

Cooking with Children: Little Red Hen Bread

Cooking with children is a wonderful way to teach them about good foods and preparing good foods to eat. Children are more likely to eat something that they have helped prepare. A cooking activity teaches them reading skills (following a recipe, even a picture recipe), math skills like measuring and fractions, and food safety skills.

Children's storybooks provide endless resources for teaching children about where food comes from, about good foods to eat, and about preparing those good foods.

Using the Little Red Hen in a Lesson with a Cooking Activity

Take the story of the little red hen, for example. In this tale, a hen finds a few grains of wheat in the barnyard and plants them to grow wheat to make bread. The story takes the children from finding and planting the seeds through the growing cycle of the wheat, harvesting the wheat, taking it to the mill to grind it into flour, baking whole wheat bread, and enjoying the fresh baked bread.

In this lesson, children will listen to the story of *The Little Red Hen*. During the story, the teacher will talk about the stages from wheat seed to bread. The children will then help with a simple whole wheat baking activity.

Things You'll Need

To teach the lesson:

- Book: *The Little Red Hen* (authors, publishers, and versions vary slightly; select a version where she makes bread, not cake)
- Supplies:
 - * wheat seeds (source: bulk bins in natural food stores),
 - * dried wheat stalk (source: craft stores),
 - * whole wheat flour in a clear bag or container



Photo Courtesy of the Wheat Foods Council

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To bake bread:

- Frozen whole wheat roll dough (thawed) or whole wheat bread dough made from scratch (1 roll per child)
- Optional: dried fruit pieces such as raisins or dried cranberries*
- Waxed paper sheets for children's work space
- Cookie sheet (either a non-stick pan or a pan sprayed with non-stick cooking spray)
- Clean work surface and hands

*Dried fruit can be a choking hazard for children under the age of four. Tip: Grind dried fruits before adding to other ingredients for foods served to very young children.



Photo Courtesy of the Wheat Foods Council

Key Nutrition Concepts

- Grains are seeds.
- Grain foods give your body energy.
- Eat foods made from grains every day.

Grains are rich in B vitamins, iron, and complex carbohydrates, which are important for supplying energy to the body. Whole grains provide fiber and other nutrients important for good health. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat breads and cereals, oatmeal, brown rice, barley, and whole corn tortillas.

Teach the Lesson

Read the story of *The Little Red Hen*.

- As you read the book, talk about the stages of growing the wheat, milling the flour, and making the bread.
- When the Little Red Hen finds a wheat seed, show the children real wheat seeds and explain that all grains are seeds.
- When the Little Red Hen plants and grows the wheat seed, show the children a dried wheat stalk. The wheat seeds germinate and push little green shoots above the ground under the Little Red Hen's watchful care. When the wheat becomes golden stalks waving in the breeze, it is ready to harvest.
- When she takes the bread to the mill, show the children the whole wheat flour.
- Finally, when she makes bread, explain that at snack today, the children will bake bread, too.

Explain that bread and other grains give our bodies energy to move and play. That is why it is important to eat grains every day.

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Check the Internet for photographs and images of wheat. There are many Web sites for wheat growers associations that provide colorful maps of wheat growing states and images of farmers harvesting the wheat with their big tractors. Some have displays on the growing cycle of wheat. You can also find recipes and menu tips.

Add to the story of the *Little Red Hen* planting wheat to bake bread by introducing more information on how wheat is planted, grown, and harvested.



Photo Courtesy of the Wheat Foods Council

Baking Activity

- Clean and sanitize the table where the children will work. Make sure all children wash their hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Provide each child with a clean sheet of waxed paper to work on.
- Give each child enough dough for one whole wheat roll. Tell them to work and shape dough into a design (optional: let children decorate with pieces of dried fruit). Place finished work on a cookie sheet in a way that will identify each child's roll.
- Let rise, uncovered, for 15–20 minutes in a warm, draft-free place. Preheat oven to 375 °F. Bake bread on center shelf of oven for 15–20 minutes (until golden brown). Cooking time will vary depending on shape and thickness of the dough. Allow the rolls to cool for 10 minutes. Serve children their creation at snack time.

Child and Adult Care Food Program Food Components

Serve the whole wheat roll with another component such as milk or fruit for a reimbursable snack.



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Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Biscuit Fresh orange sections Milk	Blueberry Muffin A-03 ¹ Mixed fruit Milk	English muffin with scrambled egg Pineapple chunks Milk	Oven Baked Whole Wheat Pancake A-06 ¹ Spiced Apple Topping C-04 ¹ Milk	Fresh strawberries Unsweetened cereal variety Milk

Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Bean Burrito D-21A ¹ Apple slices Milk	Toasted Cheese and Tomato Sandwich F-09 ¹ Chicken or Turkey Chowder H-01 ¹ Diced pears Milk	Beef-Turkey Loaf D-04 ¹ Orange Glazed Carrots I-12A ¹ Steamed broccoli Milk	Oven-Baked Parmesan Chicken D-05 ¹ Green salad with shredded carrots and lowfat salad dressing Whole wheat roll Fresh melon cup Milk	Barbecued Beef or Pork on a Roll F-08 ¹ Cole Slaw E-09 ¹ Diced peaches Milk

Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lowfat yogurt Peach halves Water ²	Dip for Fresh Vegetables E-15 ¹ Lightly steamed carrots Graham crackers Water ²	Cheddar cheese Wheat crackers Water ²	Whole wheat bread with sliced ham Water ²	Banana Muffin A-04 ¹ Milk Water ²

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

²Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

Recipe to Try

Oven-Baked Whole Wheat Pancakes – A-06A¹

Whole wheat flour	1 ½ cups
Enriched all-purpose flour	1 ½ cups
Baking powder	2 Tbsp
Sugar	¼ cup
Salt	2 tsps
Frozen whole eggs, thawed	½ cup
OR	
Fresh large eggs	3 each
Vegetable oil	¼ cup
Lowfat 1% milk	3 cups



Combine flours, baking powder, sugar, salt, eggs, oil, and milk in a mixing bowl. Using the whip attachment, mix for 30 seconds on low speed. Scrape down sides of bowl. Mix for 1 minute on medium speed until batter is smooth. Into each half-sheet pan (13" x 18" x 1") which has been lightly coated with pan release spray, pour 2 lb 15 oz (1 qt 1 cup) of batter. For 25 servings, use 1 pan. Bake until golden brown: Conventional oven: 450 °F for 10 minutes; Convection oven: 400 °F for 8 minutes. Cut each pan 5 x 5 (25 pieces). Portion size is 1 piece.

Special Tip: For best results, after pouring the batter in the pan, spray the top with vegetable spray to obtain a golden brown color.

Serving Suggestion: Top with fruit such as Spiced Apple Topping C-04¹

Yield: 25 servings. 1 piece provides the equivalent of 1 slice bread.

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

Sources

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