



How to...

FUN FACT

About 29% of kids make their own dinner at least some of the time.



Get to know your kitchen

A famous cookbook author shares how kids can boost their cooking confidence.

The best way to get started with cooking—or improve the skills you already have—is to make friends with your kitchen, says Mark Bittman. “Exploring the kitchen—opening drawers and doors, seeing what’s in the fridge, learning about knives and tools—is the best way to begin cooking,” Bittman, author of the new book *How to Cook Everything Kids*, told *The Week Junior*. Here’s how to get started.

Begin with the ingredients

The first thing you’ll want to know about your kitchen is what ingredients—all the different food and seasonings—you have to work with. Ingredients can be found in several places: in the refrigerator, freezer, cabinets, or pantry. Look around, then touch, smell, and taste what you find. Seeing what you have can help you decide what you can make right away or whether you need to add to your family’s shopping list to make a recipe.

Take stock of tools and equipment

These are the nonfood items you’ll need in order to prepare, cook, and serve what you make. They can include mixing bowls, measuring cups, cutting boards,

pots, pans, spoons, whisks, and small machines, like a blender or food processor. Ask an adult what each is used for. You may be surprised that some have multiple uses. For example, a baking sheet can be used to bake cookies, but it’s also useful for roasting cut-up vegetables tossed in olive oil and salt and pepper.

Stay safe and be comfortable

Now that you know what you have to work with, you can get started. You’ll enjoy cooking much more if you take the time to set up everything you need to be comfortable—and safe. An adult can show you the proper way to handle kitchen tools and equipment and supervise while you use them and operate the stove or oven.

There’s a bonus to having help. “Cooking with people you love will help you talk and learn about where food comes from,” said Bittman.

Let go of perfection

Save the recipes you use and take photos of what you make, even if the finished dish didn’t turn out exactly as you expected. What’s important, said Bittman, is enjoying what you created. You can start by making his quesadilla recipe on the opposite page!



Author Mark Bittman

Learn the lingo



You may run across these cooking terms when making recipes. (Always have an adult supervise while you cook or bake!)

Stir You typically use a spoon to stir. But you can also swirl food with a spatula, fork, or tongs.

Whisk Whisking is beating with a whisk or fork until food is creamy, foamy, frothy, or fluffy.

Mash You can use a handheld masher, mixer, or ricer to mash food, like potatoes.

Puree Pureeing is like super mashing—making food smooth with a blender or food processor.

Simmer Simmer means what’s in the pot is gently bubbling.