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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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Children Can Learn to Cook Nutritiously

All children can learn to help in the kitchen. In fact, kids can begin to cook when they are as young as three with adult supervision and with age appropriate recipes. Cooking can be a great way to incorporate math, science, language and reading skills, and hand-eye coordination. Children enjoy the assembling, measuring and chopping tasks that require their deepest concentration. Cooking can also teach children how to choose and prepare food that is healthy.

With the rate of childhood obesity increasing at an alarming rate, parents must take the initiative to get the whole family involved in a program for healthy living. This includes making healthy food choices. A child's diet should be safe and nutritious. Letting the Food Pyramid guide your choices will insure the Food and Drug Administration's recommended dietary intake of a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Developing good habits now will benefit everyone in your family.

A primary concern for the current trend in child obesity is consuming too much saturated fat and too few vegetables, fruits and grain products that are high in vitamins and minerals, carbohydrates and fiber. By making these changes in a child's diet gradual and fun, and allowing them to be involved in the cooking, children will not feel deprived and different from their peers. When the entire family moves in the same direction, the overweight child won't feel singled out and it reinforces the importance of good eating habits.

One of the most nutritious vegetables for families to eat together is the sweet potato. In fact, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) ranks the sweet potato as the #1 most nutritious vegetable. Sweet potatoes are loaded with beta-carotene, Vitamin B6, iron, potassium and fiber. The sweet potato is a complex carbohydrate that provides twice the recommended daily allowance of Vitamin A and more than one-third of the requirements for Vitamin C. Visit the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission's Web site, www.sweetpotato.org, to find a variety of free sweet potato recipes.

Children are more likely to be interested in healthful food if they help prepare it. The earlier you can interest a child in eating healthy, the better. Children develop attitudes about food early in life. If they have fond memories and positive experiences with healthful foods, they will be more likely to continue to choose them as they grow older. Getting the entire family involved with preparing dinner is rewarding and will strengthen relationships building lasting memories for years to come.

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