

Cooking You Do With Kids

By ELLY

Early childhood education experts agree that cooking experiences for preschool children have a valuable place in a nursery school curriculum.

At Mayfair Co-op Nursery in Farmington, teachers Jane Fagen and Rachel McCormick sometimes have as many as 24 children participating in some phase of a food project. That alone might make cooking with just one or two preschoolers at home seem attractive.

At a recent workshop for cooperative nursery school teachers Rachel shared some of her professional hints and child-tested recipes.

Since so many of the young child's discoveries are based on sensory perceptions, the different textures, smells, colors and tastes of the ingredients are all considered. Similarities and differences in salt and sugar, flour and baking powder, the change from liquid to solid when a cake bakes are exciting observations for a child to make. The children do their own measuring, spooning flour from a bowl into a measuring cup, for example.

Some recipes she rewrites in picture form. Of course, hands are washed before participating and caution is exercised in the use of heat and cutting utensils.

Here are some of the nursery school recipes which can be adapted for home cooking.

APPLE SAUCE

Each child washes and helps cut an apple with a table knife. Children will want to cut some across to see the design made by core and seeds. Put pieces in a large saucepan. Add two cups of water for 24 apples. Simmer for about 30 minutes. Add one cup of sugar and one teaspoon of cinnamon. Stir all together and then put through a food mill, colander or strainer.

PEANUT BUTTER

Children help to shell cooked peanuts. Put into electric blender and grind. Add salt to taste and enough honey or peanut oil for spreading consistency. Let children spread on crackers or bread for snacks.

INDIAN BREAD

Sift flour, baking powder and salt through a sieve into a large bowl. Melt butter and add to milk. Add milk mixture to dry ingredients and beat with a spoon. Flour a board. Divide the dough into four balls. Knead and make into round flat loaves about an eighth of an inch thick. Heat oil in a skillet and brown each loaf on both sides. Spread with preserves or fruit pie filling, cut into wedges and serve immediately.

CRAZY CAKE

1 1/2 c. sifted flour
3 T. cocoa
1 t. soda
1 c. sugar
1/2 t. salt
5 T. cooking oil
1 tsp. vinegar
1 tsp. vanilla
1 c. cold water

Put your sifted flour back in the sifter, add to it the cocoa, soda, sugar and salt and sift this right into a greased square cake pan. Now make three holes in this dry mixture. Into one pour the oil, into the next the vinegar, into the last the vanilla. Now pour the cold water over it all. You'll feel like you're making mud pies now, but beat it with a spoon until it's nearly smooth and you can't see the flour. Bake it at 350 degrees for half an hour. Frost by putting chocolate-covered peppermints on top of the hot cake and then spread around as they melt. Children can do all the measuring and mixing of this cake and love to do it. Great to use when wanting to build vocabulary and to show that sometimes it takes many ingredients to make a certain food.

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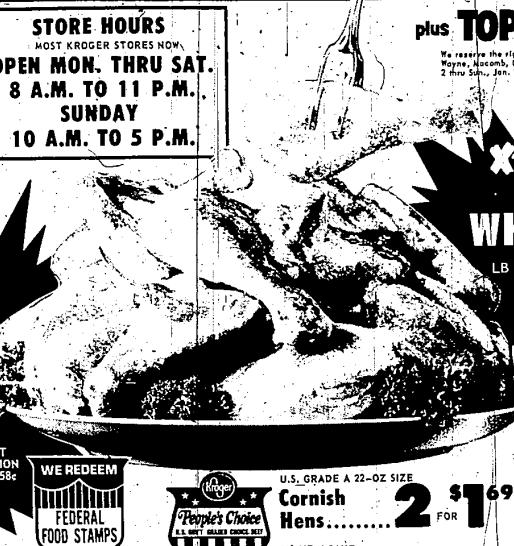


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