



Cooking and Kitchen Safety Tips for the Holidays

One cup of sugar, two tablespoons butter, combined with one cup of supervision, and a pinch of patience can be the right mix during these hectic times.

As holiday goodies are being prepared, children are eager to lend a hand. Whether decorating cookies or mixing salad dressing, children need close adult supervision at all times in and around the kitchen.

Age-Appropriate Tasks for Children

Since each child is different, it is important for parents and caregivers to consider the developmental level and abilities of their children when it comes to assigning kitchen duties.

Generally, children under age 10 don't fully understand what danger means and therefore should not handle the stove, electrical appliances, sharp utensils or hot dishes. Younger children can begin helping in the kitchen with basics like washing vegetables and fruits, or other tasks that don't require sharp knives, appliances or heat.

Following are a few suggested activities and age guidelines that Safe Kids Worldwide and the National Fire Protection Association recommends parents review to help keep the kitchen a fun, safe place for the family.

Children between 3-5 can:

- Get ingredients out of the refrigerator and cupboards.
- Stir ingredients together in a bowl.
- Pour liquids into a bowl.
- Rinse foods under cold water.
- Use a cookie cutter to cut out shapes in dough.

Children between 6-8 can:

- Use a butter knife to spread frosting, peanut butter or soft cheese.
- Peel vegetables.
- Measure ingredients.
- Stir together ingredients in a bowl.
- Set the table.

Children between 9-12 can:

- Begin to follow recipes.
- Use electrical kitchen appliances such as blenders, food processors, electric mixers and microwaves.
- Help plan the meals.
- Open cans.
- Squeeze garlic from a garlic press and use a grater to shred cheese and vegetables.
- Turn stove burners on and off and select oven temperature when an adult is present.

Children above age 13 can:

- Operate the stovetop without adult supervision.
- Drain cooked pasta into a colander.
- Remove a tray of cookies from the oven.
- Heat food in the microwave without adult supervision.

General Cooking and Kitchen Safety Tips

- Never leave a hot stove unattended. (Unattended food on the stove is the number one cause of home fires.)
- Never hold a child while cooking or carrying hot items.
- Cook on back burners whenever possible, and turn all handles toward the back of the stove.
- Don't allow loose-fitting clothing in the kitchen.
- Keep hot foods and liquids away from the edges of counters and tables.
- Be especially careful around tablecloths — children can pull hot dishes down onto themselves

Fire Prevention Tips

Visit the Web site of the U.S. Fire Administration for additional fire prevention tips (www.usfa.fema.gov).

Safety Information

Visit the Web site of Safe Kids USA (www.usa.safekids.org) for more information about accidental injury prevention in children 0-14, safety tips, fact sheets and more. Or contact Chrissy Cianflone, Home and Fire Safety Manager, Safe Kids Worldwide on 202-662-0625 or ccianflone@safekids.org.