

Christmas Home Learning Challenge - Festive Food Fun!



With the Christmas holidays, and all of the excitement that comes with it, fast approaching, it is likely that you will be looking for ways to keep your little ones entertained! Fear no more-our Home Learning Challenge for the holidays is packed with festive cooking activities that will keep your little one busy for hours. They can even leave their treats out for

Santa-if they haven't eaten them already!

Why cook with children?

Children love to help with cooking, and it is such a fantastic activity for helping their development across multiple areas. Cooking can be a fantastic language extension opportunity, with ample chances for children to broaden their vocabulary-they can learn new words to describe different textures or smells and can even learn technical words for different cooking techniques if they're feeling curious. It also aids physical development, as children can use this as an opportunity to develop hand-eye coordination, as well as developing the control that they can exert over one-handed tools such as spoons. If they are making dough, there are also the same fine motor development skills accessible as with playing with playdough. Moving on to the specific areas, cooking can help as a reading tool as children can follow simple instructions, especially if they are given a list of picture clues to follow. You can even turn it into a mark making activity if you go to the shops together to buy the ingredients, as children can "write" their own shopping list. It supports maths development as children can be encouraged to count out different ingredients and count how many times they add a spoonful of ingredients. It also supports shape development, as baking cookies is a good way to discuss the shapes of different cookie cutters! Encourage children to consider the positioning of the cutters both on the dough and the baking tray - this develops their shape skills and the ability to tessellate different shapes is even a key skill in early reading. Cooking activities also touch upon science skills, as they are an accessible way to introduce changing states, as well as discussing reversible and irreversible changes-e.g. this chocolate might be runny now but it will go hard again once it has cooled down; but we have broken this egg now, we can't make that go back to how it was. Finally, cooking is a life skill. Encourage this love and give them the key skills now, and it will really have a huge long-term benefit for your little one! Ready, steady, cook!

Marvellous Mince Pies

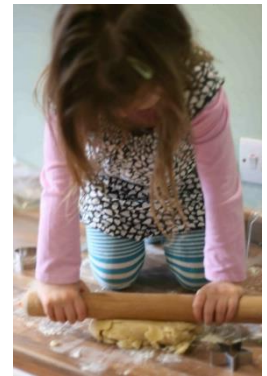
Ingredients:

- 1 block readymade shortcrust pastry
- 1 jar mincemeat

Method



1. Leave pastry block to soften for about an hour or so, until malleable
2. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees
3. Roll dough to thickness of 3mm
4. Cut circles into dough, leaving enough for the lids, and place in cupcake cases in bun baking tray
5. Fill each case with mincemeat-about 2 tbsp for each
6. With remaining dough, cut enough star shapes to cover the pie. Place on top.
7. Bake in oven for 15-20 minutes, until golden brown
8. Leave to cool. Shake icing sugar over the top for an extra festive feel!



Santa's Sugar Cookies

Ingredients:

- 200g unsalted butter
- 280g caster sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- Pinch of salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cream of tartar
- Icing sugar
- Food Colouring
- Sprinkles



Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 160 degrees (fan assisted) or 170 degrees, and line a baking tray with greaseproof paper
2. Mix the butter, sugar and vanilla extract
3. Add the egg
4. Add the flour and cream of tartar, and mix together until it forms a dough
5. Roll out the dough to the thickness of about half a centimetre
6. Cut shapes using cookie cutters
7. Bake for 8-10 minutes, until golden brown
8. Cool on a wire rack
9. Once completely cool, mix icing sugar with water and a few drops of food colouring in a few different bowls. Spoon or pipe onto your cookies

Polar Bear Peppermint Creams

Ingredients:

- 250g icing sugar
- 1 large egg white, beaten
- 3 drops peppermint essence
- Small chocolate or jelly sweets for the noses

Method

1. Sieve the icing sugar into a large bowl. Mix in the egg white, a little at a time - stop adding it when you have a soft dough that feels like plasticine.
2. Add 3 drops of the peppermint essence, mix well and taste. Add another drop if it isn't minty enough.
3. Roll half the mixture into 15 balls, about the size of cherry tomatoes, then flatten them with your hand to make the bear heads.
4. Place on sheets of baking parchment on a large board or tray. Using half the remaining mixture, make blueberry-sized balls and flatten them out onto the heads to make snouts. Add chocolate sweets for the noses.
5. Use the rest of the mixture to make the ears. Shape them into tiny balls and press them gently into the top of the heads with your fingertips. Use a cocktail stick to shape the eyes.
6. Leave the polar bears to dry for 3-4 hrs, or overnight. Eat within 1 month.



Have a wonderful Christmas-we are looking forward to seeing everyone in the New Year!

