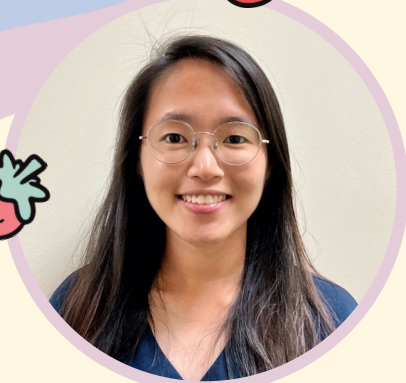


COOKING UP LANGUAGE LEARNING:

The surprising benefits of using cooking in boosting English language skills

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"The kitchen is dangerous, children shouldn't cook!" Cooking and learning may seem like an unlikely pairing at first glance, but it may bring about a whole host of benefits. In this article, we discuss how the kitchen can not only be used as a language teaching tool, but also aid in the holistic development of our children.

Facilitates vocabulary and language acquisition

Cooking provides a hands-on and practical approach to language learning. From reading recipes and following instructions, to discussing ingredients and techniques, learners get ample opportunities to practise reading, writing, and speaking in a meaningful context. By engaging in conversations about the cooking process, sharing culinary experiences, and describing tastes and flavours, children are exposed to a holistic learning experience that extends beyond rote memorisation.



Fluffy Pancakes

These fluffy pancakes are to die for. They are **fluffy, tasty** and have **great texture**. It's sure to be a hit!

Prep Time: 10 mins | Cook Time: 10mins | Servings: 4

- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons of white sugar
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 cup of milk
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 1 egg, beaten

1. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a large bowl.
2. Pour in the milk, egg and oil.
3. Mix until smooth.
4. Heat a lightly-oiled griddle or frying pan at medium-high heat.
5. Scoop batter onto pan and cook until bubbles form at the sides.
6. Flip and cook till browned on the other side.

recipe adapted from Allrecipes (<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/45396/easy-pancakes/>)

The kitchen is also a treasure trove of new vocabulary waiting to be discovered. Children can be exposed to a plethora of food-related terms, cooking verbs, utensils and culinary concepts. Take for example this pancake recipe, (*it's a real recipe, go ahead and try it!*). Upon completing the recipe, a child would be exposed to **ingredient names** (e.g. flour, sugar, baking powder, salt), **verbs** (e.g. pour, mix, heat, scoop), as well as the **terms referring to each piece of kitchen equipment** (e.g. bowl, griddle, pan).





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With each recipe, children can encounter new words and phrases, expanding their vocabulary in a fun and memorable way. More notably, the sensory experience of cooking - smelling, tasting, seeing and touching a variety of ingredients - creates powerful associations that aid retention.



Improves Executive Functioning Skills

Cooking involves following step-by-step instructions, and this can help children hone their planning, organisational and time management skills (*After all, your food may start to burn when it is cooked for too long!*). For children with learning difficulties, this may be especially helpful as they must accurately carry out instructions according to a sequence in a cooking recipe. Furthermore, listening and comprehension skills can also be honed as children must interpret verbal or written instructions to achieve a successful outcome. For example, referring to the recipe above, a child would have to place the ingredients in a sequential manner before cooking to achieve the desired results of delicious pancakes. As children venture into more complex cooking, they may engage in higher-order tasks which may require multitasking.



Boosts Self-Esteem, Confidence and Creativity

By engaging in a physical goal-directed activity, this may help boost children's self-esteem and self-confidence as what their efforts directly translate into an end-product. Children are able to take risks in a low-pressure environment, and as children successfully prepare dishes and communicate their creations, their confidence and motivation and learning may be boosted too. Given that similar ingredients can be transformed into many different dishes, creativity can also be fostered as adults can guide children to adapt recipes according to the ingredients they have, thus allowing for self-expression through language.

Cultivating Cultural Awareness

In the multiracial Singaporean environment, Singaporean children have greater opportunities to be exposed to diverse cuisines and culinary practices from different cultures. This exposure helps to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, breaking down barriers and promoting intercultural empathy. Through cooking, children can gain valuable insights into the lifestyles, traditions and beliefs of different communities. Cooking thus offers a rich and immersive environment for language learning, improved executive functions, and heightened self-esteem and creativity. Ultimately, parents are highly encouraged to embrace culinary arts both as a source of quality time, and as a teaching tool in the home environment. So, don your aprons and let the learning journey in the kitchen begin, one scrumptious recipe (and many other benefits) at a time!

