



FitFactor: Help Kids Start Cooking

One of the best ways to get kids to eat healthy is to start young and teach them how. Make healthy eating a life-long habit from the start. Eating nutritious meals and snacks is so important to people with bleeding disorders. A variety of vitamins and minerals help support strong muscles and bones, and eating a well-balanced, real food diet will help to maintain a healthy weight. A smart number on the scale will help keep added stress off of joints and can help prevent or reduce bleeds. For more information on healthy eating for individuals with a bleeding disorder visit: www.hemophiliafed.org/programs/fit-factor/

In this blog post excerpt, Kiran Dodeja Smith from 100 Days of Real Food, shares her ritual of a Kids Cook Night, and how it is teaching her kids not only how to eat healthy, but many other lessons as well. (Read the post in its entirety at: www.100daysofrealfood.com)



I recently started a weekly ritual that I know a lot of you would also love: Kids Cook Night. I'll share a little about how the process works for us as well as the intangible benefits that are a part of this activity. It's a win-win all around.

My kids have always enjoyed helping me in the kitchen, but I noticed that around age 7, unless I was really asking them to help out, their desire for other activities began to prevail. I'm guilty of not always delegating tasks because I want them done "just so," and I take responsibility for that fueling their slowing interest.

The Process

1. Each week, we decide which child will be choosing the recipe. I direct them to websites and cookbooks where they have free rein. I want them to feel the opportunity of choice and experience the decision-making process. Last week I had a giggle when I saw "easy healthy dinner choices for kids to make" in the Google search bar.
2. They print the recipe and make a grocery list, which we all take to the store. If it's not around my normal shopping day, I'll make a special trip for them.
3. My kids are ages 11, 9, 6, and 4. Often times, the older two will divvy responsibilities and go with it. I am around to help manage, but for the most part, they are the ones in charge. My 6-year-old occasionally helps, and some weeks she is in charge of choosing the recipe. There is room in the kitchen for kids of all ages!
4. If assistance is needed in any area, be it in tweaking a recipe, cooking something, or making substitutions, I'm always there to help. (My eldest makes plenty on the stove, but I recently helped them brown sausage for a meal.)
5. Clean-up is part of the package. I help a little in this area, but they also take responsibility for it.

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The Benefits

- **Decision-making.** They select their recipe, have a task to complete, and bring it from beginning to end. I love to see this build their self-confidence!
- **Planning.** As mentioned above, they need to determine what ingredients we have on hand and what needs to be purchased. Which brings me to the next benefit.
- **List writing.** This goes hand-in-hand with the planning part. Having a mental plan and putting it on paper is a skill that is useful at all ages in so many areas.
- **Realization of costs.** Money doesn't grow on trees. At least not in my yard! So I like them being tuned into what goes into a meal. I like to think that this will somehow help them appreciate the meals that we have on our table each night, but perhaps that's wishful thinking.
- **Math.** Last week they were making a meal and the 1/2 cup measuring cup was in the dishwasher. My 9-year-old got a refresher in fractions as I gave her some math lessons on what other measuring cups can help her get that same quantity. Also, we like to double recipes quite a bit, which requires some math. I always reinforce the fact that yes, what you learn in school is absolutely applicable to everyday life!
- **Safety.** I like to oversee while they are prepping and cooking. It goes without saying that safety precautions should be mentioned and considered on the front end when you give your child a large knife, put them near a burning stove, and more. And also remind them of safety as you go along.
- **Kitchen experience.** Hel-LO?! Of course this is a benefit! Getting comfortable in the kitchen at an early age is, in my opinion, a huge win.
- **Dinner on the table.** I love that they have full control over this. I love that I don't have to cook that night (though by no means am I sitting with my legs raised reading a book). And I love that they know how it feels to be on the receiving end of making a meal. Maybe, just maybe, they will watch what they say if they don't like the looks of a meal since they know how it feels to work hard preparing for others. Though in all honesty, I've gotta give it to them - they are pretty polite, and by now I like to think I'm pretty resilient to their not-so-positive comments if they have them. Still, it's good practice for everyone.

For more information go to: www.hemophiliafed.org/fitfactor