Reading unlocks a child’s imagination and increases vocabulary. Children may need to hear as many as 2,000 books before they begin to read. When you read to children, it tells them:

You’re important! I enjoy spending time with you!

Planning fun activities that support the book theme will help the child remember the story. If you select a book with a food theme, you can help your child be a book cook!

Select Books with a Food Theme
- Jamberry by Bruce Degen
- If You Give a Moose a Muffin by Laura Joffe Numeroff
- Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert
- Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- If You Give a Pig a Pancake by Laura Joffe Numeroff

Cooking With Children
What is the key to a successful cooking experience with children? Planning!

A well-planned project will run much smoother than a spur-of-the-moment project. Plan a cooking experience with your child when you are relaxed and can enjoy it.

Tips for Safety and Success
Set-up by yourself ahead of time. When ready, allow your child to feel useful as the “leader” while you play a supportive role.

Plan to manage safety. Consider your child’s age and protect him or her from sharp objects, burns, etc. Consider food safety as well. Children (as well as adults) should not taste dough or batters containing raw eggs.
When you select recipes:
Consider children’s level(s) of skills and motor development.
Choose activities that they can participate in and learn from, but not activities that will be a struggle.

Two-, three-, and four-year-olds can learn to socialize and develop skills by:
- scrubbing
- dipping
- tearing
- breaking
- snapping

Two-, three-, and four-year-olds can develop manipulation and eye-hand coordination by:
- pouring and measuring
- spreading
- juicing
- mixing, shaking
- rolling with both hands
- peeling

Three-, and four-year-olds are able to work against resistance by:
- cutting soft foods with a table knife
- beating with an egg beater

Four-year-olds can learn fine motor coordination and how to use sharp objects (with supervision) by:
- peeling with vegetable peelers
- slicing with sharp knives
- grating

How To’s:
Teach children how to wash their hands.
Encourage them to keep their hands away from hair, nose, mouth, etc. while handling food.
Show children how to use cooking utensils correctly.
Use a cooking surface that is at the child’s level. It is not safe for your child to stand on a chair or stool.

Be flexible. If your child doesn’t like a particular ingredient, substitute another.

Talk to your child about the food you are preparing and reinforce math skills (counting, measuring, sequencing of events). Notice your child’s eye-hand coordination and use of small motor skills.

Enjoy being a team. Sometimes you lead, sometimes you follow. Let this be a learning experience for you, too!