

# Teaching kids to cook: A grassroots approach to sustainability

By GIDEON NURICK

Healthy kids and healthy eating, sustainable local food sources – these have become hot topics in recent years. According to the **Heart and Stroke Foundation**, junk food consumption in our society has resulted in one in four Canadian children and adolescents from age 2-17 being overweight or obese. Many parents are now searching for ways to keep their kids active and eating healthy. Books like *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* show that there is increasing interest amongst consumers regarding what they eat and where it comes from.

One way to both combat poor eating habits and increase food sustainability awareness is to

educate our children. A fun and effective way to accomplish this is to teach kids how to cook and bake from a young age. Children who learn to cook will not only benefit from the experiential education, they will also be far more aware of where food comes from and which foods are beneficial. Through an understanding of the seasonality and availability of food, children will better understand the sustainability principles at work in food production and consumption.

Cooking is a life skill which, if acquired early enough, will not only lead to kids preparing their own school lunches, but in time will allow them to make better choices regarding how and what they eat in adolescence and adulthood. Most importantly, a child

who knows how to cook will be more likely to live in a healthier way, which will not only benefit the individual but society as a whole.

Cooking educates in the broadest sense. The perfect outlet for a creative mind, cooking engages our senses like nothing else – smell, taste, touch and sight are all fundamental to the culinary experience. When kids learn cooking together, the concepts of co-operation and teamwork are also reinforced. Best of all, cooking offers children an excellent opportunity to learn from their mistakes, since the proof of the pudding is always in the eating.

Let's not forget that cooking is fun, and fun is often the best way to get kids to learn. If you can, teach

your kids to cook and you will give them the tools for a healthy life. If you know of a school that no longer offers home economics, encourage them to reintroduce it. We should be doing all that we can to build a knowledge and love of

healthy food amongst the younger generation.

*Gideon Nurick manages business development for The Dizzy Whisk Ltd., which offers cooking classes for kids. For information, visit [www.dizzywhisk.com](http://www.dizzywhisk.com).*



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