



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
of Suffolk County

## Safety First When Cooking with Children

### **CAUTION: Children at Work!**

Cooking with children is a special way to create enduring memories. Even very young children can participate in these events. But, before you pull out the knives and turn on the stove, think safety

1. **Choose your projects carefully.** Consider both the age and ability of your children when choosing a recipe. When my son was 18 months old, he loved sitting in his highchair decorating cookies. When he was 8, he could read a recipe by himself.
2. **Organize projects ahead of time.** To avoid having your kids squirm while waiting for you to find the flour, sugar and spices, get the ingredients and any necessary utensils ready before the kids march into the kitchen.
3. **Wash your hands!** Make sure every child washes his/her hands before cooking -- and washes them again anytime they sneeze, use the bathroom or cough. It's never too early to instill good sanitary habits!
4. **Demonstrate the proper use of utensils, especially knives.** Teach children to always cut away from themselves. Save the intricate carving for yourself.
5. **Remember that seemingly innocent utensils like plastic knives and toothpicks can become dangerous weapons in the hands of an unwary child.** Always supervise closely and offer help when it's necessary to insure safety.
6. **Don't sample uncooked products made with raw eggs.** Yes, this means cookie dough! Raw eggs are a primary source of salmonella, a dangerous type of food poisoning. Although you may have eaten raw cookie dough your entire life, it doesn't mean it's a good idea to teach your children to do so. Instead, let them be your "official tasters" once the project is completed.
7. **Prepare for success.** Be ready to praise any creation, even when the biscuits look more like hot dog buns and the cloves stuck in the holiday ham aren't evenly spaced. Remember that it's holiday tradition you're creating, not a gourmet feast.