

Your little sous chef

Cooking is a life skill everyone must learn. The only question is: at what point in life should that learning start? And the answer is: early! Why not introduce your children to the kitchen from right now?

STARTERS

Cooking with your little one can give you a lot of opportunities for teaching. For a relatively younger child, you can bring basic math alive! Let your little one count slices of apples, divide a pie into X number of sections, or fetch you Y number of potatoes from the household pantry.

Meanwhile, it is a chance to make your child well-versed in names of vegetables and other food items, all done as part of the fun and games. Introduce various spices and other ingredients, and talk about where they come from and the hardworking farmers who produce them.

The more you chat with your child throughout the process, the more s/he will learn. So, get your child involved as much as possible, such as plucking herbs from your herb garden and showing him/her the various parts of a fruit or plant.

Moreover, try to instill healthy dietary ideas in your child's mind. Talk about healthy eating choices, such as the value of eating greens.

And apart from all that, cooking can also become a lifelong hobby for your children. Introduce them to it, and after they have grown up, they'll thank you for it!

HELL'S KITCHEN

Don't get any fancy ideas, though. Cooking with children can be very stressful!

The little brat will make a mess. And if you think your child will quickly become a helping hand, think again! Your child will cook up ways of getting on your nerves, and surely, you will get slightly paranoid about safety issues:

"Is he maintaining a safe distance from fire? Oh wait, he just turned up the heat and now the curry has overflowed. Where did he get that knife and what's he doing with it? How did he break a dozen eggs so fast!" And won't bother to clean up, either.



These are just some of the thoughts that will constantly race in your mind.

It's a good idea to set out some ground rules — 'wash your hands first,' 'don't get too close to the fire,' 'ask before you taste' and so on. And then, police him (read supervise). Even relatively older children need supervision in the kitchen.

SEASONED ENOUGH?

There isn't a magic number as to the 'right' age to start out in the kitchen, but you can get your child involved fairly early. Even a 5-year old can help in making dough, fetching small vegetables from the pantry, or sprinkling sugar — but under supervision, obviously, and with knives and other potentially hazardous objects out of reach.

On the other hand, a 10-year old can follow simple and easy recipes — again, with your help and supervision.

At the end of the day, it is you as a parent who can be the best judge of what to allow and where to draw the line, based on your

child's learning ability, maturity, etc.

TASKS FOR YOUR SOUS CHEF

And so, set tasks accordingly. Assign them with whisking eggs. Or give them the duty of spreading jam and butter on bread. Let them slice bananas or other soft food — first with a strong plastic knife, then with a butter knife, and then, when you feel they are ready, with a small kitchen knife. Teach them how to peel boiled eggs or potatoes with a peeler; and eventually how to mix stuff and use salad dressings to make a salad.

And gradually, start with cooking, only for much older children (a lot depends on maturity, which varies from person to person) — after you are sure s/he is aware about handling stoves and small knives.

Go for recipes of foods they love eating. Simple baking, different kinds of omelette (they'll still break and destroy a few eggs in the process), mac and cheese, and the simple pasta or noodles are just few examples of the things your children will enjoy making.

It's important to give your child a true sense of participation, and one way of doing it — if they are relatively older — is allowing to take full responsibility of a particular item in the menu; something which requires minimum supervision from your side.

One good example of such a task is making lemonade or milkshake. The children (and adults) love them, and older children can pull it off more or less independently, after you have showed them the simple recipe and how to use the blender.

Welcome your sous chef to the kitchen with gusto! Celebrate the little one's first day at the kitchen with the whole family, where everyone participates, from cutting vegetables to setting up the table.

After all, there are not many things like cooking and eating together that bring a family close!

By M H Haider

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

NEWS FLASH

A call for solidarity by Bibi Russell

The COVID-19 pandemic has brutally shaken the world. None are being spared from the cruel grip of this global phenomenon, which is severely causing negative impact on the lives of people worldwide. The impact is being felt beyond the health sector, with prolonged lockdown and isolation, which are disrupting the global economy and creating economic downturn. This global crisis has a brutally local impact, hitting the poor and the vulnerable of the country the hardest.

Bibi Russell, one of the country's most prominent designers, in a call for solidarity, put forth the plight of the artisans of the country.

"Over the past decades, I have been working very closely with craftspeople in Bangladesh and beyond. I am marvelled by their knowledge of traditional arts, by their fine skills and expertise which allows us to preserve human heritage. I am also deeply saddened to see their struggle for making a living, meeting their household needs, as they strive to offer decent livelihood opportunities to their children. With my training and knowledge in design and fashion, and with my modest means, I have been standing by the craftspeople in different parts of the world, to support them wherever my expertise was required.

"The focus of my work in Bangladesh has been to ensure the sustenance of fine handwoven fabrics and cultural crafts. In these uncertain and extremely difficult times, it is our collective responsibility to support the vulnerable people and also to protect our exceptional heritage," said Russell.

Russell, a UNSECO Artist for Peace, further added, "I call upon you to join me in this solidarity venture. Each of us can, in big or small ways, help the craftspeople to rebuild a COVID-19 safe future, in a viable socio-economic environment. If each of us, for example, buy a locally woven *gamcha*, together, we may save many households.

Let us join forces and as our first step, support the weaver's community to save our age-old handloom industries."

While governments, and international organisations try to address this unforeseen emergency with recovery provisions, the time has come for all countries to resolutely review their policies and programmes, to make development more inclusive and sustainable. For building the resilience of all segments of population, developing countries must make adequate investment in public health, ensure economic stability, provide social safety and safeguard the natural environment for those who are out of reach of public policies.