

BAKING & COOKING

Children should have regular opportunities to participate in baking and cooking, either independently or as part of a group.

These experiences support development of important life skills and enhance children's understanding of different cultures as they explore foods from around the world.

Independent activities, such as making bird seed cake, require children to plan, problem-solve and follow sequences to achieve their desired goal. However, independent baking should value the process rather than the end result.

Whilst there is no set number of participants, baking and cooking in smaller groups can provide engaging and valuable learning experiences for children. Practitioners can take time to discuss recipes and ingredients, considering ways to best support skill development during activities, such as maths and numeracy skills when weighing and measuring.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Children can explore, prepare and taste a variety of foods, developing the fine-motor and coordination skills required to use utensils effectively.

Using equipment helps children develop risk assessment skills, supporting learning around how to handle knives and use appliances safely.

Baking and cooking in groups encourages sharing, turn-taking, cooperation and teamwork to achieve a common goal.



Through handling, tasting, and discussing food, children can explore their own preferences, learn about dietary requirements, allergens, and how different foods support healthy growth and development.

Children can learn about the importance of food safety and personal hygiene. This includes developing awareness of when to wash their hands and effective handwashing techniques supported by pictorial sequence strips.

Literacy

Through exploring ingredients, shopping lists, recipes, product labels and related environmental print, children can engage with different forms and purposes of writing.

When planning their own recipes, children have opportunities to mark-make through writing shopping lists, labels and associated texts, such as menus.



Maths & Numeracy



Baking and cooking experiences support children to develop a sense of size, amount and measure, which includes volume and weight.

Through sharing out a group of items and splitting whole objects into smaller parts, children begin to learn about fractions and fair share. They can explore numbers, understanding that they represent quantities and can use them to count, describe order, create and follow sequences.

When baking and cooking, children can explore budgeting, considering what ingredients they already have, what they need, and what they can afford. Following this, they can visit local shops to buy ingredients, developing awareness of how money is used.

Following recipes provides opportunities for children to match objects and sort them using their own and others' criteria. Consulting signs and charts around them for information, children can plan and make decisions in their daily lives.



Other

The exploration of different ingredients supports children to become aware of where foods come from. This can also extend their knowledge of how local shops and services provide them with what they need in their daily lives.



Children can use different types of technology to make food and record their experiences, for example, using scales to weigh ingredients or using a camera to capture the process and finished product.

Through preparing, cooking and eating a range of different foods, children have opportunities to taste, smell, and touch, supporting sensory development.

Baking and cooking support exploration of scientific concepts. Children can observe food changing when subjected to heating or cooling processes.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should model good hygiene practices: handwashing, tying back hair, and cleaning surfaces to avoid cross contamination. Also, it's important to check equipment and utensils to ensure that they are safe and model how to use these safely.

Adults should scaffold and support learning by helping children plan and carry out baking/cooking processes.

High-quality questions help children reflect on what went well, what didn't and what they can do differently next time. This helps children develop greater skills and confidence when baking independently.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

This area should be located near a kitchen, in a low traffic space with access to sinks and plug sockets. Consideration should be given to the location of ovens and heating implements to ensure children's safety.

When in groups, children should have a suitable work surface and adequate space to chop, grate, slice, peel, stir and pour.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Child friendly knives, graters, pots, pans, bowls and peelers

Candle burner, tea lights, ignitor and oven

Cleaning equipment

Measuring utensils & tools: scales, spoons, measuring cups, jugs

Mixing utensils: wooden spoons, metal spoons, spatulas and whisks

Timer, aprons, relevant books and recipe books.

Recipes or sequence strips containing Boardmaker symbols

Baking trays, tins, cupcake cases and a cooling rack

REFLECTION POINTS

- Do staff have confidence in their ability to manage risk whilst supporting children to develop key life skills, such as using sharp knives?
- Are baking and cooking activities inclusive of children's individual dietary needs and requirements? How can practitioners accommodate children with particular allergies?

