

taste buds
chef Larry
James

Get kids involved in cooking

Ah! Tranquility has once again returned to the James Gang home. Gone are the "what are we gonna do today?" questions that seem to be the reason for being for kids bored with summer vacation. The old school routine has returned. Unfortunately, some parents look at the preparation of school breakfasts, lunches, and even dinner, as a chore that should be done as quickly, and as cheaply as possible. For those parents (and even for parents who like to cook), I suggest getting the kids involved in the planning and preparation of food.

The foods children eat affect their growth, development, behavior and ability to learn. How children eat is equally important. Early experiences with food lay the foundation for lifelong eating habits. Children learn the most by being actively involved. At home, and at school, children should be encouraged to be interested in food, and involved in its preparation. Creating something beautiful and tasty is a very rewarding experience.

Yet many children eat foods that come in boxes, packages, bags, bottles and out of vending machines, foods that have been designed for eating on the run. Such poor dietary habits, encouraged by misleading advertising, can undermine our children's health.

So forget the formulated, fabricated fake foods, and spend some time with your kids, showing them how to plan, shop, prepare and enjoy their meals. Make it a family affair.

Start with the youngest, who can help stir and measure, and involve the older children too. Weave in tales of how food was prepared "way back then."

There's little doubt that good eating habits are not naturally acquired, they must be learned. There are many things children can learn through working with food. First off, they gain an awareness of nutrition. Dairy products help bones grow; meat, fish and poultry provide the protein that gives us energy to play. What's more, working with parents in the kitchen helps children develop socially and emotionally.

Food comforts, food nourishes. Food is an excellent vehicle for communication among humans. Learning to cook helps us develop a sense of independence. It forces us to hone our language skills and our ability to think conceptually.

Cooking offers a bouquet of sensual experiences. Squeezing the oranges, melting the butter, popping the corn, freezing the ice cream, noticing the bitter taste, feeling the smooth skin on the eggplant...

Kids also can learn a great deal about science through cooking. What effect does food have on how we look, feel and behave? What is an egg and why (or why doesn't it hatch)?

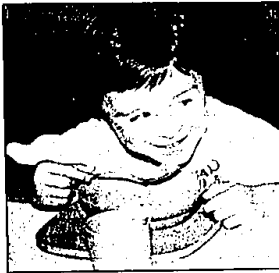
The preparation of food teaches us the value of making mistakes. If the results are not as the recipe described, we should review the process to find out why!

Food can awaken the artist or the creative genius in everyone. Colors, shapes and textures can inspire creative expressions. Even mathematics are involved with measuring, lining, dividing of portions and setting the table. These tasks all take mathematical skills that most adults take for granted.

The list can go on and on. Geography, transportation, reproduction, spelling, you name it and you can learn it through food.

You can make creative food experiences simple enough for a 2-year-old, and stimulating enough for a teenager. All it takes is a little patience and a lot of love.

See recipes inside.



Hey mom, what's for breakfast?



In the top photo, Michael Fitzpatrick digs into a bowl of cereal. In the photo above, Paula Fitzpatrick pours juice for Michelle and Michael.

Packing power in kids' first meal

By Ariene Funke
special writer

PAULA FITZPATRICK of Garden City isn't fussy about what her three children eat for breakfast.

As long as it's nutritious, they can decide — dry cereal with milk, toast or bagels with cream cheese, oatmeal or a frozen waffle warmed in the toaster, and juice or fruit.

"It isn't fancy around here," Fitzpatrick said. "There isn't time."

Erin Fitzpatrick, 12, is a seventh grader at Garden City Junior High. Her 9-year-old sister, Michelle, is a fourth grader at Douglas Elementary School in Garden City, and Michael, 5, attends kindergarten at the same school.

While the children eat breakfast, Paula Fitzpatrick plans her day as a Tupperware saleswoman. Husband Michael is a plumber.

THE FITZPATRICKS are on target, experts say.

"You think better, feel better and work better after eating breakfast," said Carmen Bongiovanni, a registered dietitian employed by Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills.

Breakfast restores the body's metabolism, and provides energy after hours of fasting, said Bongiovanni of Farmington. People who skip breakfast may overeat later to compensate.

"A glass of orange juice isn't enough," said Gail Posner, a registered dietitian in private practice in Southfield and West Bloomfield.

"TAKE a child's preferences into consideration," said Posner of West Bloomfield, mother of two children, ages 3 and 5. "Try to lead them toward healthy choices."

Posner suggests spreading graham crackers with peanut butter and jelly. Serve them with lowfat milk or juice. How about cottage cheese with applesauce? Or leftover pizza? Crackers and cheese or pita bread stuffed with a nutritious filling can be eaten on the run.

HEATHER WHITTINGTON, 8, of Canton likes fruited yogurt or leftover later tots served with an egg. She's a third grader at Hoben Elementary in Canton.

"We rely on yogurt for breakfast," said Heather's mom.

Chris Whittington. "Sometimes I melt some cheese on toast or serve peanut butter toast."

Heather likes oatmeal. Her siblings prefer cold cereal.

Melanie, 5, is a first grader at Hoben. Daniel, 4, attends Canton Crickets, a preschool program.

While they're having breakfast, their dad, Terry Whittington, arrives home from his job on the midnight shift at Awrey Bakeries in Livonia.

CHRIS WHITTINGTON steers her children toward the less sugared cereal varieties. She absolutely refuses to buy any containing marshmallows.

She also makes batches of trail mix, using dried apricots, cashews, sunflower seeds and pretzel sticks. Melanie likes trail mix with milk or yogurt.

Key components of a balanced breakfast would include fruit or juice, some bread, cereal or pasta, dairy and protein.

Indulge in high-fat foods, such as sausage or doughnuts, or heavily sweetened foods, only occasionally. "The habits kids develop now, they will have for a lifetime," Posner said.

POSNER SUGGESTS that shoppers read labels. Pick cereals that aren't heavily laden with sugar, honey, corn syrup or fructose. Sweeten with fresh fruit or raisins.

Irene Cameron, coordinator of media relations for United Dairy Industry Association of Michigan, based in Lansing and Farmington Hills, suggests:

- Alternate chunks of cheese on a skewer with fruit.
- Toss one cup of milk in a blender with bananas or other fruit. "Let the children do it," said Cameron of Livonia.

CAMERON OFFERS a recipe for breakfast cheese spread, using part-skim ricotta cheese and lemon lowfat yogurt. The spread, used with bread, bagels or rice cakes, can be refrigerated up to five days.

Jan Sproul of Redford and her husband, Steve, an architectural engineer, use novelty to spark the interest of their son Jacob, 5.

He's a kindergartener at Vandenberg Elementary School in Redford. See recipes inside.

Fall back into routines with quick, easy meal

Editor's note: Betsy's back with her popular Winner Dinner menus. Look for it on the Taste front, every other week.

By Betsy Brethén
staff writer

Welcome back to the beginning of the third year of "Winner Dinners." I hope you and your family enjoyed the summer, and are ready to shift gears and return to life in the fast lane. For ready or not, now that Labor Day has come and gone, the checkered flag has been waved and summer is officially gone.

This week's Winner Dinner, submitted by Mary Kroneman of Birmingham, offers a delicious transitional menu that was selected with the tempo as well as the temperatures common to the next few weeks in mind.

Quick and easy to make, it is a perfect meal for those still warm September evenings that typify summer's end. Featuring a chicken and rice salad, a luscious-colored raspberry gelatin dish and "wacky" chocolate cake, this is one meal that is sure to bring rave reviews from all who partake of it.

A native Michigander, Kroneman has lived in Birmingham for eight years with her husband, Chip, and their two children. She is looking for "winners" being vice-president of the Cranbrook Kingswood Middle School Mothers' Council this year, and is actively involved at her daughter's elementary school as well.

Her volunteer efforts extend to her church where she just completed two years as vice president of the Women's Society at the Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church. One day a week, Kroneman works with her husband, a nephrologist (kidney specialist), when he has office visits, greeting his patients, and making sure everyone feels "at home" and comfortable.

In fact, the recipe for Raspberry Danzle comes from one of her husband's patients, Elita Mermell, who



family-tested
winner dinner
Betsy Brethén

always brings the Kronemans gelatin molds whenever she comes into the office.

Thank you, Mary Kroneman, for sharing your delicious recipes with us, and congratulations on being selected as our Winner Dinner. An apron will soon be sent to you as a token of appreciation for supporting this column.

From the feedback I have been getting, it seems that there is great interest in "heart-smart" menus. If you have a favorite low-cal, low-fat meal, I encourage you to send the recipes my way. After all, healthy eating habits begin at home.

Submit recipes to be considered for publication, to Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham 46012. All submissions become the property of the Observer & Eccentric newspapers. Each winner receives an apron with the words "Winner Dinner Winner" on it.



Mary Kroneman of Birmingham with her Winner Dinner.

Recipes

Observer & Eccentric Winner Dinner

Shopping List

Notes