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Home Tips: Spend Quality Time in the Kitchen with Your Kids

WACO, Texas (August 29, 2008) – As back-to-school schedules get more hectic, it can be harder to find quality time with your family. Get that time back by spending more time with your kids in the kitchen.

Spending time with family members and cooking dinner can become more hurried during the school year. It's easy to get lost in the deluge of after-school activities, meetings and homework. Having your kids help you in the kitchen after school, during dinner preparation and while making lunches for the next day can give you a great opportunity to bond and talk about the day.

Make snacks with your kids after school.

- This gives you a chance to ask about their day, and you can monitor their pre-dinner snacking.
- If you have young kids, stimulate their creativity by letting them play with their food. Give them a piece of wheat bread with peanut butter spread on one side, along with a variety of dried and fresh fruit slices. They can make a happy face or draw a picture with the fruit on their bread, and then eat their healthy, delicious masterpiece.

Get your kids involved in cooking dinner.

- Give them safe, easy preparation tasks and ask them to taste test with you when dinner is almost ready.
- This is a great opportunity to squeeze in quality family time. Have fun and enjoy each other's company.
- The fun and sense of pride they'll get from helping make the meal might even inspire them to try a food they wouldn't normally eat.

Have your kids help you make lunch and breakfast for the next day to save time in the morning.

- Talk about the importance of healthy eating and plan wholesome lunches together.
- Have them help you make a batch of breakfast trail mix for mornings when you want something quick. Mix two of their favorite cereals (or one cereal and granola) and add toasted nuts and dried fruit. Pack it in sandwich bags so it's ready and portioned ahead of time.

Always keep safety in mind when cooking with children.

"The kitchen is a great place for bonding, but it's also a room that has more potential for accidents," says Doug Rogers, president of Mr. Appliance Corp. "Between hot appliances and sharp cooking objects and corners, curious kids can often be in danger of hurting themselves. Fortunately, homeowners can prevent most accidents by making a few simple adjustments and educating their children about kitchen safety."

Follow these simple tips from *Mr. Appliance* to keep your kitchen as safe as possible.

- Keep pot and pan handles turned in away from the edge of the stove so that curious hands can't pull them down.
- Keep flammable items away from the stove at all times.
- Keep kids several feet away from the oven while it's hot. Establish a "keep out" zone marked by a small rug or area of the kitchen to ensure they won't play too close.
- Supervise all use of the microwave. Talk to kids about being careful with hot plates and food.
- Keep items not safe for children out of reach, if possible. Be available to help your kids pick out food and drinks that are best for them.
- Use non-slippery mats and stools to reduce the risk of kids falling.
- Cover the trash can with a lid and talk to kids about not playing by it.
- Label harmful products and post a poison control hotline number.

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