FAMILY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Chimichurri Chicken with Mediterranean Couscous
July 26, 2020
How can kids help in the kitchen?

If you're cooking with kids, you know best what they're ready for based on their level of maturity and motor control. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends the following:

Ages 2-3 might be ready for stirring, shaking, spreading, tearing, dipping, kneading and using basic kitchen implements like whisks, spatulas, strainers, or cookie cutters. Kids age 3-4 might be ready for more complex tasks like pouring, rolling or measuring, and with supervision they might try using small non-electric appliances. Kids older than five can do just about anything with supervision -- grating, mashing, peeling, even cutting with a knife.

SAFETY FIRST!

- Supervision is key! Don't leave little ones unattended while cooking.
- Keep potentially dangerous equipment stored until you're ready to use it.
- Sharp knives are safer because they are easier to control -- keep your knives sharp, but out of reach until needed and supervise carefully!
- Make sure you have plenty of potholders around; keep them dry and away from burners.
- Be careful with electric appliances, cords, and electrical outlets.
- In case of a stove top fire, use a fire extinguisher or baking soda, NOT WATER as it can spread a grease fire quickly. You can also use a lid to smother flames.
- Make sure your helpers know what's hot -- lids, handles, and utensils all heat up when the stove is in use, and releasing steam can cause severe burns.
- Prevent food-borne illness: wash hands frequently, keep hot food hot and cold food cold; wash fruits and vegetable thoroughly, and cook meat, poultry, eggs and fish to the appropriate temperature.
FIVE SENSES OF FOOD

A way to explore new foods with picky eaters! Prepare and sample a new food and describe it using your five senses.

This activity works with individual foods, or two-three foods at a time to make comparisons, like:
- Different foods from the same food group, like three nuts or three fruits
- Things that look similar but taste different, like papaya and sweet potato
- The same vegetable, served raw and cooked in different ways, like roasted, steamed, or sautéed

**Sight:** What color is it? Is big or small? Does it look different after you cook it? How so? Is there something about the way it looks that makes you want to eat it? Does it look like other foods that you've tried?

**Sound:** What does it sound like when you cut it? When you cook it? When you chew it?

**Smell:** What does it smell like? Does it smell like it tastes? Does it smell like other foods that you've tried?

**Touch:** What does it feel like when you touch it? Is it dry or greasy or slimy? Rough or smooth? What does it feel like in your mouth? Is it squishy or crunchy? Does it stick to the roof of your mouth or get stuck in your teeth?

**Taste:** Does it taste like you expected? Is it sweet? Spicy? Sour? Salty? Does the flavor remind you of something else?

COOKING CONVERSATIONS

Ask open-ended questions about what's happening in the kitchen:
Make comparisons between ingredients: "Dried basil and dried oregano look the same, but how are they different?"
Apply past knowledge: "What happened when we boiled noodles? Will the same happen with rice?"
Make predictions: "What will happen to the cheese when we put it in the microwave?"
Look for creative solutions: "What can we do with this leftover sauce?"
Solve problems: "How can we pour this without spilling?"

Information adapted from The Cooking Book: Fostering young children’s learning and delight, published by The National Association for the Education of Young Children.
**CHIMICHURRI**

Chimichurri is a condiment; a green sauce from Argentina that is traditionally served with grilled meat, and made from fresh herbs and oil. It can be used as a topping or a marinade -- something you add to food before cooking it to make it more tender or add flavor.

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**EVERYBODY LOVES GREEN SAUCE!**

Many cultures have a version of green sauce -- usually made with fresh herbs and oil with other ingredients. What makes them different are the different combinations of herbs that create the sauce's unique flavor. What do you think makes them different in different parts of the world?

- **Chimichurri** from Argentina is a green sauce that is traditionally served with grilled meat, and made from fresh herbs and oil.
- **PESTO** from Italy is made with pine nuts and is usually served on pasta.
- **ZHUG** is from Yemen, and adds spices and chilies to make it spicy. Use it on eggs or grilled veggies.
- **CHERMOULA** from Morocco is great on meat and veggies.
- **ZHUG** is from Yemen, and adds spices and chilies to make it spicy. Use it on eggs or grilled veggies.
- **SALSA VERDE** from Mexico is made with jalapenos and tomatillos, a small green tomato. It’s delicious on tacos and chips.
- **AJI** is from South America, specifically Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. It’s got lime juice for zing and chilies for spice.

For more green sauces to try, click here or go to https://bit.ly/2OPhMpr
What's Cooking

Couscous

Couscous is a little bit like pasta, made from a crushed grain called durum that’s rolled into ball-like shapes. It originates in North Africa, and is popular in Africa, the Middle East, and France.

Like pasta, couscous is cooked by boiling it in water until the water is absorbed. Sometimes, you might use flavored stock or broth. Why do you think that might be different?

Moroccan

Smallest in size with a nutty flavor and grain-like texture

Israeli

Bigger and softer with a more pasta-like taste

Lebanese

Biggest in size and almost chewy in texture

Marinades

Marinades are used to make meat more tender or more flavorful, using acid (like vinegar or lemon juice), and enzymes (found in ginger and some fruit).

They change the texture and flavor of the meat using a chemical reaction called adsorption, which affects the surface of the meat.

Adsorption sounds a lot like absorption, but they describe different things. While adsorption affects the surface of an object, absorption goes deep below the surface.

Couscous, for example, cooks by absorption, where liquid molecules (in this case, water) go beyond the surface to permeate and soften the couscous.

Interested in learning more about the science of marinades? Check out this experiment from Scientific American here or go to https://bit.ly/39hDhsD

Adsorption: Where molecules go beyond the surface. Absorption: Where molecules go deep below the surface.
As you make the chimichurri, taste the parsley, then the cilantro. In what ways do they taste the same? In what ways are they different?

Taste some of the reserved marinade. What does it remind you of? What else might it taste good with?

The recipe suggests that you marinate the chicken for at least four hours. What do you think takes so long? What happens during that time?

How does the couscous change as it soaks?

Where does the stock (liquid) go when it disappears?

Taste the chicken. Can you taste the effects of the marinade?

How's it look?

Is it pretty? What colors do you see? Does the way it looks make you want to eat it, or not?

How does it smell? Does the way it smells make you want to eat it, or not?

Now take a bite. What individual ingredients can you identify by smell or taste? What do you like or not like about the way it tastes?


Grown-ups: Read more about the Maillard Reaction in this post from Serious Eats
1. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/2 measuring cups?
2. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/3 and 1/2 measuring cups?
3. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/3 measuring cups?
4. How could you make 2 cups using any of the other measuring cups? Find as many ways as possible.
5. Find two ways of making 3/4 cup.
6. Bonus challenge: How is the 1/3 cup measure different from the others?

Fill a dish tub or bucket with water, and try to create the amounts given below using your measuring cups at home. Have kids measure various amounts using different combinations of their measuring cups. They can keep track of their work by writing fraction addition equations in the space below each question.

Fill a clear liquid measuring cup like the one shown below to see your progress!
Suggestion: Have kids record their solutions on a piece of paper.

Check out these short videos from Kahn Academy: introduction to fractions and equivalent fractions!
MEASURING CUP FRACTIONS CHALLENGE

ANSWERS

1. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/2 measuring cups?
   1/2 + 1/2 = 1 cup
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup

2. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/3 and 1/2 measuring cups?
   1/2 + 1/2 = 1 cup
   1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 = 1 cup

3. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/3 measuring cups?
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup

4. How could you make 2 cups using any of the other measuring cups? Find as many ways as possible.
   1 + 1 = 2 cups
   1 + 1/2 + 1/2 = 2 cups
   1 + 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 = 2 cups

   1/2 + 1/4 = 3/4 cup
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 3/4 cup
MyPlate, from the US Department of Agriculture, is a way to find your healthy eating style and build it throughout your lifetime.

Everything you eat and drink matters. The right mix can help you be healthier now and in the future. This means:

- Focus on variety, amount, and nutrition.
- Choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Start with small changes to build healthier eating styles.
- Support healthy eating for everyone.

Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our stage of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate offers ideas and tips to help you create a healthier eating style that meets your individual needs and improves your health. Go to choosemyplate.gov for more information, activities and worksheets on healthy eating.

**WHAT'S ON MYPLATE?**

- Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed.
- Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the Vegetable Group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.
- Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits are examples of grain products. Grains are divided into 2 subgroups, Whole Grains and Refined Grains.
- All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content (like cheese and yogurt) are part of the group. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group.
- All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group.
WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PLATE?

Use the space below to draw your favorites from each of the MyPlate groups!

For more information on healthy eating, visit www.choosemyplate.gov
**MyPlate snack tips for kids**

10 tips for making great tasting snacks

**If you’re a budding chef, it’s easy to create a great tasting snack!**

Below are some quick ideas that you can make on your own.

1. **create a yogurt sundae!**
   Top plain, low-fat or fat-free yogurt with fresh, frozen, or canned fruit, like bananas, strawberries, or peaches. Sprinkle whole-grain cereal on top for crunch.

2. **make pita pockets**
   Stuff a small whole-wheat pita with sliced bell peppers, salsa, and a slice of low-fat cheese. Melt in the microwave for 15-20 seconds.

3. **jazz up your favorite cereal**
   Make a trail mix! Stir 1/4 cup of unsalted nuts, 1/4 cup of dried raisins or cranberries, and 1/4 cup of whole-grain cereal together.

4. **make a fruit sandwich**
   Cut an apple into thin slices. Spread peanut butter or almond butter between two slices to create “apple sandwiches.”

5. **dip your veggies**
   Create veggie treats by dipping slices of cucumbers, peppers, and carrots in a low-fat salad dressing or hummus.

6. **pack an afterschool snack**
   For a healthy afterschool snack, keep a fruit cup packed in 100% juice or water in your bag. Some fresh fruit, like bananas and oranges, are also easy to pack and eat any time.

7. **try a piece of cheesy toast!**
   Toast a slice of whole-wheat bread and top with a slice of your favorite low-fat cheese.

8. **freeze your fruit**
   For a frozen treat on hot days, try freezing grapes or bananas! Don’t forget to peel bananas and pull grapes from the stem before freezing.

9. **power up with ‘roll-ups’**
   Roll a slice of low-salt deli turkey or ham around an apple wedge or around a slice of low-fat cheese.

10. **build a fruit salad**
    Mix your favorite sliced fruits such as pineapple, grapes, and melon.

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.