Cooking in a classroom

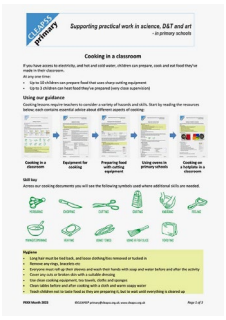
If you have access to electricity, and hot and cold water, children can prepare, cook and eat food they've made in their classroom.

At any one time:

- Up to 10 children can prepare food that uses sharp cutting equipment
- Up to 3 children can heat food they've prepared (very close supervision)

Using our guidance

Cooking lessons require teachers to consider a variety of hazards and skills. Start by reading the resources below; each contains essential advice about different aspects of cooking:



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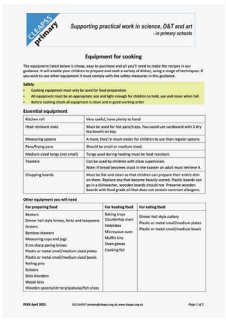
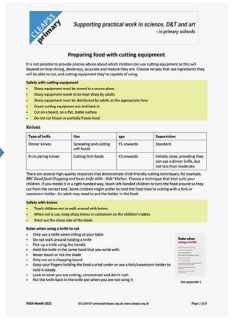
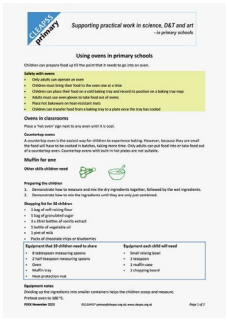


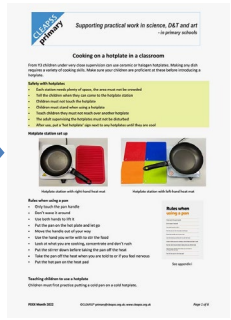
Equipment for cooking



Preparing food with cutting equipment



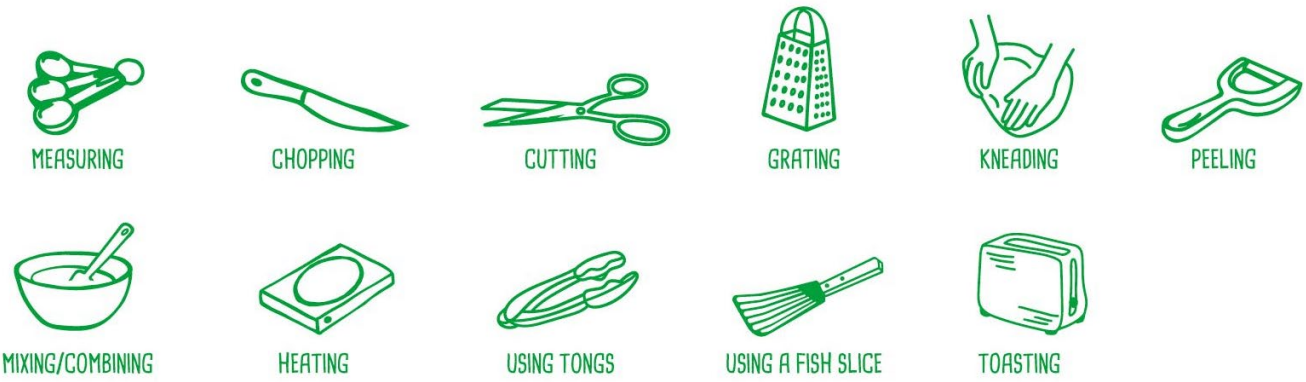
Using ovens in primary schools



Cooking on a hotplate in a classroom

Skill key

Across our cooking documents you will see the following symbols used where additional skills are needed.



Hygiene

- Long hair must be tied back, and loose clothing/ties removed or tucked in
- Remove any rings, bracelets etc
- Everyone must roll up their sleeves and wash their hands with soap and water before and after the activity
- Cover any cuts or broken skin with a suitable dressing
- Use clean cooking equipment, tea towels, cloths and sponges
- Clean tables before and after cooking with a cloth and warm soapy water
- Teach children not to taste food as they are preparing it, but to wait until everything is cleared up

Planning

Everything takes longer than usual when cooking in a classroom, plan accordingly.

Allergies and individual food choices

Check school records for allergies/intolerances/religious/cultural preferences or send home an ingredient check letter, such as on the *FOOD a fact of life* website. Having children that are allergic to an ingredient doesn't necessarily mean your class cannot use it. Find out how severe their reaction is. Affected children may be able to be in the room using an alternative ingredient. Check food packaging for ingredients that children are allergic to. Follow your school's policy on allergies.

Choosing ingredients

- Avoid ingredients like raw fish and meat that easily spoil, or which would contaminate other foods
- Keep dairy items and cooked meats wrapped and cool
- Raw eggs can be used
- Check all *use by* and *best before* dates on food
- Bring fresh items into school on cooking day
- Store cupboard items can be kept in school in ordinary food containers

Choosing a recipe

Our resources include recipes that limit any risk of harm. We suggest you use them in the order they're sequenced. If your children are cooking other meals, single portion dishes that children can prepare for themselves are easiest to manage. If the dish is being cooked on a hotplate it must cook in less than 10 minutes. Whatever they cook, you will need to consider your children's abilities and experience:

- how strong and dextrous they are
- what cooking equipment they will need
- what cookery skills will they need

Supervision

If possible, have an extra adult present. Before the lesson go through your lesson plan with them and brief them on their role. The level of supervision needed for any cooking activity will depend on:

- the children's age
- maturity
- experience
- behaviour
- the number of children cooking
- what equipment the children are using

Managing cooking

- Plan where ingredients will be stored before the lesson
- Practise the activity with the equipment your children will use
- Decide who will be cooking when and tell the children
- Have independent work ready for children waiting their turn
- Demonstrate all stages of the method each time the children cook
- Have the children practice using the equipment before they cook
- Let the children eat the food in the room, after they've made it

Note: Children making and eating single sized portions will reduce food waste. If you send food home it will need to be packaged, labelled with the ingredients and the date it was made and refrigerated until home time.

Before the lesson begins

1. Wash ingredients that need it
2. Cut large ingredients into manageable chunks
3. Clear the children's tables and the surrounding floor
4. Put recipe cards on the tables
5. Put chopping boards at each food preparation station
6. Set out ingredients on the tables

   Note: Putting some ingredients in bowls helps children scoop and measure them
7. Put food waste pots on the tables
8. Tell your school first-aider what your class is doing eg using heat and / or knives, etc

Before cooking begins

Cooking presents unavoidable hazards. Our resources contain specific safety measures, or rules, that effectively reduce the risks from the various hazards. However, some general rules also apply:

- Behave sensibly
- Don't touch anything until you're told to
- Watch the teacher demonstration
- Don't start until your teacher tells you to
- Clear up spills as they occur
- If your hands get sticky wipe them

Remind children each time they cook of the general and any specific rules they must follow.

Clearing away, washing up and breakages

1. Put cutting equipment in a *Gratnell* type tray and store away from the children (adults only)
2. Clear away any unused foodstuff
3. Place similar equipment in separate trays in preparation for washing up
4. Wash equipment with a cloth or sponge in soapy warm water

   Note: All cutting equipment, large or heavy equipment and appliances must be cleaned by an adult. Children can wash up other items using water no hotter than 41 ^{o}C.
5. Put clean equipment away once dry
6. Don't touch hot equipment until it has cooled

Plan how any breakages will be dealt with. Teach children what to do if this happens.

Childhood infections

If infections, such as gastroenteritis are going around, postpone your cooking lesson until the outbreak has passed. However, a child with a sniffle could be given a tissue and reminded to use it, and wash their hands.