

10 GREAT WAYS TO KEEP LITTLE KIDS AMUSED IN THE KITCHEN

One of the times I found it hardest to keep my kids amused when they were small was cooking time. I couldn't give them my full attention, they were hungry and tired, impatient to eat or dreading the vegetables! Patience is short and tempers were easily frayed. Too young to watch TV without an adult and, we want to minimise screen time. Here are 10 suggestions keep them amused:

TOY SPACE IN THE KITCHEN

Even if you didn't plan your kitchen with kids in mind, its easy enough to reorganise your kitchen to have a space they can play in, even if its just at meal time. I got a little car play carpet / mat and brought their play cars and garage or blocks into the kitchen. They played in he rom while I cooked.

LETTING CHILDREN COOK

If you're clever with your meal plans, you can often let the children take part in the cooking. Try to relax and not worry if they don't make the veggies exactly the right shape and size. The experience is worth it.

PLAY FOOD OR PLAY KITCHEN

Many of my parent friends find that their kids enjoyed copying them while they cooked and if you don't want them to help you with the actual cooking, maybe they can pretend. I know several parents who keep their kids play kitchen in their kitchen.

COLOURING AND DRAWING

A wipe-clean table or tablecloth is essential, scrap paper, their favourite colouring medium plus a pair of scissors. (No glue, or glitter as that will need wiping up). If you don't know what they have drawn, heres your mantra: "That looks interesting, tell me about your picture?" Easy! No awkward moment where he child asks you what she's down or you ask her.

MATCHING PUZZLES

This is the time to get those simple jigsaw style cut-out boards out. Or picture matching games. Either at the table or on a mat on the floor of the kitchen. Even a simple game of pairs or snap with cards is a good option.

SORTING GAMES

Take some three colour pasta, write colour names on sticky notes in corresponding colours and stick to cups. "I wonder if you can sort out these mixed up pasta pieces by the time I cook dinner?" Any multi-coloured small items are good for sorting. Be careful of size to prevent choking.



BEAD THREADING

Dinner prep time is a great time for bead threading. It promotes dexterity, hand strength, hand-eye co-ordination, concentration and the all important pincer grasp, essential for writing skills. For younger children, it can be easier to thread beads onto straws, big laces, or pipe cleaners.

You could buy specially designed large bead threading kits such as the kit pictured above or make your own using penne pasta, rolls of card taped together or wooden sticks cut into circles with a hole drilled in the centre.

CHOPSTICK PRACTICE

Start with serving tongs...Take pasta pieces, or cotton wool balls and 2 bowls. Challenge your child to transfer the items from one bowl to anther. Increase the challenge using attached chopsticks and older kids can learn to use real chopsticks with this activity. Children can compete to see how many pieces of pasta or rice they can move in one minute.

MAGNET FISHING

If you have a magnetic fishing toy, this is a great time to get it out. If not, attach a fridge magnet to a pencil with thread, put some pennies on a tray and let your child "Go fishing" you could tape a paper clip to coloured paper fish. Add a letter on each fish to gradually help hem recognise letters. "Can you find the blue fish? Can you catch a fish with a "b" on it? The fishing is great for hand - eye co-ordination.

HELP SET THE TABLE?

'I bet you can't set the table up really nice before I've finished mashing these potatoes!" Well, of course she can, and she gets a big hug or a "Wow, thats great". If she does it, no matter how haphazard the setting!

Fi Miles

www.PlanBWriting.co.uk

