, cooking gives children first-hand experience at watching foods change.

One of the greatest benefits of cooking with children is increasing their interest in trying new foods. They’re more likely to try new things if they’ve helped prepare them.

Cooking can be messy. Being relaxed about messes and mistakes role models a positive attitude toward trying new things and can open the door for discussion, creativity and learning.
Tips for Recovery From HOLIDAY SPENDING

Return What You Don’t Need or Want
Exchange these gifts for items you need now or may need in the coming months, such as a birthday gift, or something you run out of regularly. Of course you can always return an unwanted gift for cash, and use it to pay down those hefty credit card bills.

Double Your Credit Card Payments
Finance charges add up faster than you can blink, and you may end up paying $50 for a pair of socks before you’re through paying off your cards. The best solution is to pay off the balance of your cards when the statement comes due, but if that is not possible, curb enough expenses to double your payments each month, at least until the holiday expenses are covered.

Put A Cap on Entertainment Expenses
In order to raise some cash to pay off your cards, put a moratorium on going out to dinner, movies, and purchasing unnecessary items. Instead, institute game night, book club, or an outdoor activity. Replacing the same old expensive fun with exciting new (free) fun helps to take the sting out of staying on budget.

Do Your Taxes
If you are one of the lucky few that actually receives a refund each year, do your taxes as soon as you receive all your forms from employers, investment companies, and banks. Use the refund to pay down debt.

Do Your Spring Cleaning Early
Spend a weekend sorting through all of those tucked away boxes and bags and pull out anything you haven’t used a while, or don’t want anymore. Take digital photos of the gently used items and put them up on eBay for auction. Another benefit of spring-cleaning is all of the “found money” lying about. Use the proceeds of your cleaning adventure to pay down holiday debt.

Make a Plan
Holiday spending can get out of hand when you don’t have a plan. Chances are, you will have the same people to buy for next year, so make a plan now for how much you would like to spend and ideas for gifts. In the coming months, take advantage of sales and pick up gifts on your list as you go. Your spending will be spread out, and you are less likely to pay full price for certain items. Remember to pay cash!

Revive the Christmas Club
The first free moment you have, go to your bank and open up a Christmas club savings account. It may sound old fashioned, but it is a simple way to save for the holiday. The bank will take out any amount you specify. Even if it’s only fifty dollars a month, by December you will have saved $600 towards your holiday expenses.

Set Up a Family Exchange
Gifts for extended family can get way out of hand, and we rarely budget for it in advance. Start talking with your family now about cutting costs. A family exchange is a fun solution most people would agree to. Each family is matched up with another family, and is given a dollar amount to spend. It takes the guesswork out of deciding how much to spend, and it can be fun to see what everyone comes up with!

The holidays are a time to celebrate traditions and family. Financial stresses put a cloud over the festivities and make it difficult for you and your family to enjoy the season and weeks to come.

Meet Cori Woelk
Extension Educator, Agriculture/4-H

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, I am Cori Woelk and I have just recently joined the Kay County Cooperative Extension Service as the Agriculture Extension Educator. I am originally from western Kansas and have lived in Oklahoma for the past four years. My educational background includes two Bachelor of Science degrees; one in Animal Science and another in Hotel and Restaurant Management.
An odd combination by most standards, but it has really served me well in many different jobs. Most recently I have been pursuing a Master of Science degree in Agriculture Leadership and Education from Oklahoma State University.

My position as an Agriculture Educator allows me to aid and assist the residents in Kay County on a daily basis. I am more than willing to help anyone who has an agricultural based question or concern. My position allows me to work with farmers, ranchers, local businesses, gardeners, home owners and all others interested in topics that are related to agriculture. Some of the topics that I can provide resources about include; soils, plants, trees, crops, ag economics, wild & domestic animals, gardens and many other ag topics. Current programs that I am working on include a Grain Sorghum meeting and the Master Gardener class. I hope to provide a wide assortment of agriculture programs to the residents of Kay County in the future. Please feel free to get in touch with me if I can be an asset for your agriculture questions or concerns. I look forward to meeting many of you in 2010.
**Who Pays for Long-Term Care?**

Long-term care is expensive. Even a temporary stay in a nursing home can derail years of careful financial planning.

**Medicare: What It Can and Can’t Provide**

Medicare is the federal government’s health insurance program for the disabled and for people over 65. Many Americans believe Medicare will pay their long-term care bills. In fact, Medicare pays only under certain conditions and only for a limited number of days.

Currently, Medicare may cover skilled care in a nursing home for (up to) the first 20 days and a portion of the cost for (up to) the next 80 days if admission follows (at least) a three-day hospital stay and the individual needs skilled care.

The “need” for skilled care is determined according to specific Medicare criteria. To receive home care benefits from Medicare an individual must also meet specific Medicare guidelines.

The biggest gaps in Medicare coverage are:

- **No coverage for “Custodial” care, either at home or in a nursing home.** (Care is considered custodial when an individual’s condition is stable, care needs have not changed over a period and care needs are not expected to change. Custodial care is care considered routine enough that any competent adult might be taught to perform it.)
- **No coverage in a nursing home unless it immediately follows hospitalization of at least 3 days.**
- **No coverage for nursing home care after 100 days.**
- **Coverage only through a facility or home health care agency approved by Medicare.**

**Medigap** plans are supplements to Medicare sold by insurance companies. They pay for some costs not covered by Medicare. They do not provide coverage from long-term care. They may provide some coverage for short-term nursing home care at Medicare-participating facilities.

**Medicaid** is a joint federal/state program that pays for health care for people with limited income and assets. To receive Medicaid benefits, the recipient must meet federal poverty guidelines for income and assets. This means that most of your loved one’s assets will need to be used before he or she becomes eligible.

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**What You Can Do to Prevent Falls**

The death rate from falling has risen dramatically for older people since the 1990’s, said federal health officials, perhaps because people are living longer with chronic conditions. People are not dying as much from chronic diseases so they’re more likely to die from a fall,” said Judy Stevens, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Falling is the 14th leading cause of death among the elderly. Many falls can be prevented. By making some changes, you can lower your chances of falling.

**Four things YOU can do to prevent falls:**

- **Begin a regular exercise program**
- **Have you health care provider review your medicines**
- **Have you vision checked**
- **Make your home safer**

**Begin a regular exercise program.** Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce risk of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like tai chi) are the most helpful. Lack of exercise leads to weakness. Ask your doctor or health care provider about the best type of exercise program for you.

**Have your vision checked.** Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision.

**Make your home safer.** About half of all falls happen at home. To make your home safer:

- **Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.**
- **Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.**
- **Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.**
- **Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.**
- **Use non-slip mats in the tub and shower.**
- **Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.**
- **Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.**
- **Wear shoes both inside and outside the house.**
**Winter Skin Survival Guide**

Nothing makes skin dry and itchy like cold winter wind and indoor heating.

The keys to battling elements are protection and exfoliation.

No matter how cold it is in the morning, resist the urge to turn up the heat in your shower. Long soaks in hot water will dry skin. Use warm water and cut down on rinse time.

Exfoliate regularly with a washcloth or gentle scrub to get rid of dead cells, but don’t rub too hard – you will only be damaging the skin.

Finally, don’t forget to moisturize inside and out. Drink lots of water and look for slightly heavier lotions or dry skin formulas, they are meant for the heavy duty help you need.

Those who engage in outdoor activities in snow climates have the problem of increased exposure to ultraviolet rays. For every 1,000 feet of elevation, ultraviolet exposure increases about 2 percent. And snow reflects about 80 percent of the ultraviolet light, compounding the problem.

**Skincare on a Ski Trip**

Since winter slopes are dry, cold and windy, sun protection and moisturizing are important. Even if it is snowing or overcast, you can still get sunburned through the clouds. Your chances of sun exposure are even greater on a mountaintop because at high altitudes, you are more vulnerable to the intensity of the sun’s rays.

Apply a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher a half hour before hitting the slopes. Look for a waterproof formula with a creamy, moisturizing base that has both UVA and UVB protection. Don’t forget your lips. Use a lip balm with sunscreen protection and apply it frequently.

**Protection from Winter Wind and Sun**

Often in winter, the humidity inside houses, offices and schools is low because of the heating system. Forced-air heating is probably the most drying (radiator heat is a little less so). When skin is dry and itchy, winter itch can occur. In the elderly, whose skin produces less oil, it is quite common.

Those who are indoors think that they don’t need sunscreen. In fact it is important for people to wear sunscreen all year. Even indoors, ultraviolet exposure can occur through car windows and cause skin problems over the years. Many people have extra sun damage on the left side of the face because of sun exposure through the car window.

If you are outside, be sure to apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before sun exposure to ensure that it absorbs into the skin. Reapply it every two hours. Keep a lip balm or protector of SPF 15 or higher, and re-use it every half hour.

**Dry, Flaky Lips**

To soothe the dry hands, make a honey paste to use overnight. Stir together one tablespoon each of ground almonds, ground oatmeal (use a spice mill or coffee grinder), zinc oxide paste and honey and one egg yolk. Rub the mixture over your hands, and recruit someone to help you into a pair of cotton gloves. Leave the gloves on overnight. In the morning, rinse your hands with cool water and feel the softness.

**Softening Cracked Heels**

Cracked heels are uncomfortable, not very pretty and during the summer months, they put a serious crimp in your shoe wardrobe. During the winter, you can hide them, but cold weather and indoor heat sap moisture away nonetheless. Your best bet is to exfoliate daily while you are in the shower – pumice stones or foot files (they are like nail files, only bigger) are great for softening calluses. Then carefully pat them dry and immediately apply a rich moisturizing cream. Curel’s skin Healing Stick looks like a solid deodorant but it is an intense moisturizer that easily targets problem areas such as your heel. Before bed, lather on a lot of slip into a pair of socks for intense healing while you sleep.

**Treating Rough Dry Feet**

Use a rich emollient cream (aloe vera is especially softening) on your feet every night, massaging the cream in well. Try a foot massage cream with a touch of mint or a hint of menthol for a smoothing fresh feeling. You would also do well to start the day with a dab of the same cream.

**Mask for Dry Skin**

Mix all the ingredients until you obtain a smooth texture. Apply and massage into skin. Keep the mask on for twenty minutes.

**Ingredient Benefits**

- **Crushed Almonds**
  - Exfoliating power
  - Eliminates dead skin

- **Beeswax**
  - Aids in adhering mask to skin

- **Wheat Germ Oil**
  - Contains Vitamin E
  - Fights free radicals
Beat the Winter Blues

Winter means less outdoor time for children and more boredom. To beat the winter blues, try some of these activities to keep little hands busy. Always supervise activities and make sure items are age appropriate for your children.

Pine Cone Bird Feeder:
- Large pine cones
- Vegetable shortening or peanut butter
- Bird Seed
- String
Smear each pine cone with peanut butter or vegetable shortening, and then roll in bird seed. Attach a string to each pine cone and hang outside.

Recycled Art:
- Used greeting cards
- Scrapes of wrapping paper
- Used bows, ribbons, and garland
- Glue
- Construction paper
Have children cut out card designs, wrapping paper, and any other left over materials in various shapes and sizes. Give each child a piece of construction paper to glue pieces on to make their own collage.

Personal Pizzas:
Get children involved in mealtime by allowing each child to create their own personal pizza. Children are much more likely to eat when they are given choices. Offer various toppings and remember to keep things sanitary by having the children wash their hands first and use spoons or tongs and individual containers. Use your imagination and have fun!

- Refrigerated biscuit dough or English muffins
- Nonstick spray coating
- Readymade pizza sauce
- Mozzarella cheese
- Various pizza toppings such as: diced ham, cooked ground beef, mushrooms, green peppers, onions, etc.
Spray cookie sheet with nonstick spray. Separate biscuits and flatten on cookie sheet, leaving space between so edges do not touch. Have children spread 1 teaspoon pizza sauce on each biscuit and top with ingredients of their choice. Bake at 400 °F for 8-10 minutes or until biscuits are light brown and cheese is melted.

What’s for Dinner?
Cooking with Slow Cookers

It is 5:30pm. What’s for dinner? Each day, millions of people are faced with this question. If no plans have been made, fast food and home-delivered pizzas start to look pretty good. While eating out occasionally is okay, meals eaten out tend to be less nutritious than those prepared at home. Plus, frequent eating out can put a dent in the wallet.

So, what’s the solution for a time-restricted, nutrition-conscious, budget-minded individual? Look no further than the slow cooker. Slow cookers are great because they essentially do the cooking while you are away.

In addition to preparing great tasting meals, a slow cooker can save money. First, it takes less electricity to use a slow cooker than an oven. Second, slow cookers don’t heat up your house like an oven (an added bonus during those hot summer days). Finally, slow cookers are a great way to prepare inexpensive, lean cuts of meat. The moist heat generated by the slow cooker makes these cuts of meat more tender compared to other cooking methods.

Another feature of slow cookers is the ease of use. For the most part, just place the ingredients in the slow cooker, plug it in, and turn it on. However if important food safety recommendations are ignored, food prepared in a slow cooker could cause a food borne illness. To reduce the risk of food borne illness, the Food Safety and Inspection Service offers the following tips for safe slow cooking:
1. Always start with a clean cooker, utensils and work area.
2. Wash hands before and during food preparation.
3. Refrigerate perishable foods until preparation time.
4. Use only thawed meat or poultry.
5. Do not place large pieces of meat or a whole chicken in the slow cooker. Instead, cut the meat or poultry into small pieces. Otherwise, the food will cook so slowly that it could stay in the danger zone too long.
6. Fill the cooker between ½ and 2/3 full. Root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes cook slower than meat or poultry so place them on the bottom, add the meat, then cover with broth or sauce.
7. Don’t peek! Every time the lid is removed, it can take 20 minutes to regain the lost heat.
8. If you are not home during the entire slow-cooking process and the power goes out, throw out the food, even if it looks done!

9. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat and poultry dishes have reached a safe internal temperature.

10. Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking.

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**Treating and Preventing Head Lice**

Head lice are something no one likes to think about or deal with. They are, however, a common problem and solutions are available. The good news is that lice are not dangerous and don’t spread disease. Adult lice are no larger than a sesame seed and brownish tan in color. They feed on blood and a rash or sore may result, causing infection if the child scratches excessively. Lice eggs (called nits) appear as tiny yellow, tan or brown dots close to the scalp. They may look like dandruff, but stick to the hair shaft and cannot be brushed out. Eggs hatch within 1 to 2 days after they are laid.

By the time you notice a child scratching, they may have had lice for some time. Watch for children complaining of “tickling” or feeling “something moving around” on their heads. To check for lice, part the hair into sections, looking especially around the ears and nape of the neck. Lice cannot jump or fly, but they crawl very quickly. Lice spread through head-to-head contact and sharing bedding, brushes and clothing articles such as hats and scarves. Pets cannot catch or spread lice.

Lice treatments are available. Pyrethrins and Permethrin are extracts from chrysanthemums available over the counter. Malethion and Lindane are prescription drugs and generally used for children over the age of 6. Check with your physician if a child has sores from scratching, as these may require a topical or oral antibiotic. It is important to administer treatments correctly in order for them to be effective and to prevent causing the child harm. You should also take the time to comb or pick out the nits before they hatch. Treatments do not kill the nits. Lice Treatments should be done only according to the timetable prescribed, as they are pesticides. There are also electric combs which will kill lice with a small shock from a AA battery.

**Tips for ridding your child of head lice include:**

- Do NOT use more than one head lice medication at a time.
- Do NOT use more than three times on a child.
- Use ONLY amount prescribed at time intervals given in directions.
- Do NOT use cream rinse or shampoo-conditioner combinations prior to treatment.
- Do NOT wash the child’s hair for 1 to 2 days after treatment.
- Do NOT use a hair dryer on hair after application (some contain flammable ingredients).
- AVOID lice sprays, as they may be toxic when inhaled.
- DO treat all family members, regardless of whether they appear to have lice.
- DO wash all bed linens and clothing in very hot water (130 degrees Fahrenheit)
- DO dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- DO dry clean any clothing that is not washable.
- DO seal stuffed animals and plush toys in a black, airtight bag for 2 weeks.
- DO vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, mattresses, and automobiles.
- DO soak hair-care items (brushes, combs, hair bands, barrettes, etc) in alcohol or medicated shampoo or place in boiling water for one hour.
- DO have parents call the doctor if a child still has lice after 2 weeks or the scalp is infected.
- DO check children for reinfestation for several weeks after an outbreak.

**IF CHILD IS 2 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER, DO NOT USE LICE TREATMENTS!!**

Schools should be notified if the infestation involves a school-aged child. Assure children that anyone can get lice and that they haven’t done anything wrong. Putting in a video or having children watch a favorite show can make the tedious process of “nit picking” less stressful for all involved. More information on head lice can be obtained from [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).
Valentine Ideas

Friendly Hearts

• First, cut many hearts of all different sizes from red, pink, and white paper. On several of the hearts write short verses or poems that you have found having to do with love or friendship. On one of the larger hearts include a short message from you (or it could be from several).
• Then go to the home of a neighbor or friend that you have chosen, preferably when they are not at home, and quickly tape the hearts all over their front door. Leave a gift bag with cookies or some other yummy treat or gift idea, “love coupon”, etc. hanging on the doorknob.
• Children especially love the excitement and fun of surprising someone on such a special day!
• You could also decorate your own child’s bedroom door so that he/she awakes on Valentine’s Day to a surprise to be excited about.

“You Warm My Heart” Cocoa Mix Treats”

• Start with a small cellophane bag with hearts or other valentine décor on them (you can also use plain bags and decorate them with stickers).
• Put in one packet of cocoa mix, mini marshmallows, and red plastic spoon that you have dipped in chocolate and let harden.
• Tie a red ribbon around the spoon with a heart shaped tag that reads, “Valentine, you warm my heart!”

Grandma’s Valentine Book & Family Handprint Tablecloth

• Start a Valentine’s birthday book for your grandchild. Present to him/her when they turn 18. In the book include one picture from every birthday and use festive Valentine stickers, scrapbooking frames, etc. to adorn the pictures.
• Also, you can make a Valentine’s Day tablecloth, using the grandchildren’s handprints forming hearts in painted colors of red and pink on a white cloth. Each year the handprints will symbolize the love you share, and they’ll grow larger over the years. They could also write 10 things they love and cherish about your family relationship on each of the fingers of the painted hands.

The Extension office will be closed on Monday, February 15, 2010 for President’s Day
If you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail rather than direct mail, please go to our website at http://oces.okstate.edu/kay and follow the link on the home page.