

Mix & Match

Kids  
IN THE  
KITCHEN

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**Kids in the Kitchen**

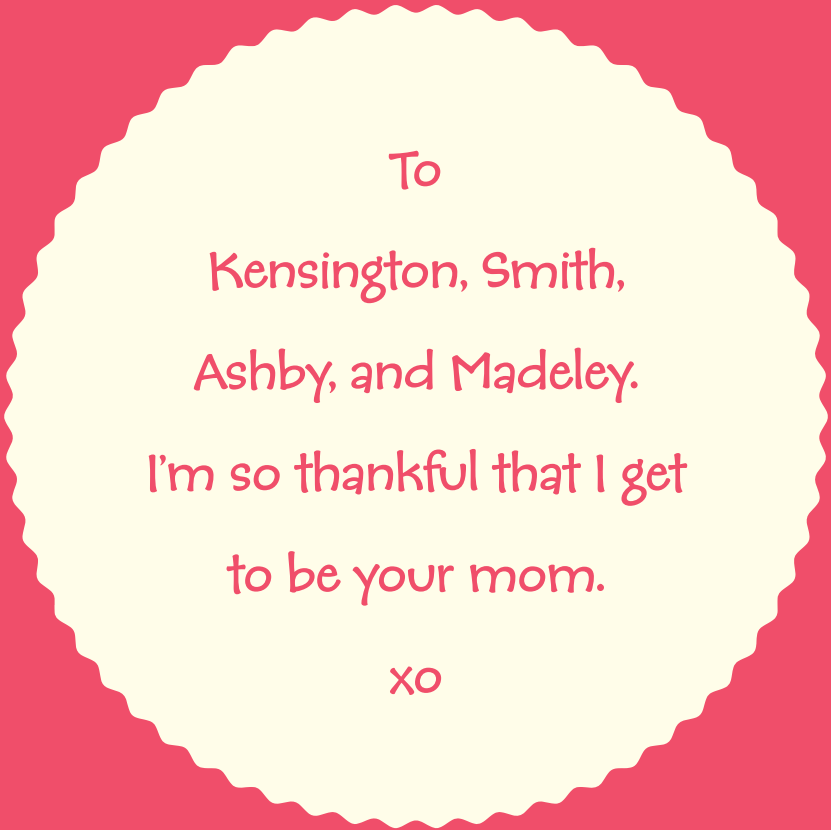
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## Introduction

Kids in the kitchen. Sounds like such a great idea, right? You and your children standing by the sink, stirring, chopping, tasting, and laughing. So innocent. So sweet. So not happening that way at my house. I'm a mom of four kiddos, and when we're all in the kitchen together, it's total chaos. Flour on the floor, pushing and shoving over who gets to hold the electric hand mixer, eggs being cracked at the wrong time, shells in the batter, loud talking, fast talking, so much talking... wildness in the kitchen. And I love every messy minute.

When my kids look back on their childhood, I want it to be filled with memories of all of us in the kitchen together. I want them to grow up and know how to make a cake, brown ground beef, stir risotto, and press a panini. I want them to have pride and confidence in the kitchen and to be familiar with all sorts of ingredients. I want them to have the same passion in their soul their mama does for food and family.

This isn't one of those cookbooks that teaches you how to sneak veggies into everything your kids eat. (Those books are great—this just isn't one of them.) This is one of those books where you turn pages, pick out fun, kid-friendly recipes the whole family will love, and work together as a little team to make them. My goal always is for you to spend less time cooking and more time with your family...so it's a bonus when that time cooking (though brief!) includes your kids. From my crazy, kid-filled kitchen to yours, have fun and enjoy. The days are long but the years are short. This sweet time will be gone in a flash, so we'd better soak up every moment.

## Tips and Tricks

Kids are much more able in the kitchen than you might think. Believe it or not, my kiddos can do everything from perfectly crack an egg to brown a pound of ground beef. Sure, it took some practice—and lots of patience! But because we all try to have a good attitude (and...let's face it...I have a handheld vacuum), we successfully navigate our way through recipes every day. Here are some of my favorite tips and tricks for every age.

### Birth to Age Two

- When my kiddos were babies, I would pull them up to the kitchen counter, hand them a rubber spatula to bang around, and just let them watch me cook in the kitchen. As I worked, I talked to them about the names of the foods we were using, pointed out the bright colors and different shapes, and had them feel the various textures. Even when they were too young to talk, I made sure to tell them a lot about food and show them how much fun cooking was.
- Tasting is such a big key to cooking with kids! No matter what I prepared, I always had some spoons on hand to let them (safely) taste the ingredients. As they watch you cook, they taste...and they learn.

### Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Plastic knives and soft foods are so great for toddlers and preschoolers in the kitchen! I give my kiddos a plastic knife (so they won't cut themselves) and then something soft to cut (like bread, bananas, or avocados). Super simple—and they feel totally involved in the food prep.
- My kids learned a phrase that I still say over and over again: "Low and slow." I let my toddlers and preschoolers start out by stirring stuff in our mixing bowls, reminding them to stir *low* and *slow*. (Keep the spoon low in the bowl,

and stir slowly to avoid spilling.)

- Pouring is perfect for kids this age! I measure out the ingredients—both liquid and dry—and let the kiddos pour away. Sure, sometimes spills happen, but they wipe up quickly, and the little ones are having so much fun that it's totally worth the mess.

### Elementary Ages

- My kiddos can crack an egg better than some adults! And you know how they learned? Lots of practice! I let my kids practice cracking eggs over an empty bowl just for the experience. My rule of thumb? *Use your thumbs.* Crack the egg on the hard side of your bowl and then use your thumbs to break away the shell. After some practice, my kids could crack eggs into the bowl without any shell getting inside. Practice makes perfect when it comes to eggs!
- The “low and slow” rule comes into play with beaters too! My kids know how to attach the beaters to the electric mixer and mix together ingredients. Keeping things low and slow avoids spilling. Kids are fascinated by how the ingredients change as they all get mixed together. Super simple entertainment—and super fun!
- Kids this age can brown meat too. At first, I started by showing them how I brown a pound of ground beef. That's right—low and slow, which prevents grease spattering. After they watched me do it, they practiced stirring once the meat was nearly browned. Soon enough, they were browning it themselves from start to finish.



# EGG-CELLENT BREAKFASTS

Eggs are the perfect thing to make with and for kids. They're great for breakfast, easy for lunch, and perfect for dinner too. Egg recipes are typically really simple and can be made in advance. Plus, when you cook with eggs, you give your kiddos the opportunity to practice cracking. You'll be amazed at how well your kids can learn to crack an egg with just a few tries. I just don't think a busy mom can have enough egg recipes in her repertoire.

Breakfast Pizza with Biscuits

Egg-tremely Delicious Breakfast Cups

Bacon and Avocado Scrambled Eggs over Waffles

Sausage Crescent Breakfast Casserole

Spinach and Chorizo Breakfast Casserole





## Breakfast Pizza with Biscuits

Sometimes my kids just need a little pizza with their breakfast. We use canned biscuits for our crust and then build our little pizzas right on top. Since we're talking breakfast, we'll add some chopped bacon along with pepperoni and pizza sauce. After these guys bake in the oven, my kids love topping them with a fried egg and some chives. Sometimes we even make this little breakfast gem at suppertime too.

This recipe makes eight little pizzas.

### INGREDIENTS

1 (16-ounce) can biscuits	About 1½ cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
1 (14-ounce) bottle pizza sauce	8 eggs
8 slices uncooked bacon, chopped	Chopped chives to garnish
About 1 cup sliced pepperoni	

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Grease a baking sheet or cover it with parchment paper. Open the can of biscuits, spread out each one with your fingers just a little bit, and place it on the baking sheet. Spoon a little pizza sauce on top of each biscuit.

Next, sprinkle the chopped bacon, a few pepperoni slices, and some cheese on each pizza.

Pop the pizzas into the oven and bake 8 to 10 minutes or until the edges are golden brown.

While the pizzas are baking, fry (or even scramble!) the eggs in a large skillet over medium heat.

Once the pizzas are ready, remove them from the oven, top with an egg and a sprinkle of chives, and breakfast (or dinner) is served!



## Egg-tremely Delicious Breakfast Cups

These little egg cups simple to whip up. We like to pop them in the freezer and then in the morning, pull out as many as we like, microwave for 30 seconds, and *bam*...our family is fed! We love chopped turkey bacon and green onions, but you can mix and match whatever you love—browned sausage, turkey, pepperoni, and any combination of veggies you like. Bonus: You can omit the meat and veggies altogether and just keep this a simple egg and cheese cup. Kids will love these!

This recipe makes 12 breakfast cups.

### INGREDIENTS

12 eggs, lightly beaten	About 4 green onions, chopped
About 6 to 8 slices cooked bacon, crumbled	½ cup cheese, shredded

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Line a 12-cup muffin tin with muffin liners. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, bacon, green onions, and cheese. Fill each muffin cup 2/3 full with the mixture. Bake 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool about 5 minutes before removing the cups from the muffin tin. Serve immediately or freeze.