As your family enjoys local food, you may find that some children, especially young children, may seem a little picky. Getting your children involved in the food choices and food prep is one way to help them get excited about food, before it is actually on their plate.

Here are some ideas for getting young children involved in the kitchen. The ages are a general guideline, each child develops at their own pace and has their own strengths. Remember this is a positive way to be around food, be sure to praise their efforts and have fun!

**2 Year Olds:**
- Help choose items and put them away
- Rinse vegetables and fruits
- Tear lettuce and greens
- Snap asparagus or green beans

**3 Year Olds:**
- The things 2 year olds can do plus...
- Add ingredients
- Mash potatoes and other boiled vegetables
- Scrub root vegetables

**4 Year Olds:**
- The things 3 year olds can do plus...
- Peel eggs
- Set the table
- Crack eggs
- Help measure dry ingredients
- Help assemble sandwiches and salads

**5 Year Olds:**
- The things a 4 year old can do, plus...
- Measure liquids
- Cut soft or cooked vegetables and fruit with a dull knife

Eating is a fun sensory experience! With all children, talk about the food (color, shape, quantity, as well as things that may interest them, like where it grows, how you will prepare it...), allow them to touch, smell and taste the food.

Encouraging young children in the kitchen can sound like a hassle, the mess! But honestly, they would likely be making a mess elsewhere while you cook and you are already going to have to clean up the kitchen...

For more ideas for using locally produced food and fresh produce, call Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County at 561-7450, subscribe to our blog [http://blogs.cornell.edu/clintoncountyeats](http://blogs.cornell.edu/clintoncountyeats) and like us on Facebook.

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