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," Hildebrand said. "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.

Hildebrand said 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," she said. "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 helps develop 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," she said. "They’re more likely to try new things if they’ve helped prepare them."

Hildebrand said 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.
Aim for a Healthier Heart
This February

During the month of February, hearts are on lots of minds with it being American Heart Month and hearts on display for Valentine's Day.

Coronary disease is the number one killer of men and women in the United States and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention states it affects one in four Americans.

With heart disease being the leading cause of death, why not try to keep heart healthy foods, activities and gifts in mind this Valentine's Day.

By developing good eating habits, being physically active, taking advantage of preventive screenings and avoiding tobacco, individuals can significantly reduce the onset and burden of heart disease. Eating a heart-healthy diet and choosing to live a heart-healthy lifestyle will be helpful and beneficial for individuals.

For a heart healthy meal this Valentine's Day, try foods that are part of a heart healthy diet.

◊ To get the nutrients you need, eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups. Choose foods like vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and fat-free or low-fat meat and dairy products most often.

◊ Vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber—and they are low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and your blood pressure.

◊ Unrefined whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help lower your blood cholesterol and help you feel full, which may help you manage your weight.

◊ Choose fish as your main course. Recent research shows that eating oily fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (for example, salmon, trout and herring) may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.

◊ Limit foods and beverages high in calories but low in nutrients, and limit saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium.

◊ Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat in your diet.

◊ Select fat-free, 1 percent fat and low-fat dairy products.

◊ Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fats in your diet.

◊ Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol daily.

◊ Cut back on beverages & foods with added sugars.

◊ Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt.

Heart Healthy Recipe—Old Fashioned Bread Pudding with Apple/Raisin Sauce

For Bread Pudding (9—1/2 cup servings):
10 slices whole wheat bread
3 egg whites
1 1/2 cup skim milk
1/4 cup white sugar
2 tsp white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp clove
As needed vegetable oil spray

To prepare bread pudding:
1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 8x8-inch baking dish with vegetable oil spray. Lay slices of bread in baking dish in two rows, overlapping like shingles.
2. In medium bowl, beat together egg, egg whites, milk, 1/4 cup of white sugar, brown sugar and vanilla. Pour egg mixture over bread.
3. In small bowl, stir together cinnamon, nutmeg and clove and 2 teaspoons of white sugar. Sprinkle sugar mix over pudding. Bake 30-35 minutes.

For Apple-Raisin Sauce:
1 1/4 cup apple juice
1/2 cup apple butter
2 Tbsp molasses
1/2 cup molasses
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
1/2 tsp orange zest (optional)

To prepare apple-raisin sauce:
1. Stir all ingredients together in medium saucepan.
2. Bring to simmer over low heat. Let simmer for 5 minutes. Serve warm.

Source: National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute
Southwest District OHCE Meeting

Please mark your calendar to attend the 2010 OHCE District Meeting on Friday, March 19, at Central Middle School; 1201 NW Fort Sill Blvd.; Lawton. Registration information and meeting details have been given to all OHCE group Presidents.

Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. with wonderful cinnamon rolls being offered by the Oklahoma Wheat Commission. The business meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. County award nominees will be recognized during the business meeting along with 50 plus years of service members.

Lunch will be catered by Salas Catering (Mexican/American). Several workshops will be offered including officers’ workshops, district lesson, “Butterflies and Hummingbirds”, “Favorite Cookie Mixes”, “The History of Fairs”, “Not Your Grandmother’s Pressure Cooker” and other fun workshops.

“Crossing the Native Path” is a pre-conference tour which will be offered from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 18. The tour includes visits to Geronimo’s grave, the guardhouse where Geronimo spent his last days, the gravesite of Quanah Parker, Medicine Bluff, the Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center, and a Native American dance performance. The tour cost is $25.00.

Registration cost for the Friday meeting is $15.00. OHCE groups should send their registration information and check to Peggy Howard; 1613 North Judy; Purcell, OK 73080, by February 26, 2010.

Operation Christmas Report

Over 700 McClain County residents were served this year through Operation Christmas. Thanks to all OHCE members for contributing to the success of the event. For 2010, OHCE groups are asked to furnish the following items:

- Blanchard: Children’s Books
- Cole: Toothpaste
- Stealey: Crayons
- Town & Country: Children’s books
- Washington: Toothbrushes

Leaders’ Training

Gardening 101 will be the title of the lesson scheduled for February 18, in Room 111 of the Courthouse, Purcell. The lesson will begin at 1:30 p.m. and will be taught by the Cleveland County O.S.U. Extension Office.

The lesson scheduled for March 18, 1:30 p.m., is Food Preservation Update. This lesson will be taught at the Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Center in Purcell.

Food Preservation Update will be presented by Donna Jung, Canadian County FCS Extension Educator.
Congratulations to Award Winners Recognized at Winter Council

Outstanding Groups:
1st, Cole; 2nd, Stealey; 3rd, Town & Country

Rookie Award:
Elaine Dahl, Cole

Member Award:
Martha Schrader, Stealey

Heart of OHCE Award:
Peggy Christian, Stealey

Life Stories:
Evelyn Ogden, Blanchard
Phyllis Linker, Washington

Photography Awards:
1st, Peggy Howard, Town & Country
2nd, Evelyn Ogden, Blanchard
3rd, Bonita Brakefield, Stealey

McClain County OHCE 2010 Officers Installed

OHCE 2010 officers were installed at Winter Council. Pictured left to right are:

Phyllis Linker Vice-President
Peggy Howard Treasurer
Peggy Christian President
Martha Schrader Secretary

Military Aid Report

Thanks to all members and groups who participated in the Military Aid Project in 2009. McClain County groups sent 36 care packages to military personnel. What a great effort!!
This project will continue in 2010.

Save the Date!!

McClain County OHCE, McClain County O.S.U. Extension and Newcastle First Baptist Church are once again sponsoring the “Enrich Your Life” Senior Adult Conference. The date is July 27, 2010, and it will be held at the First Baptist Church of Newcastle. Watch for more details in later newsletters.
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Dollar Decisions
When your will power lets you down, ask yourself these questions.

- Will this purchase meet one of my goals?
- Do I really want and need it?
- What must I give up to have it?
- Am I buying this only because it's on sale?
- Would I buy this if I had to pay cash?
- Am I buying because I'm depressed?
- Would I come back tomorrow to buy this?
- How much do I owe on my credit card this month?
- If I charge this, can I pay off this month's bill?
- Could I feel better now without spending money?

Source: University of Idaho Extension