

Cooks and Books: Family Learning in the Kitchen

Check It Out

Animal Snackers

by Betsy Lewin
(Grades 1–3)

Poetry blends with science as it explores what (or who) various animals prefer to eat.

Berry Magic

by Teri Sloat and Betty Huffmon
(Grades K–3)

In this legend, a young girl hopes to delight the women in her village by taking many delicious berries to their community.

Blueberries for Sal

by Robert McCloskey
(Grades K–2)

McCloskey writes a sweet story about a sticky situation involving a little girl, a baby bear, and their mothers during a day of blueberry picking.

Chato's Kitchen

by Gary Soto
(Grades 1–3)

New to the barrio, a group of mice are invited to a cat's dinner party. The clever rodents decide to take a surprise guest.

The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear

by Don and Audrey Wood
(Grades Pre-K–1)

A little mouse discovers the best way to save his delicious strawberry from the big hungry bear is to share it.

Tops & Bottoms

by Janet Stevens
(Grades K–1)

Bear and Hare are joint partners in a farming operation. Choosing to nap instead of work, Bear lets Hare get the best of the situation.

Activities

- Play with food. Fruits and vegetables offer a palette of colors, shapes, and sizes to create some artistic edible masterpieces. Use a plate as a canvas and cream cheese or peanut butter as the glue to hold pieces in place until kids gobble them up.
- Have each family member make up a menu of items they would like to feature at a future meal. Then prepare one of the items each week, and feature the menu on the table.
- "Cook" a book. Read a book that features food, such as Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham* or Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Try to prepare one of those foods (for instance, use food dye to color scrambled eggs).
- Ask your child to help you with the grocery list. Look through the cabinets to see what you need, and ask her to write the list for you. Head to the grocery store and shop together.

Table Talk

Invite each family member to prepare a dish for a meal. Talk about what was involved in the preparation, what ingredients each dish includes, and whether it is a dish the family enjoys and would like to eat again.

Family Field Trip

Grocery stores and markets often feature free samples on weekends. Visit the grocery store or a market when you don't have a lot of shopping to do. Take the time to check out what's available, discover new fruits and vegetables, and taste the samples available. Discuss what items you might want to find recipes for in the future. If you cannot find a place with samples, create your own taste-testing party with some new food items.