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Stirring the Pot

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Kids in the kitchen is as simple as stirring the pot and soaking up time together. There's nothing more my girls really want then time and attention. Positive, affirming attention. It's my duty and pleasure to parent them that way. And, the kitchen seems like a perfect place!

It might seem a little senseless or perhaps a bit of a nuisance, having the little ones hovering about when your trying to get meals prepped, lunches made or dishes done. I admit, there are nights I

simply want my space…and when I say MY space if I'm not referring to my bedroom, it's the kitchen I mean. My kitchen is clean, organized (well, mostly) and what I consider the control center of our household.

So, sometimes inviting the girls into that space, the control center, is nothing short of a complete loss of control. The mess, the begging and bickering. The 'I wanted that job!' and 'You got more of that!' It'd be easier to just say, 'GO PLAY!' and they'd surely oblige.

However, I've found this loss of control, even the inevitable frustration of more mess and time than necessary on making a meal, is worth it. **The loss of control is worth every bit of the benefit we reap as a family.**

When I invite my girls into my space they feel valued and validated. *Mom wants me with her!*

Even if your children are older than mine and perhaps not as enthused, your *kind invitation* is engraved in their hearts as a call of care to them.

But the benefits extend far beyond evidence of your care and love. I know mine do. My kids in the kitchen with me teaches them:

- **Cooperation**. The way a cohesive family cooperates and contributes to a common goal. That, to me is priceless time spent!
- **Problem solving.** We put portions on the plates, figure out how to divvy up the almost-gone mango that everyone loves and what to do when the results go bad (not necessarily fun but definitely a lesson in problem solving and making the best of a mess!)
- **Healthy Eating Skills**. Most practically, time in the kitchen provides an early foundation in healthy meal making. Even my four year old knows we need vegetables and fruits at every meal and my six year old is starting to understand whole grains and proteins. Most of all, *they are learning to make real meals with real foods and that healthy eating is all about making choices*…and tasty ones too!

The list of reasons to keep your kids IN the kitchen despite the potential debacles goes on and on. Math and communication skills, reading and following directions, lessons in sharing, taking turns and caring for others…..



Realistically and logistically, I know it won't be always! Sports, schedules and homework take precedence some evenings. But, cnosider making kitchen-together-time a priority once or twice a

week. And, if you aren't much of a cook, that's okay! Start simple. Whole grain grilled cheese, simple salads and who said eggs for dinner is a bad thing?

The already listed reasons aside, see it as **time together.** Even with my messy reservations I'm never sorry I spent that time. It won't be long before my girls are making meals in their own kitchens. So, I'm gonna savor the moments they're in mine as long as I can.

So...*sigh*... truly savor the time together.

It's time less the loaded questions, void of analyzing worksheets or worries and without forced conversation. *It just happens.* In the kitchen, my control center, we're learning how to be a family. **ALL OF US are learning how to relate and work together** at the task of creating something we will soon sit to enjoy.

We're learning together, in a simple way, that family teamwork offers rewards, tangible and not. I love that! Don't you?

I'll share more about exactly what my girls do to help in the meal-making routines. But, keeping it simple and age appropriate is key. Because, it's really about the ritual of time together, sharing family life and undivided attention. **It's as simple as stirring the pot.**

Ah, yes, even stirring the pot pleases a family's soul!

Pleasing My Little Family's Soul one Pot at a Time,

Katie

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