



Parent Guide to Being a Sous Chef

Welcome you to our kitchen! We are honored that you are sharing time with your young chef in the kitchen: the place we find the most joy. We want to help provide a safe and fun kitchen environment for you and your child as you cook along with us.

In our Parent Guide video you will find some of the same information that is shared below; we highly encourage you to check it out before you get cooking.

Simple tips for successful cooking with your young chef:

1. **Kid Space.** Create a little corner in the kitchen or use a box that can be dedicated to your kid's tools and perhaps even their growing pantry. Finding a sense of belonging in the kitchen will really boost their confidence and curiosity.
2. **Tools.** We don't believe in getting more tools or gadgets than necessary, but having some tools dedicated to your budding cook will ground them and show them that they belong in the kitchen.

Tools we recommend to get started:

- a. Child size apron.
- b. Safe kid's chef knife (could be a household knife that is dull enough for them to handle, or a kid knife like [this one](#))
- c. Cutting board.
- d. Set of measuring cups and spoons.
- e. Clean kitchen towel and bowl for scraps to help keep the workstation tidy.

This setup can be built over time and stored along with the recipes for each kit and special ingredients that you purchase for each class.

3. **Timing.** We recommend setting aside special, dedicated time to work on these projects. Trying to cook with a new, young chef while also trying to get a meal ready for the family is a recipe for failure. As time goes by they will become more proficient and independent, but in the beginning you will be instrumental in their positive experience.
4. **Clean up.** It is VERY important to include your young chef in the clean up from day one. We will reinforce that in the lessons because we believe that cleaning is an integral part of cooking, even if they are just scraping bowls into the compost bin or wiping down their work surface. It's a principle that will serve them for life!

5. Hands-on Cooking Tips. You will find your own groove in the kitchen with your young chef - patience and a positive attitude are paramount here - but we have some tips that will go a long way:

- a. **Mixing.** Always remind your young chef to hold the mixing bowl stable with one hand and the whisk/mixer with the other hand. That will assure that the mixing bowl is stable to avoid spills.
- b. **Measuring.** Young chefs LOVE to measure! You can make it easier for them by having the ingredient that needs to be measured in a container that will easily accommodate the measuring tool that they are going to use. Young chefs should fill the measuring tool to a heaped pile and use a "karate chop" finger or hand, sweeping over the top to level the ingredient and obtain a precise measurement (for dry ingredients).
- c. **Chopping.** Chopping involves a lot of fine motor skills that are still developing in young chefs. The way we guide the younger chefs in their first attempt to chop is by positioning ourselves slightly behind them and gently placing our hands on top of their hands. That way we can control their movements and show them how to hold the food with one hand and the knife with the other hand. This technique will be demonstrated several times in our videos, and it's important to have a consistent way of teaching them. For older kids that are already strong and coordinated enough to chop by themselves we encourage a proper 'pinch grip' with the knife and 'bear claw' with the hand holding the item being chopped.
- d. **Cleaning.** In our school, we always place one bowl by the cooking station for discards and a towel that young chefs can use to wipe their work stations. We also encourage all children to scrape leftovers into this scrap bowl and place their used tools in a bin with soapy water. At home you may find what works best for your family, but assigning a simple and consistent cleaning task is very important.

Trying new foods, eating, and celebrating the experience:

Our mission at Club Artistas is to empower and inspire children to have a positive relationship with food and their bodies; to create a sense of safety and happiness in the kitchen. That is a tall order and not something that can be imposed or developed overnight, but once nurtured will be something that will positively impact them for the rest of their lives.

Here are our preferred ways to achieve this experience:

1. **Set the mood.** Make sure you have plenty of time to cook the recipe. Find a time when neither of you are too tired or hungry, set the expectations in terms of how long will take them to have their final dish ready.
2. **Smell, touch, & taste as you go.** As you introduce new ingredients, make sure that you take time to touch them to feel their texture. Take a good sniff of each ingredient and comment on its smell. Chop little morsels of each fresh ingredient and let the kids taste as they go. If they don't want to taste with their mouths, encourage them to smell and touch. This way they start to establish a connection with each element of the recipe.

3. **Kids should never be expected to eat what they prepared.** This tip is especially important for picky eaters and their families! At Club Artistas we pay the utmost respect to food and we do not believe in wasting anything. However, in order for some kids to feel comfortable cooking, they need to know that there will not be an expectation that they will eat what they make. Remember that the sheer act of spending time preparing a meal has already brought them so much value: motor skill development, hand-eye coordination, vocabulary, bonding time with their adult, and so much more. With time and patience, kids will develop a sense of ownership and pride over their creations and will be more and more interested in tasting and enjoying everything.
4. **Celebrate!** Positive memories are the main seasonings of an adventurous eater. Celebrate each step, find joy in the process! At Club Artistas, we end every class with a group "Cheers!" before we start eating.

Putting it all together:

We've created 3 Artistas Kitchen Tenets to help remember the key concepts summarized above. Please share and reiterate these with your young chef throughout your time in the kitchen.

1. **Keep your Body Safe.** This means, moving with caution, respecting our tools, and using proper knife skills.
2. **Keep your Mind Open.** This means we like to try new things and aren't afraid of ingredients we may have never met before. Our young chefs are never required to eat anything, but it is part of their job to use all ingredients that are listed in the recipe. Tasting is optional, and always encouraged. Rather than getting frustrated when a young chef won't try something, applaud them when they DO.
3. **Cleanliness is Awesomeness.** We like to keep our workstation tidy with this simple trick: have a kitchen towel and a small bowl handy for cleaning up any compost or garbage. Your young chef is responsible for keeping their station clean!