



Bath and North East Somerset Director of Public Health Award

Early Years Cookery and Food Play Toolkit





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We hope this toolkit will help you support children and families to extend their learning, develop good habits and have fun!

Background

Establishing good habits and behaviours towards food and eating is one of the key areas that will help young children eat a varied and balanced diet; attain and maintain a healthy weight and improve their physical and emotional prospects for later life.

Healthy eating is much more than what is eaten. Young children also need to be supported to establish good behaviours around **how, when and why** they eat.

The importance of food is widely known: children need to be well-nourished to thrive and, as explained in Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow 1943), food is one of the basic physiological needs which need to be met before humans can function properly during more complex tasks.

However, in today's society, many children are not well-nourished. Various factors contribute to diets which are high in fat, salt and sugar and low in essential nutrients: e.g. reliance on fast food or readymade convenience meals; the influence of advertising and media; poverty; lack of cooking skills; parenting skills; supermarket special offers. It's a long list!

Combining this with a general reduction in physical activity levels means that many young children are beginning formal education at a disadvantage. In Bath & North East Somerset almost 1 in 4 children starts school an unhealthy weight (2009/10 – 2011/12 National Child Measurement Programme.)

Unhealthy diets are now a major national concern and it is becoming increasingly understood that early intervention is needed, not only to help these children and their future well-being as adults but also for the health and economic well-being of society (UNICEF 2013).

Early Years settings have an important role to play in changing attitudes and habits for the better - but how?



How will food play and cookery help?

The Statutory Framework for the EYFS requires settings to “promote good health” (paragraph 3.2) and to ensure that children “know the importance for good health of ... a healthy diet” (para. 1.13, ‘Physical Development: Health and self-care’).

When you hear the phrase ‘healthy eating’ what do you think of, how does it make you feel? Many of us moan at the thought of eating something ‘healthy’, like we are missing out on the ‘unhealthy’! To some people ‘healthy’ means ‘dull’. Children can quickly learn this too from the people and the environment around them. We must be careful how we label food as it is highly emotive and habits are formed quickly – good and bad!

Telling children that foods are ‘healthy’ and others are ‘unhealthy’ is an unhelpful practice. Labelling foods as ‘treats’ and ‘rewards’, or using a dessert as a bribe to eat more carrots for example are also unhelpful.

Food often becomes much *more* desirable if it is restricted or forbidden. ‘Unhealthy’ foods, treats, rewards and desserts are all more often than not foods that are high in sugar/fat and these practices will encourage a reliance and preference to them.

Children should be supported in an age appropriate way to understand that different foods have different purposes for our bodies and thus should be eaten in different quantities – there will be things we should eat lots of every day and things we should only have occasionally or in small amounts. For all of us, it’s about understanding a good balance across the food groups.

That said, for Early Years children, the ideas of food groups, portions and of food being ‘good for you’ can be too abstract (Lynch 2012).

We know children learn best from their experiences, the activities they are involved in and the attitudes of the people around them so our food provision, modelling and activities involving food should implicitly reflect these messages rather than trying to explicitly ‘teach’ them.



Children start learning about food and food preparation from a very early age. Often, before they can speak they will be able to mimic feeding a baby or cooking a meal in the role play area.

If they have frequent experiences of tasting, smelling, handling and exploring a wide variety of foods and if the people around them set good examples in growing, preparing and enjoying a range and balance of good food, the children will be more likely to develop the same habits and make good choices.

This means that settings have a responsibility, not only to provide balanced and nutritious food for meals but also to provide an environment where children can explore food in various ways with positive encouragement and support.

The 'Early Years Cookery & Food Play Toolkit' offers some guidance in helping to establish these healthy behaviours. Growing is explored in another toolkit which you can find on the DPH Award Website.

It doesn't have to mean extra work!

Many of the learning opportunities which settings already plan for can easily be adapted to include food related play and cookery as well as meet the principles and many aspects of learning, outlined in both the Statutory Framework and the 'Development Matters' EYFS Guidance (Early Education 2012). In fact some aspects of learning are directly related to food.

The idea of this toolkit is to support settings with ideas, resources and further signposting to help provide a wide variety of valuable, positive experiences, involving exploring, preparing and cooking food.

Please note:

These are general ideas for a range of ways to explore food and cooking. Most of them will be adaptable for all ages of children, including babies but others; particularly where food could be consumed will need to be done so once age/stage and appropriateness of food have been considered. Babies should only be introduced to solid food from 6 months old and obviously led by parents/carers. Check out [Start4Life](#) resources for more info. [Introducing Solid Foods](#) leaflet will also help you think about suitable foods and things to be mindful of for under the 1s.



Food safety and risk benefit

In common with many other exciting and engaging play experiences, there can be certain risks as well as many benefits whilst playing with food and cooking. It is important that care is taken when planning and whilst supervising all food related activities. Explaining to children as you observe safety rules will help them to learn good habits too.

When thinking about risk assessment it is important to also think about the benefits of doing an activity. It is often necessary to have some risk in children's play to give them the benefits of development, achievement and fun. The Risk Benefit approach is one where we look at what risks are present and what, if any, benefits are gained from having these risks.

A good judgement can then be made on what risk, if any, is acceptable. Check out the [BANES Risk Benefit Toolkit](#) for more information and example templates etc.

Some considerations:

- **Be allergy aware**

Take into account existing and potential allergies. Ensure parents/carers know that you will be regularly exploring food during play and cookery activities.

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Food allergies and intolerances – page 48

- **Avoid choking hazards**

Check the size of items and how easily they can be broken into swallowable pieces.

Food should always be cut length ways rather than into circular shapes/discs to avoid forming a 'plug' e.g. carrots and sausages. Foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes should always be cut in half, lengthways.

Babies and young children frequently explore with their mouths and might be even more likely to try to swallow something which is a recognisable food whilst playing with it.



- **Do not use raw beans**

They can be toxic if not cooked.

- **Avoid raw eggs**

They might contain salmonella so no licking of spoons etc.

- **Using sharp utensils safely**

You will need to decide on the suitability of the utensils for the children and, of course, include their use in your risk assessments including how the children will access and handle them and what the child: adult ratio will be throughout the activity and what happens if the supervising practitioner is called away. How will children be supervised at all times whilst using or having access to knives for example?

- **Food safety and hygiene**

All staff supporting children with cooking (as well as those responsible for preparing food for children) should have a current Food Safety Level 2 Award certificate.

Children need to be shown how to observe safety and hygiene rules and reminded each time they handle food e.g. turning away from food and people to cough/sneeze; not licking fingers/spoons; wearing aprons; covering/tying back long hair; as well as the more obvious washing of hands and raw food.

Keeping the cooking area clean and tidy before and after cooking will prevent any contamination/accidents and encourage children to be tidy too.

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Food safety and hygiene – page 55

- **Electrical equipment**

Safe positioning of equipment and maintaining safety around the power socket and cables is essential (e.g. avoiding water contact; busy thoroughfares; not leaving electrical leads within reach and ensuring kettles and other equipment are pushed to the back of the work surface so they can't be accidentally knocked over.) Ensure appliances have portable appliance testing PAT when necessary.

Consider whether each of the children will be able to operate the equipment safely and what kinds of adult support will be needed.



Consider what precautions must be taken if the supervising adult needs to leave the equipment during the session (e.g. if called away).

- **Using hobs, ovens etc.**

Consider whether children can have safe access and how burns will be avoided for children and adults. Make sure pans are on the back burners. Adults should always be good role models when using cookers, e.g. wearing oven gloves. Children should always be supervised.

- **First aid**

At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate must be on the premises at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings (EYFS Statutory Framework para. 3.24). Consider in advance any potential injuries and how they will be dealt with. Ensure that the First Aid kit is suitably stocked.

Waste & ethical considerations of playing with food

“Some people regard the use of anything edible in play activities as wasteful. It should be remembered that all materials get ‘wasted’, in the sense that they have taken raw materials, money and people’s time, effort and energy to produce, and having been used, they are often discarded.

Playing with food can be very enjoyable and is a very good play for acquainting children with unfamiliar foods.

Better a little food used through play than piles of uneaten cooked food wasted after lunch time, sometimes because the food was unfamiliar to children.

Of course there is a case for teaching children to respect food and all the work that has been necessary to produce it, just as much as with furniture and resources.

In this context it is important to point out that foods used in early years activities are actually being used for many learning purposes.”

Text taken from *The Nursery Food Book*, Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein 1998

Although the above does make a good case for letting children explore food, it is important to consider the ethics around the issue.



Please consider what you use, how often and in what quantity. Discuss, as a setting the objectives and learning outcomes of your food based play activities be mindful of excessive waste and of whether you can dispose of it usefully e.g. by feeding birds (though uncooked rice and pulses should not be used for this purpose.)

It is also important to keep in mind the information you hold about individual children's dietary requirements and parents'/carers' preferences regarding food, which can be part of their ethics or belief system. Remember that staff, too, might hold strong views.

For instance, vegans, strict vegetarians and followers of some religions are likely to be unwilling to let their children play with jelly containing gelatine, which is made from animal by-products. In Thailand, and other South East Asian countries where rice is the staple food, it has religious significance: children are taught from a young age not to waste rice.

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Managing special dietary needs – page 48
- Food allergies and food intolerances – page 48
- Vegetarian diets – page 49
- Cultural and religious diets – page 49
- Food customs of difference cultures and religious groups – page 50

Good, positive relationships with open, timely communication and thoughtful planning will help ensure that all can be included and enjoy food-related play.

Planning for activities

Children will show a greater willingness to try new foods that they have been accustomed to seeing and exploring in their environment (Lynch 2102; Children's Food Trust Jan.2012, p51)

It makes sense to provide, in addition to mealtimes, plenty of opportunities for them to become familiar with a wide variety of foods through handling, smelling, cooking, tasting, role play and investigation as well as songs, rhymes and stories.

All learning opportunities should be planned with the children's individual needs, interests and developing learning characteristics in mind. Most of



the play should be open-ended, with some experiences - e.g. cooking - being adult-led and small group based.

Ideally small groups should be led by the Key Person to ensure experiences remain suitable and tailored to the individual children. Small group activities are great for developing language and communication skills.

Ten Top Tips for Talking

1. Be on the same level as the child

Sit next to or near to share the snack/mealtime experience.

2. Notice and encourage all children's attempts to communicate

This could be a gesture, a look or words.

3. Watch and listen

Watching what the child is interested in and listening carefully to what they say.

4. Use a clear, lively and animated voice

It will enthuse and motivate children to communicate.

5. Match your language levels to the child's

If a child understands/uses 2 information carrying words you do the same e.g. Child: "butter on my toast" – Adult: "mmm milk in my cup".

6. Follow the child's lead

Let them lead where the conversation is going and support their communication to sustain it and include others if appropriate.

7. Copy what the child says and correct mistakes by modelling

Copy their word or phrase or model back what they say e.g. "I cutted it" – "yes you cut the potato with your knife".

8. Extend the child's language

Add one extra word to their phrase e.g. Child: "I got peppers!" – Adult: "mmm, you've got yellow peppers".

9. Use more comments than questions

Label what the child is doing/eating or comment on what the child is doing instead of asking them.

10. Take turns and keep going

Repeat what a child says and add a comment or use a gesture to indicate they can take another turn to keep the conversation going.



Exploring food

Some children will only recognise food items by their manufactured product, not realising chips and mash are actually potato. They may never have seen something raw and may not associate the cooked item with it at all. Do children know peas come in pods or understand that tinned sweet corn actually comes from the cob? Give children opportunities to explore whole and raw items as well as see them cooked so that they understand the varieties available and where they come from.

An important aspect of finding out about food and making informed choices is to learn about where it comes from, how it is grown or made, what processes are involved in getting it to us and having opportunities to explore the raw item as well as see it cooked.

Exploring food and its provenance is also another opportunity to explore diversity and our interdependency on each other within our country and as part of the wider world.

Closer to home, it is a valuable experience to visit allotments, farms, markets, local shops and supermarkets to see food in processed and unprocessed states and to buy some for cooking and/or eating at the setting.

Within Early Years settings, children can learn about the food cycle by growing herbs, fruit and vegetables, harvesting, washing and eating them and then composting waste.

[Where food comes from](#)

- Part of the Food a Fact of Life resources from the British Nutrition Foundation

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Learning about and through play – page 53

[Laying the Table Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance](#)

- Summary of current good practice in settings – page 94 – 101



Sensory play

Early years practitioners already understand the importance of providing sensory experiences to stimulate children's learning from birth. The sensory nature of foodstuffs makes them an ideal resource for this kind of play.

Play dough:

See Appendix A for difference recipes.

Feely bags:

Children have great fun guessing the items in a feely sack. Use fruit or vegetables to test their knowledge! Can they tell what it is just by putting their hand inside? Pull it out, were they right? As an alternative ask them to find a certain item by putting their hand in without looking and pulling out the one you asked for.

Treasure baskets:

<u>Fruit & vegetables</u>	<u>Herbs & Spices</u>
Apple Peas in pods Sweet potato Orange Plums Banana Mango Cauliflower Carrots with tops on Beetroot with leaves on Corn on the cob	Parsley Garlic Cloves Root ginger Cinnamon sticks Mint
<u>Pasta</u>	<u>Kitchen equipment</u>
Spirals/bows Tagliatelle/spaghetti Macaroni Cannelloni Tubes Tri coloured Large shells/small	Small saucepans Wooden Spoon Spatula Ladle Masher Cup/bowl/plate (plastic) Balloon whisk

**Vegetable/fruit ‘treasure hunt’:**

Whole, raw fruit and vegetables can be hidden in a box of e.g. soil/sand/shredded paper/sawdust, for children to find. Children also enjoy hiding them again or washing them for future use.

Creative play:

Play food stuff in a container, tray or on a mat e.g. flour; jelly; pasta, or new items which are being introduced to the menu and letting children freely explore.

The following foods can be used for art and craft, sorting activities and malleable/messy play. Please consider what you use and in what quantity, being mindful of excessive waste. Children need to learn about these considerations too.

Lentils	Mustard seeds
Split peas	Sunflower seeds
Dhal	Dried peas
Macaroni	Rice, wheat, oats etc.
Spaghetti	Used tea bags
Pasta shapes	Herbs
Cous cous	Mashed potato

DO NOT USE RAW BEANS AS THEY CAN BE TOXIC IF NOT COOKED

Edible paint for babies:

Make ‘paint’ out of vegetables/fruit for mark making. Cook longer than you would normally, until very soft. Blend until completely smooth. Strawberries can be prepared as usual and then blended with a little water. Put blobs of ‘paint’ on a tray or wipe clean surface for baby to explore - carrot for orange “paint”; strawberries for red; broccoli for green etc.

Gloop:

Put corn flour in tray/ bowl. Slowly add water until just runny but malleable. When pressed or squeezed the mixture becomes firm and dry-ish; when left alone it is runny and will drip through fingers. Fascinating for adults as well as children!

**Printing:**

Traditionally shapes are cut from potatoes for printing but why not try letting children experiment with the natural texture and shapes of different fruit and vegetables?

- Use cauliflower or broccoli florets, either whole or cut in half.
- Rolling corn on the cob makes a great pattern.
- Cut things lengthways and width ways to give different shapes.
- Mushrooms, tomatoes and peppers make great shapes when cut in half.

Use plenty of thick paint to avoid watery pictures and splashes. (Adding glue will help with this.)

Special interest tables:

As previously mentioned the best way for children to accept food is by letting them explore it by looking, feeling, smelling and tasting it – all of their own choice. By displaying items and making them available for this, children can become more familiar without the pressure of mealtimes.

A smells table:

Children can explore the smells of food items and guess the contents. Fill containers with items from the following list and cover the top with a thin piece of cloth and an elastic band.

Freshly chopped onion	Pickle
Ripe cheese	Curry powder
Whole grain mustard	Powdered ginger
Turmeric	Powdered cinnamon
Freshly chopped orange	Freshly chopped mint or parsley

A herb table:

Using fresh herbs show children how to rub their fingers and thumbs gently on the leaves and then to smell the aroma that has been released.

Parsley	Fennel
Mint	Sage
Thyme	Rosemary
Chives	

All of these can be grown in the garden or in containers if outdoor space is limited. Help children to identify these in dishes they may have already



tasted or incorporate them into the weeks menu so they can see how they are used.

Ways of categorising food for exploration:

- **‘Leafy vegetables we can eat’** – lettuce, green cabbage, red cabbage, Chinese leaves, spring greens, spinach.
- **‘Root vegetables we can eat’** – carrots, parsnips, Swedes, turnips, beetroot, radishes, yams, celeriac, ginger, potatoes (these are actually tubers rather than root vegetables and grow underground).
- **‘Flowers we can eat’** – broccoli, calabrese, globe artichokes, cauliflower. We eat these whilst still in bud. Cauliflower is a compressed mass of unformed flower buds.
- Don’t forget there are also “fruits we can eat” and “stems we can eat” i.e. celery, and asparagus.

Exploring fruit and vegetables:

- Give children appropriate knives to chop fruit and vegetables themselves. They can peel and help prepare for snack time.
- Cut open different fruit, what’s inside? Offer magnifying glasses to help look at seeds. Tomatoes and peppers are great for this!
- Ask children to talk about texture inside and out.
- Can they smell chopped fruit & guess what it is?
- Mix up the chopped pieces and encourage children to taste and guess what it is by taste.

Role play:

Imaginative play in areas resourced as domestic/shop/café etc. gives children opportunities to act out what they have experienced first-hand and to discover new experiences. These areas can greatly encourage language and communication. Include fresh produce and real foodstuffs to extend vocabulary as well as sensory learning.

Embrace each child’s cultural identity, and promote diversity, by including produce and utensils from various cultures. Be aware of and respect the variety of cultural differences in cooking and eating (e.g. making tea in a saucepan; eating with fingers; in Chinese culture you hold a bowl of rice to your mouth to eat from it with chopsticks). Even in the same extended family, individual households will have their own views on what constitutes “good” table manners or acceptable food.



Food related songs and rhymes

As well as developing early literacy, music and numeracy skills, songs and rhymes can help children learn new vocabulary and routines when they are regularly used in the same situations.

Children can have fun and develop their language further by playing around with rhymes/songs. Encourage children to invent new versions related to foods or processes they are involved with.

Making soup

(‘Here we go round the mulberry bush’)
Who will help me make some soup,
Make some soup, make some soup
Who will help me make some soup,
Soup for the nursery children

Chop up the carrots, in they plop,
In they plop, in they plop.
Chop up the carrots, in they plop
Making soup for the nursery children

Empty the pea pods, pop, pop, pop,
Pop, pop, pop; pop, pop, pop.
Empty the pea pods, pop, pop, pop,
Making soup for the nursery children

Five juicy apples

Five juicy apples, crunchy to the core,
One went in a lunchbox, and then there were four.

Four juicy apples hanging from a tree,
One went into a pie, and then there were three.

Three juicy apples, ripe and good to chew;

One was made into some sauce, and then there were two.

Two juicy apples, shining in the sun
One was squeezed to make a drink
And then there was one.

One juicy apple, and this was just for me
I pulled it down from off the branch, and took it home for tea.

Slice up the onions, wipe your eyes,
Wipe your eyes, wipe your eyes.
Slice up the onions, wipe your eyes.
Making soup for the nursery children

Crumble a stock cube sprinkle, sprinkle
Sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle
Crumble a stock cube, sprinkle, sprinkle
Making soup for the nursery children

Give it all a great big stir,
Great big stir, great big stir
Give it all a great big stir,
Making soup for the nursery children

Now it’s time to eat it up,
Eat it up, eat it up.
Now it’s time to eat it up,
For the nursery children

House of sandwiches

Build a house of sandwiches thick and thin.
Make a little chimney of tomato skin.
Lettuce for the windows, pancakes for the floor,
Let’s walk in through the big banana door!

Choosing/picking fruit

(‘Here we go round the mulberry bush’)
This is the way we pick the fruit...
This is the way we wash the fruit...”
This is the way we chop up the fruit...”
This is the way we eat the fruit...”



Five little peas

Five little peas in a pea-pod pressed,
One grew, two grew, and so did all the
rest.

[Clench all the fingers on one hand]

[Slowly open each finger]

They grew and they grew ...and did not
stop,

[Stretch fingers wide apart]

Until one day the pod went ...POP!

[When it says POP! clap loudly]

Don't forget old favourites. . . One Potato, Two Potato; Little Miss Muffet; Little Jack Horner; Jack Sprat; Pat-a-cake; Sing A Song of Sixpence; Mix A Pancake, Stir A Pancake; Five Rosy Apples by the Cottage Door . . . etc.

Food related books

Sharing stories and non-fiction books is a great way to introduce new ideas, encourage discussion and support learning. There are many food related fiction and nonfiction titles; here is a very small selection:

Fiction:

Delicious! [Pumpkin Soup Series] Helen Cooper, Picture Corgi (2007)

Eddie's Garden: and How to Make Things Grow Sarah Garland, Frances Lincoln Children's Books (2006)

Everybody Cooks Rice Norah Dooley, Carolrhoda Picture Books (1992)

Going to the Dentist [Usborne First Experiences] Anne Civardi, Usborne Publishing Ltd (2009)

Growing Vegetable Soup [Board book] Lois Ehlert, Harcourt Trade (2008)

Handa's Surprise Eileen Browne, Walker Books (2006)

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World Marjorie Priceman, Dragonfly Books (1996)



Mama Panya's Pancakes Mary and Rich Chamberlin, Barefoot Books Ltd. (2006)

Oliver's Milkshake Vivian French, Hodder Children's Books (2000)

Oliver's Vegetables Vivian French, Hodder Children's Books (1995)

Spot's Harvest [Board book] Eric Hill, Frederick Warne and Company (2010)

Stone Soup [Flip-Up Fairy Tales] Jess Stockham, Child's Play International (2006)

The Gigantic Turnip Aleksie Tolstoy and Niamh Sharkey, Barefoot Books Ltd. (2006)

The Little Red Hen [Board book] Byron Barton, HarperCollins (1996)

The World Came To My Place Today Dr Jo Readman, Eden Children's Books (2004)

Wash Your Hands! [Little Princess Books] Tony Ross, Kane/Miller Book Publishers (2006)

Non-fiction:

Bread [Starters] Saviour Pirotta, Wayland (2007)

Carrots Grow Underground [How Fruit and Vegetables Grow series] Mari Schuh, Capstone Press (2011)

Come and Eat with Us [Discovery Flaps] Annie Kubler, Child's Play International (1995)

Long Distance Lunch [Big Cat Progress Series] Anita Ganeri, Collins Educational (2012)

We Are What We Eat! [Things I Eat!] Sally Smallwood, Zero To Ten (2008)



World Food Alphabet Chris Caldicott, Frances Lincoln Children's Books (2012)

There are many many more titles!

Food for different cultures, festivals and celebrations

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Cultural and religious diets – page 49
- Food customs of difference cultures and religious groups – page 50

Many settings include festivals and celebrations in their planning as a way of celebrating diversity and many festivals and celebrations have traditional food associated with them. When deciding which to include it is useful to know that current thinking suggests they should be related to the daily lives of the children in a developmentally appropriate, informed and balanced way (O'Connor, 2010).

Therefore, it makes sense to choose festivals which the children themselves celebrate with their families and those which are reflected in the wider local community. Remember that not all the members of any community will necessarily celebrate the same events - and those who do will not celebrate in exactly the same way. This is an important thing for children to learn too.

Food connected with special occasions is often high in fat, sugar and/or salt, so this needs to be kept in mind when planning, especially if there are several celebrations in a row. Try to find a balance of food to explore.

Talk to the children, their families and local participants to find suitable recipes.

See Appendix B for a calendar of festivals and celebrations.

Cookery

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Cooking with children – page 54

“Over the last generation or two, people’s cooking skills have been lost. This is due to a growing culture of takeaways, fast food restaurants and ready meals, combined with a reduction in teaching cookery in schools,” (Children’s Food Trust, September 2012: p20).

This lack of experience, together with increasingly busy lives, means that many children do not have the opportunities to cook or even eat homemade food often. Early Years settings are well-placed to provide these experiences whilst offering many other learning outcomes at the same time.

Cooking is one of many opportunities to develop good habits, along with life skills, which will serve children well in the future and increase their familiarity with a range of tastes and textures to encourage them to choose a varied, nutritious diet as they grow.

The more involved children are in preparing food, the more likely they will want to taste what they have made. Even very young children can be involved in some stages of the preparation process in virtually any meal/snack. Most toddlers love squeezing, manipulating, stirring, and mashing food - often doing so with their own food during mealtimes. These skills can easily be transferred, for example, to kneading dough, shaping pastry, mashing banana or cooked vegetables and stirring all kinds of mixtures.

Cooking can be a rewarding experience for children and adults together. Even so, practitioners can be deterred by a variety of obstacles.

Overcoming Obstacles:

The most commonly mentioned reasons for not providing cooking opportunities are: lack of time; not having the right resources; the cost; and mess. All of these obstacles can be overcome with reflective practice, careful planning and enthusiasm.



With such a priority being placed on children's emotional and physical health and wellbeing we cannot afford not to give cookery more priority in our settings.

Not enough time:

- Don't begrudge time spent on cooking it offers so many possible learning opportunities (see Appendix E, 'Supporting Learning in the EYFS').
- Get organised before you start the activity with the children - have everything to hand before you start or get children to help with the preparation.
- Work with small groups at a time.
- Children's attention spans can be short so if there is a long process, such as bread making, consider making it on a smaller scale (eg rolls instead of loaves); doing some of the preparation in advance (eg leaving the children to knead dough and shape rolls).
- As children get older, they can concentrate for longer and you can move on to more complicated dishes.
- Giving different groups different tasks/parts of the recipe to make one combined end result.

No Cooker:

- If you don't have access to a cooker, you might consider giving children opportunities for preparing food which can be refrigerated then taken home with cooking instructions eg. mini pizzas, bread rolls, fruit crumble. This would also encourage more cooking together at home.
- There are many 'no cook' recipes e.g. fruit and/or vegetable salads, kebabs, milkshakes, fruit smoothies, dips etc. Children can still experience weighing, measuring, chopping, blending without heating. Other examples include, coleslaw, wraps, pittas, sandwiches, cous cous, dips and dippers.
- Outdoor cooking is another option if your setting lights fires as part of Forest School for example. See Appendix D for more details.
- Portable mini-cookers and hobs are available to buy for small scale cookery activities, your next fundraising project could aim to purchase new resources to support more cooking.

**Cost:**

- Cooking ingredients should be considered just as important as all other resources you buy for the setting e.g. paint and paper because of the valuable learning and positive health outcomes associated with them.
- If finance is a serious issue, you might consider asking for donations of utensils and/or ingredients from the local community e.g. a local shop/supermarket.
- You could ask parents/carers to think of the setting when they next go shopping; asking them to bring in an ingredient to keep the 'larder' stocked e.g. flour, pasta, spices etc.
- Organise fundraising activities to raise money for cookery

Mess:

- Accept mess as part of the learning process, this is the early years after all!
- Wearing aprons and covering surfaces and maybe floor might help?
- Encourage children to be involved in clearing up after cooking. Even very young children enjoy acquiring life skills such as washing up, sweeping or wiping surfaces.

What to cook?

There are many useful cookery websites, books and resources aimed at young children which will contain a range of recipes you can use/adapt for your cookery activities. We have listed recommended recipe sites in Appendix C.

Some recipes you'll come across will be high in fat and sugar. When cooking, in the same way as planning menus and cooking meals for young children, you need to be mindful of the Eat Better Start Better Nutritional Guidelines for Early Years and plan to cook dishes that are made up predominantly of food from the 4 food groups. Sugar and fat is kept to a minimum and confectionery should be avoided.

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- Summary of the four food groups – page 15
- Guidelines for desserts, puddings and cakes – page 24
- Guidelines for fat, salt and sugar - 27



Whilst cakes and biscuits can be cooked and consumed as part of a balanced diet, we are using cookery within our settings to help promote good habits whilst widening tastes and preferences and supporting a balanced diet. Providing a wide selection of recipes will allow children to develop different skills and become more familiar with a variety of foods and preparation techniques.

When planning cookery, offer a balance of savoury and non-savoury recipes but where traditional 'sweet' recipes are used try halving the amount of sugar in the recipe.

Remember whilst choosing recipes with children do not label recipes as healthy or unhealthy.

Be aware that some recipes will claim to be 'healthy' because they don't include white/processed sugar. They will instead use honey, concentrated fruit juice, syrup (such as molasses/golden syrup) or other sugars which are equally sweet. This means they are still detrimental to dental health and to maintaining a healthy weight whilst also encouraging a sweet tooth so avoid too much of these too.

When planning your recipes ensure that you have considered dietary requirements and have planned recipes which are accessible to all children.

Resources to consider:

The basic items which you will probably need are listed below. Remember, investing in high quality resources will mean a higher quality experience and will save money in the long run as they will last longer.

Mixing bowls	Whisks
Measuring jugs	Scales
Wooden spoon	Aprons (& chef hats)
Spatulas	Kitchen timers
Rolling pins	Vegetable peelers
Graters	Oven trays
Chopping boards	Tin opener
Potato masher	Plastic table cloths to wipe clean
Hand blender	Cleaning kit!



Induction hobs - These allow work stations to be set up near to electrical sockets using tables with a cloth over which are of children's height. They cost £50-£60 approx. and require induction ready saucepans. (You can check if the saucepans you have are suitable to use on induction hobs as they have a magnetic bottom.)

Knives for children – children can be supported to use any knives but there are several children's knives available on the market that help to minimise safety risks whilst maximising cutting ability. They often have easy to grip handles and can be serrated so that children learn to cut in a sawing/back and forth motion. We are not endorsing any brand or recommending specific types of knives but here are some examples:

Kinderkitchen ["dog knife with teeth"](#)

Kinderkitchen ["dog shaped knife"](#)

Pampered Chef ["My safe cutter"](#)

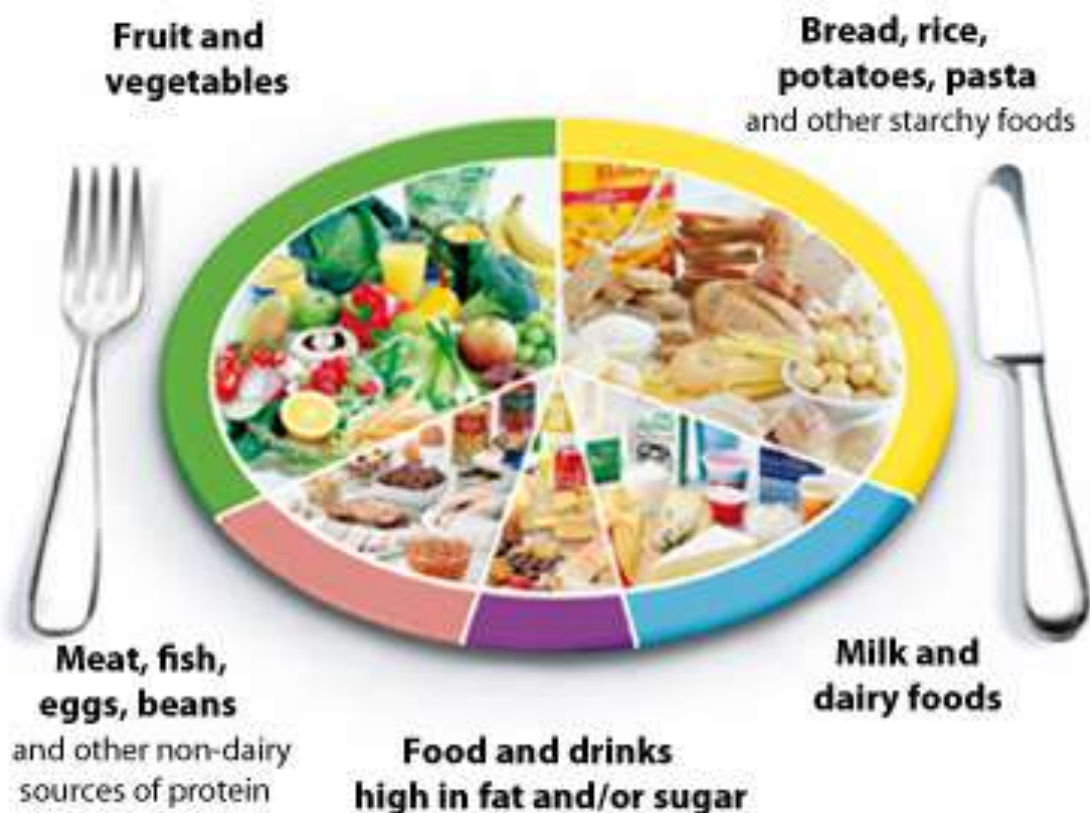
Basic skills children will be trying out:

- Spreading using knives at snack time or during cookery
- Cracking eggs by tapping the egg on the rim of a cup/bowl, then opening the two halves out, trying not to spill the egg!
- Kneading and rolling out dough using a rolling pin
- Cutting shapes out using cutters and place shapes on a dish by hand
- Using a sieve to shake flour into a bowl
- Cutting soft fruit or vegetables
- Grating
- Crushing in a plastic bag with a rolling pin
- Rubbing in butter and flour for crumble
- Crushing garlic in a garlic press
- Greasing and lining tins
- Mashing with the back of a fork e.g. banana for a banana cake
- Mashing vegetables with a masher
- Peeling with a vegetable peeler
- Pouring ingredients into containers and bowls
- Prepare for cooking e.g. tying back hair, wash hands, wear an apron
- Wash fruit and vegetables to remove dirt
- Measure quantity of ingredients with whole numbers e.g. 8 grapes, 1/2 cucumber and use cups and measuring spoons e.g. 5ml/ 1 cup
- Use a cutter to cut out shapes Knead bread dough using hands



- Combine ingredients together using a spoon e.g. Stir
- Clear away equipment
- Place food in the fridge to keep it safe
- Arrange ingredients e.g. on a kebab stick
- Know names of basic equipment

The Eatwell Plate



Although the Eatwell plate isn't meant for children under 5, it is what they should be working towards by the time they reach 5 years old. It can be used when you are planning your food provision – both for meals/snacks and cookery activities – to help ensure children are getting the right balance of food across the food groups.

As mentioned previously, the Eat Better Start Better Guidelines plan from 4 food groups but acknowledge that there will be added sugar/fat within some dishes, although this should be kept to a minimum. You can use the Eatwell Plate with children and families to demonstrate the types of foods we should consume and the proportion of these to others. Fruit, vegetables and carbohydrates should make up the biggest part of our diet, with protein and dairy sources next. Our bodies don't need added sugar or fat so



these should only make up a really small part of what we eat. In a child- friendly way, the different food groups do these things for us:

- **Fruit & vegetables** – give our bodies lots of vitamins and minerals, and boost our immune systems which keep away coughs and colds! They also have some sugar in them which we can use to make things sweeter.
- **Carbohydrates** – these give us lots and lots of energy for a long time and they will keep our tummies full!
- **Protein** – these are ‘body builders’ for good muscles, strength and energy! There is some good fats in here too that will help our bodies move well.
- **Dairy** – this will make sure we have strong bones as we grow and strong teeth too!
- **Added fat & sugar** – Extra sugar will give us a small amount of energy but very quickly and won’t keep us full or last long. Sugar can harm our teeth too. Too much extra fat isn’t good for our bodies either.

Portion sizes

Any guidance about portion sizes should be underpinned by the principle of responsive feeding. Discussions/displays/information given about portion sizes needs to clearly include following hunger and fullness cues and the importance of following the child’s lead.

So what is a portion?

We can use our own hand as a ‘ready reckoner’ when thinking about portions for ourselves and a child’s hand for them to get an idea of the recommended size of one portion for themselves:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Cupped hand | fresh fruit/veg |
| • Half a cupped hand | dried fruit |
| • Closed fist | pasta/potatoes/rice (½ - 1 slice bread) (carbs) |
| • Palm | meat/fish/eggs/pulses (protein) |
| • Two fingers | piece of cheese (dairy) |
| • Tip of thumb (to 1 st joint) | fat/sugar |



Number of portions:

Daily portions	Children	Adults
Fruit & vegetables	5	5+
Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta	4	6
Meat, fish, eggs, beans	2-3	2-3
Milk and dairy foods	3	2-3
Foods and drink high in fat and/or sugar	0-2	0-2

[Eat Better Start Better Guidance](#) has more information on:

- How to use the portion size information – page 14

The [Food Portion](#) Book is also useful as is [Food for Thought](#) (with more on responsive feeding.)

Cooking Outdoors

More and more settings are incorporating forest skills into their sessions and giving children a quite different experience of cooking. When cooking outdoors you can tailor virtually any recipe to suit your equipment, time and fire-making skills. Children can prepare ingredients, mix and pour outdoors in just the same ways as indoors with some organisation and planning beforehand.

For a list of outdoor recipes, cooking methods and outdoor cooking health and safety considerations please check out Appendix D.

Early Years Foundation Stage - Curriculum Guidance

Food play and cookery offer ideal opportunities to support and extend the learning characteristics (Playing and Exploring; Active Learning; Creating and Thinking) as well as to develop the skills and knowledge in all areas of learning outlined in “Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage” (Early Education 2012).

The Prime areas are all integral elements of well-planned food play and cookery; for example:-



- The relationships which build as children engage in these activities with encouraging adults and cooperative peers; the confidence and self-esteem children experience as they learn to do things for themselves (and create attractive and appealing items for others); learning to take turns and observing safety rules help children's **Personal Social and Emotional Development**.
- **Communication and Language** skills are developed through conversation and non-verbal communication with adults and peers as children play or cook. Children who are having fun are motivated to communicate. With sensitive and responsive adult support, they learn new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, they practice listening, following instructions and they have opportunities to express what they are doing, thinking or feeling. (See page 9 - Ten Top Tips for Talking).
- **Physical Development** is a key aspect of both food play and cookery - from the earliest sensory explorations to the high levels of co-ordination and control needed to use kitchen tools effectively. The physical awareness and motor skills which are established in the earliest years form foundations for all sorts of later learning - including writing. "With fingers first, then using utensils or even a piece of bread, making marks and patterns in food helps finger and hand control. . . needed later for holding mark making instruments." (Williams & Featherstone 2013: p8). In addition, children can learn important messages about self-care - particularly regarding hygiene and the benefits of a healthy diet.

In 'Exploring Food and Where It Comes From' (see page 10), it is easy to see how all the areas of learning can be supported:

- **Literacy** - e.g. writing shopping lists; reading recipes; rhymes; stories; reference materials.
- **Mathematics** - e.g. counting; weighing; measuring; comparing sizes; calculating.
- **Understanding the World** - e.g. learning about food and food-related customs from their own and others' cultures; learning about countries of the world, diversity and interdependence; growth and change; similarities and differences; cause and effect; technology in daily life.



For a more detailed look at how settings can use food play to support these areas see Appendix E.

Involving families

Early years practitioners know that children's learning is more effective when they are supported by their families; food is an ideal common ground from which to encourage this. For instance:

- Food forms part of the discussion when a child first attends a setting as dietary needs or preferences are considered. This might be an opportunity to ask for any well-loved recipes or sources of any unfamiliar foodstuffs.
- Families could be asked to contribute recipes to match a current theme or interest or to make a setting recipe book.
- Cookery bags, containing a recipe, some utensils and perhaps a related story could be taken home for families to enjoy together with the children. If a notebook is included for comments and pictures, children can share their cooking experiences with each other. You can find information on [cookery bags](#) on the DPH Award website.
- Events such as family breakfasts or tea parties could showcase children's food preparation skills and will help promote food children are enjoying in the setting all whilst fostering positive relationships.
- Some family members might be willing to come and help with cookery sessions or to lead a session by cooking a recipe which is special to them.
- Settings might even consider running cookery workshops for parents/carers. For more information on this check out the DPH Award website.

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Fun with dough

Appendix A

Recipe 1

Salt dough for modelling (food or anything!), dry in the oven and varnish with PVA glue.

500g self-raising flour

500g salt

Water to mix

Recipe 2

Play dough that requires cooking and storing in airtight container.

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

2 cups water

2 tablespoons oil

2 teaspoons cream of tartar

Powder paint or food colouring

Cook the mixture over medium heat, stirring all the time to prevent sticking. Remove from the heat when mixture comes away from the pan. Knead well; children can help with this when mixture has cooled down.

Recipe 3 – Jelly dough

9 cups of plain flour

3 cups of salt

2 cups of boiling water

9 tablespoons of vegetable oil

4 tablespoons of cream of tartar

1 packet of jelly crystals

Put jelly crystals, cream of tartar, salt and flour into a pan and mix together with a wooden spoon. Put oil and boiling water into a large jug and stir. Slowly pour the water and oil into the pan with the dry mix and stir slowly. Place on a medium heat and continue to stir until you get smooth workable dough.

Recipe 4 – Cous Cous dough

2 cups of cooked cous cous

4 cups of plain flour

8 tablespoons vegetable oil



Mix cooled cous cous, flour, add vegetable oil until you have a good pliable dough

Recipe 5 – Porridge Oats dough

6 cups of porridge oats
6 cups of plain white flour
4 cups of boiling water
4 tablespoons vegetable oil

Put oats in a large bowl & pour in boiling water, allow to cool add flour & oil stir until you have a workable dough

Recipe 6 – Glue dough

6 cups of plain white flour
6 cups of corn flour
3 cups of white PVA glue
3 cups of warm water

Place the flour & cornflour together in the bowl & mix well, slowly pour in the PVA glue mixing all the time. Add the water until you have soft pliable dough.

Recipe 7 – Wheat free dough

2 cups rice flour
2 cups salt
1 tablespoon of cream of tartar
4 tablespoons of oil
1 cup of water
Food colouring (optional)

Mix the flour, salt and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Add the oil and gradually blend in the water and food colouring, if using. Cook over moderate heat, stirring, until mixture is stiff and leaves the sides of the pan clean. Leave until cool enough to handle, and then knead gently on the work surface until smooth. Store in an air tight container.

Painting

Using watered down dough from recipe 2 (without oil) – colour it with paint and let the children explore and paint with their fingers. Give children a large space – paper, cloth, plastic sheet etc.



Festivals and Celebrations

Appendix B

<u>Festival/Celebration</u>	<u>Date/Time Of Year</u>	<u>Comments</u>
New Year's Day	1 January	Gregorian calendar
Ne'er Day -Scotland		
Rastafarian	7 January	Ethiopian Christmas
Makar Sankranti	14 January	Indian harvest festival
Burns Night	25 January	
Chinese New Year	Late January/Early February	
Tu b'Shevat	Late January/Early February	
Setsuban	3 February	Japanese-bean scattering ceremony
Valentine's Day	14 February	
Shrove Tuesday	40 days before Easter	Pancake Day / Mardi Gras
Latin American & Caribbean Carnival	Late February/March	Sometimes linked to Shrove Tuesday
Holi	Late February/Early March	Hindu Spring Festival
St. David's Day	1st March	Patron saint of Wales
Ching Mong	Usually March	Festival of Light
Purim	4 weeks before Passover	Celebrating Esther's saving of the Jews in Persia
St. Patrick's Day	17 March	Patron saint of Ireland
Naw-Ruz	21 March	Baha'i New Year
Jamshedi Noruz	21 March	Fasli calendar New Year
Mothering Sunday	March	3 weeks before Easter Sunday
Easter	March or April	
St George's Day	23 April	Patron saint of England
May Day	First Monday in May	Spring festival
Ploughing Festival	A week before Wesak	Buddhist festival
Wesak (Visakha)	First day of full moon in May	Most important Buddhist festival-inc Buddha's birth
Shavuot	Late May/Early June	A Jewish harvest festival
Tuan Yang Chieh	Late May/Early June	Chinese Dragon Boat Festival
Obon	15 July	Japanese festival of ancestors
Rosh Hoshana	Usually September	Jewish New Year
Chong Yang	Late September/Early October	Chinese 'Double 9' festival
Harvest - UK	Late September/Early October	
Dussehra	Usually October	Hindu festival
Hallowe'en	31 st October	The night before Christian "All Saints Day"
Diwali	October/November	Hindu festival of light
Guy Fawkes	5 th November	Commemorates foiling of Gunpowder Plot
Shichi-go-san	15 th November	Japanese "7-5-3" children's festival
Ramadan	Islamic Calendar 9 th month	Muslim month of prayer and fasting
Eid Al-Fitr	End of Ramadan	
Al Hijrah	14 weeks after Eid Al-Fitr	Muslim New Year
St. Andrew's Day	30 th November	Patron saint of Scotland
Chanukah or Hanukkah	Usually December	Jewish festival of lights
Christmas Day	25 December	Christians - Jesus' birth

Please note that some dates are not the same every year. There can be checked online at sites such as www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar



Recommended cookery links

Appendix C

- **Eat Better Start Better Recipe Books**

Seasonal recipe books – [Spring Summer](#) and [Autumn Winter](#)

These are compliant to the Guidelines with main meal and dessert recipes for both small and large numbers of children.

- **British Nutrition Foundation**

www.foodafactoflife.org.uk

“Food - a fact of life provides a wealth of free resources about healthy eating, cooking, food and farming for children and young people aged 3 to 16 years.

The resources are progressive, stimulate learning and support the curriculum throughout the UK. All resources are designed to ensure that consistent and up-to-date messages are delivered.”

There are 5 main modules aimed at 3 – 5 year olds:

[12 Food-based sessions](#)

[Healthy eating](#)

[Cooking](#)

[Where food comes from](#)

[Recipes](#)

- **Let's Get Cooking**

[Recipes and resources](#) under ‘School clubs’ section

- **Food for Life Partnership**

www.foodforlife.org.uk

“The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. Together we are revolutionising school meals, reconnecting children and young people with where their food comes from, and inspiring families to grow and cook food.”

[Get Growing](#)

[Get Cooking](#)

[Visit a Farm](#)

- **Let's Get Cooking at home**

www.letsgetcookingathome.org.uk More Let's Get Cooking resources

- **Change 4 Life**

[Eat Well pages](#) of the website contain lots of recipes and ideas



- **Start4Life**

Give babies a better start with [Start4Life](#). Free information and downloadable resources for health and childcare professionals.

[Introducing Solid Foods](#) leaflet will help you think about things to consider when babies are just being introduced to solid foods; suitable foods to offer (ensuring parents/carers have offered them first) and things to be mindful of for under the 1s.

Other useful resource links:

- **British Nutrition Foundation**

[Video of Cutting, Grating and Peeling Techniques](#)

- **Great Grub Club**

Recipes, toolkits, resources, growing and food related activity ideas.
www.greatgrubclub.com

- **The Tesco Eat Happy Project**

Teaching toolkits, Farm to Fork Trails and how to videos.
www.eathappyproject.com

- **British Heart Foundation**

[‘Artie Beat’s Healthy Cook Book’](#) Free download – all recipes provided by children. Developed for children aged 7 plus but many of the recipes are suitable for younger children.

Don’t forget the [‘Food for Thought’](#) document created to support settings with snack and mealtimes; creating better eaters; responsive feeding and using snack and mealtime as a time to talk using the 10 Top Tips for Talking!



Outdoor Cooking Recipes

Appendix D

Vegetable Kebabs

Let children choose vegetables from a pre-prepared selection – peppers, mushroom, cherry tomatoes etc. and push onto a skewer. Place kebabs on a grill over the coals and cook until tender, leave to cool before eating.

Campfire Corn

Skewer corn on the cob and wrap up tightly in aluminium foil. Cook in the coals for about 15 minutes, unwrap and leave to cool before eating.

Baked Potato in a Can

Prick a potato (use jacket potato or small potato for speed and appropriate portion size) and place into a tin can, cover the top with aluminium foil and put the can into the coals.

Baggie Omelette

Put a large pot of water in the fire and allow it to come to the boil. Put 2 eggs in a heavy duty freezer/food bag with sealable top, press all the air out and seal. Let the children mix the eggs through the bag by squeezing between their fingers.

Open the bag and add children's desired ingredients - shredded cheese, chopped ham, vegetables etc. Press the air out again and seal tightly. Fold the bag several times making sure all your eggs are at the bottom.

Carefully place in boiling water. Let boil 12-15 minutes. Carefully remove bag out of boiling water, open the bag and a perfect omelette will roll out! Leave to cool and share between 2-3 children.

Pizza in a Pouch

Let children spread half a muffin with tinned tomatoes some grated cheese and any extra toppings of choice – pepper, mushroom, ham etc.

Place 2 muffin halves on a piece of aluminium foil, leaving enough spare to fold it in half over the pizzas. Seal all three edges, forming a pouch and totally enclosing the two halves. Wrap a second piece of foil around the foil pouch as a second layer. Seal the edges. Carefully place the foil pouch over the fire (shortly before the fire has burned to coals or the charcoal has turned grey) with the bottom of the muffin on the coals.

Allow to cook on the fire until the cheese melts. The foil will be very hot when removed from the fire so allow it to cool before opening.

Campfire Breadsticks

Let children roll homemade bread dough between their hands, forming a rope (don't leave it too thick as this will take too long to cook all the way through). Let children take the dough and wind it around the stick in a spiral, pressing the ends to the stick so that it does not fall off.

Place the stick over hot coals, occasionally rotating the stick so that the bread gets brown on all sides.



Different bread recipes (e.g. chapattis, Indian Flatbread etc.) can also be tailored to cooking on an open fire or on a skillet/dry frying pan or use a cardboard oven (see below) to cook in a more conventional way. Make dough into rolls rather than loaves for speed of cooking.

Baked Apple & Raisins

Core an apple and let children fill with raisins. Wrap the apple in foil and place in the coals. Cook until apple is soft, leave to cool and let children spoon out the insides.

Apple Pie on a Stick

Push a skewer through an apple and turn over the coals of the campfire. When the apple peel starts to loosen, adults can peel the skin off and let the children roll their apple around in a bowl of cinnamon or sprinkle the cinnamon until lightly coated. (Cinnamon has quite a strong taste so careful children don't coat their apple too heavily!) Return the apple back to the coals and roast for a few more minutes. Leave to cool before eating.

Ants on a Log - Campfire Style!

Let the children split a banana down the middle, leaving it in its peel then sprinkle raisins down the split. Wrap up in tin foil and warm in the coals. Leave to cool before eating.

Orange Campfire Cakes

Slice off the top of an orange, let children spoon out all of the fruit, leaving an empty shell. (They can eat the fruit as they wait for their cake to cook!) Pour homemade cake batter into each orange, place the top back on and wrap up in tin foil. Place in coals and bake for 10 to 15 minutes or until cake mixture is cooked.

Cake in a Can

As above but using an empty aluminium can - half fill the can with homemade cake mix and make an aluminium foil lid for the top. Put a slice of pineapple into the bottom of the can first for pineapple upside down cake. Place in fire and bake until skewer comes out clean.

Making soup

Various soup recipes can also be made outdoors; children will get lots of opportunities for chopping and peeling using different vegetables. A 'Dutch Oven' (see page 35) can be used to boil vegetables and a masher can be used instead of a hand blender/food mixer. Consider salt content of stock cubes if you wish to use them, some soups will work just as well without. Add beans and pulses too!

Cardboard oven

You'll need a large cardboard box with 5 sides, heavy duty aluminium foil a stapler and 4 wire coat hangers.

With a sharp knife cut 3 sides along a solid side of the box, preferably the bottom so it will open as a door or up as a lid. Cover all sides inside and out with 3 layers of foil,



shiny side up. Secure with staples. Straighten wire coat hangers. Poke through box on both sides to form rack a little above halfway to the lid. Bend both sides of hanger down on outside of box to form a hook. Repeat with other 3 hangers with equal distance between them.

Start fire and wait until coals are hot rather than an open flame. Set box on top, open side down. Make sure lid is closed. Now you are ready to bake. When baking, make sure you check every 5 minutes or so. It will be hot!

Dutch oven

Lots of outdoor cooking recipes refer to using a Dutch oven; this was originally a thick walled cast iron cooking pot with a tight fitting lid, it has three legs to stand in the fire and a convex lid so that hot coals can be placed on top to create heat all around the dish. It is possible though to cook on an open fire using any cooking pot as long as it has a lid. Traditional casserole dishes will also do the job.

Cooking Outdoors - Health & Safety

- Transport perishable foods in cool boxes with ice packs and ensure these are then kept in a cool sheltered spot.
- Food must not be placed directly on the ground and should be protected from the risk of contamination at all times. Use chopping boards, trays, wipe clean table cloths etc. as your food preparation area.
- Water in a spray container, antibacterial spray and kitchen roll can be taken to clean the above.
- Always keep cooked and raw foods separated. Prepare separately with different utensils etc. This will avoid cross contamination.
- Keep all food covered or wrapped for as long as possible to avoid contamination from flying insects, etc.
- Always get children to wash their hands thoroughly before preparing and eating food. Where hand washing facilities are inaccessible, antibacterial hand wipes/gel should be used.
- Ensure cuts and sores are covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Encourage children not to cough or sneeze over food.
- Do not allow anyone who is suffering with an upset stomach to handle food.
- Follow the instructions on the packaging of the food to ensure that you cook it thoroughly. Ensure that food is piping hot before serving. Whenever possible avoid reheating food.
- Always take your rubbish away with you.



Supporting Learning in the EYFS

Appendix E

These EYFS suggestions for things which practitioners might do and provide to support children's learning can all be achieved through food play and cookery from birth. [Relevant appendix/appendices for play ideas are noted in green]

Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

Birth -20 mths	Show your pleasure in being with the baby. Respond to and build on babies' expressions, actions, and gestures. Babies will repeat actions that get a positive response from you. Offer choices, e.g. different vegetables and fruit at snack time; Follow young babies' lead as they explore resources.
16-26 mths	Share children's pleasure when they do something for themselves.
22-50 mths	As children differ in their degree of self-assurance, plan to convey to each child that you appreciate them and their efforts. Vary activities so that children are introduced to different materials.
40-60 mths	Encourage children to explore and talk about what they are learning, valuing their ideas and ways of doing things. Offer help with activities when asked but not before.

Physical Development:

Birth -20 mths	Encourage babies gradually to share control of food and drink. Provide objects to be sucked, pulled, squeezed and held, to encourage the development of fine motor skills. Help children to enjoy their food and appreciate healthier choices by combining favourites with new tastes and textures.
16-26 mths	Provide sticks, rollers and moulds for young children to use in dough.
22-36mths	Involve young children in preparing food. Give children the chance to talk about what they like to eat, while reinforcing messages about healthier choices. Allow children to pour their own drinks, serve their own food. Create opportunities for moving towards independence, e.g. have hand-washing facilities safely within reach. Be aware of eating habits at home and of the different ways people eat their food, e.g. that eating with clean fingers is as skilled and equally valued as using cutlery. Ensure children's safety, while not unduly inhibiting their risk-taking.
30-50 mths	Talk with children about the importance of hand-washing.
40-60 mths	Explain why safety is an important factor in handling tools, equipment and materials, and have sensible rules for everybody to follow. Introduce and encourage children to use the vocabulary of manipulation, e.g. 'squeeze' and 'prod'. Provide activities that give children the opportunity and motivation to practise manipulative skills, e.g. cooking.



Communication and Language:

Birth - 20 mths	Create an environment which invites responses from babies and adults, for example, touching, smiling, smelling, feeling, listening, exploring, describing and sharing. Talk to babies about what you are doing and what is happening, so they will link words with actions, e.g. preparing lunch. Encourage babies' sounds and babbling by copying their sounds in a turn-taking 'conversation'. Share the fun of discovery and value babies' attempts at words.
16-26 mths	Build vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. ' <i>apple or Satsuma?</i> ' Be aware that young children's understanding is much greater than their ability to express their thoughts and ideas. Use pictures, books, real objects, and signs alongside your words.
22-36 mths	Use talk to describe what children are doing by providing a running commentary. Provide activities, such as cooking, where talk is used to anticipate or initiate what children will be doing, e.g. " <i>We need some eggs. Let's see if we can find some in here.</i> " Help children to build their vocabulary by extending the range of their experiences.
30-50 mths	Set up shared experiences that children can reflect upon, e.g. cooking. Give children clear directions; help them to deal with those involving more than one action. Give children 'thinking time'. Wait for them to think about what they want to say; put their thoughts into words without jumping in too soon to say something yourself.
40-60 mths	Set up collaborative tasks, for example, food activities. Give children opportunities both to speak and to listen, ensuring that the needs of children learning English as an additional language are met, so that they can participate fully. Ask children to think in advance about how they will accomplish a task. Talk through and sequence the stages together.

Literacy:

Birth -20mths	Use finger play, rhymes and familiar songs from home to support young babies' enjoyment. Tell, as well as read, stories, looking at and interacting with young babies. Provide objects to be sucked, pulled, squeezed and held, to encourage the development of fine motor skills. Provide a range of everyday objects for babies to explore and investigate such as treasure baskets. Encourage babies to make marks and to squeeze and feel media such as paint, gloop (cornflour and water), dough and bubbles. Provide materials to encourage large motor movements, e.g. sprinkling, throwing or spreading paint, glue, torn paper or other materials.
16-26 mths	Provide story sacks for parents to take them home to encourage use of books and talk about stories. Provide sticks, rollers and moulds for young children to use in dough.
22-36 mths	Find opportunities to tell and read stories to children, using puppets, soft toys, or real objects as props. Provide materials which reflect a cultural spread, so that children see symbols and marks with which they are familiar, e.g. Chinese script on a shopping bag.



30-50 mths	Provide fact and fiction books in all areas. Introduce children to books and other materials that provide information or instructions. Carry out activities using instructions, such as reading a recipe. Make books with children of activities they have been doing, using photographs of them as illustrations. Model writing for a purpose, e.g. a shopping list.
40-60 mths	Support and scaffold individual children's reading as opportunities arise. Encourage children to add to their first-hand experience of the world through the use of books, other texts and information, and information and communication technology. Resource role-play areas with listening and writing equipment. Ensure that role-play areas encourage writing of signs with a real purpose.

Mathematics:

Birth - 20 mths	Provide a small group of the same objects in treasure baskets, as well as single items. Play with children. Encourage them to explore, and show your own interest in discovering new things. Help children, as needed, to do what they are trying to do, without taking over or directing. Provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. Develop an awareness of number names through action rhymes and songs that relate to their experience of numbers.
16-26 mths	Use number words in meaningful contexts. Equip the role-play area with things that can be sorted in different ways. Provide collections of objects that can be sorted and matched in various ways. Talk about the maths in everyday situations. Provide resources that support children in making one-to-one correspondences, e.g. giving each dolly a cup. Use 'tidy up time' to promote logic and reasoning about where things fit in or are kept. Encourage children, when helping with domestic tasks, to put all the pieces of apple on one dish and all the pieces of celery on another for snacks.
22-36 mths	Make a display with the children about their favourite things. Talk about how many like apples. Plan to incorporate a mathematical component in areas such as the sand, water or other play areas.
30-50 mths	Model and encourage use of mathematical language e.g. asking questions such as 'How many saucepans will fit on the shelf?' Help children to understand that one thing can be shared by number of pieces, e.g. a pizza. Provide story props that children can use in their play, e.g. varieties of fruit and several baskets like Handa's in the story <i>Handa's Surprise</i> by Eileen Browne. Include counting money and change in role-play games. Provide rich and varied opportunities for comparing length, weight, capacity and time.
40-60 mths	Encourage estimation, e.g. estimate how many sandwiches to make for the picnic; Ensure that children are involved in making displays, e.g. making their own pictograms of lunch choices. Develop this as a 3D representation using bricks and discuss the most popular choices. Have areas where children can explore the properties of objects and where they can weigh and measure, such as a cookery station.



Understanding the World:

Birth to 20mths	Engage in playful interactions that encourage young babies to respond to, or mimic, adults. Plan to have one-to-one time to interact with young babies when they are in an alert and responsive state and willing to engage. Respond to and build on babies' expressions, actions and gestures. Babies will repeat actions that get a positive response from you. Provide a range of everyday objects for babies to explore and investigate such as treasure baskets.
16-26 mths	Provide books and resources which represent children's diverse backgrounds and which avoid negative stereotypes. Be positive about differences between people and support children's acceptance of difference. Be aware that negative attitudes towards difference are learned from examples the children witness. Celebrate and value cultural, religious and community events and experiences. Talk with children about their responses to sights, sounds and smells in the environment. Comment on the ways in which young children investigate how to push, pull, lift or press parts of toys and domestic equipment. Talk about the effect of children's actions, as they investigate what things can do.
22-36 mths	In pretend play, imitate everyday actions and events from family and cultural backgrounds, e.g. making and drinking tea. Talk to children about their friends, their families, and why they are important.
30-60 mths	Provide activities and opportunities for children to share experiences and knowledge from different parts of their lives with each other. Strengthen the positive impressions children have of their own cultures and faiths, and those of others in their community, by sharing and celebrating a range of practices and special events. Use parents' knowledge to extend children's experiences of the world. Visit different parts of the local community, including areas where some children may be very knowledgeable, e.g. Chinese supermarket, local church, elders' lunch club, Greek café. Provide role-play areas with a variety of resources reflecting diversity. Teach skills and knowledge in the context of practical activities, e.g. learning about the characteristics of liquids and solids by involving children in melting chocolate or cooking eggs. Examine change over time, for example, growing plants, and change that may be reversed, e.g. melting ice. Pose carefully framed open-ended questions, such as "How can we...?" or "What would happen if...?" Support and extend the skills children develop as they become familiar with simple equipment, such as twisting or turning a knob. Encourage children to speculate on the reasons why things happen or how things work. Provide a range of materials and objects to play with that work in different ways for different purposes, for example, egg whisk, torch, other household implements.



Expressive Arts and Design:

Birth - 20 mths	Provide objects to be sucked, pulled, squeezed and held. Encourage babies to use resources they can grasp, squeeze and throw. Encourage babies to make marks and to squeeze and feel media such as paint, gloop (cornflour and water), dough and bubbles. Provide materials to encourage large motor movements, e.g. sprinkling, throwing or spreading paint, glue, torn paper or other materials.
16-26 mths	Accept wholeheartedly young children's creations and help them to see them as something unique and valuable. Provide a wide range of materials, resources and sensory experiences to enable children to explore colour, texture and space. Show genuine interest and be willing to play along with a young child who is beginning to pretend. Provide a variety of familiar resources reflecting everyday life, such as ... real kitchen items.
22-36 mths	Encourage and support the inventive ways in which children add, or mix media, or wallow in a particular experience. Observe and encourage children's make-believe play in order to gain an understanding of their interests. Be interested in the children's creative processes and talk to them about what they mean to them.
30-50 mths	Support children's responses to different textures, e.g. touching sections of a texture display with their fingers, or feeling it with their cheeks to get a sense of different properties. Introduce vocabulary to enable children to talk about their observations and experiences, e.g. 'smooth' 'shiny' 'rough' 'prickly' 'flat' 'patterned' 'jagged', 'bumpy' 'soft' and 'hard'. Make suggestions and ask questions to extend children's ideas of what is possible, for example, " <i>I wonder what would happen if...</i> " Support children in thinking about what they want to make, the processes that may be involved and the materials and resources they might need. Demonstrate and teach skills and techniques associated with the things children are doing. Tell stories based on children's experiences and the people and places they know well.
40-60 mths	Encourage children to notice changes in properties of media as they are transformed through becoming wet, dry, flaky or fixed. Talk about what is happening, helping them to think about cause and effect. Provide children with opportunities to use their skills and explore concepts and ideas through their representations. Help children to gain confidence in their own way of representing ideas. Provide children with opportunities to use their skills and explore concepts and ideas through their representations.