Mealtime Memories Begin in the Kitchen

A good way to get young children excited about new foods and healthy eating is to get them involved in the kitchen. Young children like to imitate their parents, and this is especially true during meal planning and food preparation.

Young children can:
- wipe and help set the table,
- select fruits or vegetables for the meal,
- rinse vegetables and fruits,
- snap green beans,
- stir pancake batter, and
- help assemble a pizza and make sandwiches.

Parents need to remember some safety tips when children are in the kitchen:
- Cook with pots and pans on the back burners.
- Keep hot dishes where children cannot touch or pull them down on top of themselves.
- Children should not remove cooked food from the microwave.
- Keep knives and other sharp objects out of children’s reach.

Watching children closely and giving them specific, child-appropriate tasks can help to increase your child’s interest in new foods and food preparation. Dr. Sharon Robinson, Associate Professor and Nutrition Specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, recommends that parents teach children to wash their hands with warm, soapy water before helping in the kitchen. This lifelong habit will keep children from getting sick or making others sick with a foodborne illness.

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service offers free and low-cost nutrition and health classes and other events. To find out what is available in your area, please contact your local county Extension agent.

Contact: Sharon Robinson, PhD, RD, LD; Associate Professor and Nutrition Specialist; Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System, September 2011.

Sources:
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/HealthyHabits/PickyEaters/kitchenactivities.html