

Food for Thought

December 2025

Holiday Baking with Kids

December is a time for families and traditions. What better way to spend time together as a family while teaching favorite traditions than with baking with your kids.



- 🌲 Baking can also be a teaching tool:
 - By reading ingredients and instructions, kids can learn new words and what actions go with them.
 - Following a recipe can teach children how to follow directions and how not doing so affects the result.
 - Baking can improve motor skills. Fine motor skills like spreading toppings and sprinkling spices are needed when cooking. Rolling, squeezing, cutting, and flipping are ways your child can improve their hand-eye coordination.

Here are some tips to help you get kids involved in the kitchen:

- 🌲 Begin with talking about family food traditions. Children love to learn about their families and hear the stories behind traditions and what their parents did as children.
- 🌲 Choose foods and favorite recipes that kids can easily help make. Don't choose a recipe that is tricky to make. They can help make the grocery list based off the recipe and plan their role in the baking process.
- 🌲 Consider the ages of your children. Preschoolers have shorter attention spans and like instant results. Have them do simple things like rolling dough into balls, sprinkling decorations or stirring foods. Elementary age kids are capable of more involved tasks. With supervision they can measure ingredients, use a mixer and help take things out of the oven. Older children can do the whole task.
- 🌲 Determine upfront how much mess you are willing to tolerate. This is the thing that probably stops many parents from having their kids cook or bake. Children need to learn that clean-up is part of the process. No parent should be stuck with the entire clean-up job.
- 🌲 Demonstrate and encourage taking turns with the tasks. Stay flexible and calm when something doesn't work out. Your child will pick up clues on how you deal with less than perfect situations and will copy your actions. If the cutout cookies aren't perfect, does it matter?



🌲 Baking with kids is more about the experience than the end product. Something as simple as baking cookies together, and sharing them, can contribute to a child's self-esteem. The finished product gives children proof of their abilities and a sense of accomplishment.

With a little planning working together in the kitchen at holiday time may become something you do regularly throughout the year.

Banana Oatmeal Cookies



Non-stick spray OR aluminum foil or parchment paper

3 ripe bananas

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

3 cups quick-cooking oats OR rolled oats

1/2 cup chocolate chips (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray baking sheet with cooking spray or line with paper or foil.
2. Mash bananas in a large bowl and stir in cinnamon, oats, and chocolate chips (if using).
3. Measure out two tablespoons of dough and roll between your hands. Then, place the ball on the baking sheet and slightly flatten the top.
4. Continue with the remaining dough until you have about 12 cookies.
5. Bake for 12 minutes. Cookies will not be visually brown when done cooking.
6. Remove cookies from oven and allow to rest for 10-15 minutes before serving or storing.

Chocolate Surprise Cupcakes

Non-stick spray

1 - 15 ¼ ounce box chocolate cake mix

3/4 cup 100% apple juice

1 - 15 ounce can pumpkin puree

3 eggs

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)

1. Before you begin, wash your hands, surfaces, utensils, and tops of cans.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray muffin tins with non-stick spray.
3. Combine the pumpkin, cake mix, eggs, and apple juice in large mixing bowl. Mix well.
4. Fill muffin tin or cupcake pan 2/3 full of batter with spoon. If using walnuts, sprinkle on top.
5. Bake according to cupcake package directions--about 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
6. Let cool for 5-10 minutes. Remove from tin and serve. Store in airtight container or freeze in freezer bags within 4 days of baking.

Eat Smart Idaho offers FREE classes & educational events that can help limited resource individuals & families learn how to eat well for less! Ask for Eat Smart Idaho in your County.

Panhandle: Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai & Shoshone Counties
208-292-2525

North Central Idaho: Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, & Nez Perce Counties
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Sources [sixtysecondparent](https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/indianriverco/2022/12/22/holiday-baking-with-children/); <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/indianriverco/2022/12/22/holiday-baking-with-children/>;
<https://celebrateyourplate.org/recipes?categories=meal-type%3Adesserts> retrieved 12/02/25

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