

Booking and Cooking

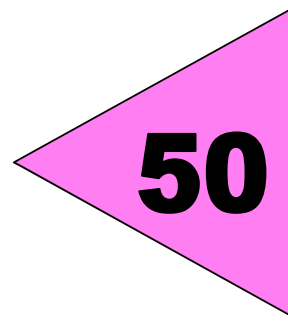
When we cook in class, children combine ingredients, mix, stir, and taste. They also use the descriptive words of literature - nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs-to describe the what, how, where, and why, as well as the movements, textures, tastes, and feelings, associated with food and cooking.

This combination of cooking and books can be continued at home. As Sunday morning pancakes are cooked, consider referring to Eric Carle's *Pancakes, Pancakes* (Simon & Schuster 1990) or Tomie de Paula's *Pancakes for Breakfast* (Harcourt Brace Juvanovich 1978). Make split pea soup from the *George and Martha* series by James Marshall (Houghton Mifflin) or porridge after reading a version of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Buy or bake different kinds of bread after you read *Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris (Mulberry 1989).

Literature and cooking experiences are limited only by your imagination. Use your child's food preferences as a starting place and expand the experiences from there.

As in any other shared reading time, talking about the story is just as important as reading the book. Make comments about the plot as you read, helping connect events in the book to the child's life. For example, when reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (Collins 1979), you might remark, "Remember when we bought those good plums at the grocery store?" Ask questions that help your child think about the story: "How do you think you would feel if you ate everything that the Very Hungry Caterpillar ate on Saturday?"

Connecting books with enjoyable family experiences-like cooking or conversation-sends your child the message that reading is fun for children and grown-ups, too.

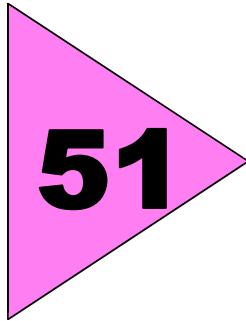


Few experiences are as much fun for children as cooking, and cooking offers lots of opportunities for connections to books. With your help, parents will see how hands-on experiences like cooking can make books even more special to children.

Give parents specific ideas about books with to link to cooking. Here are some ideas:

- ◆ *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss (Random House 1976): colored eggs and ham
- ◆ *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Gale/one (Houghton Mifflin 1975): gingerbread
- ◆ *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey (Viking 1948/): blueberries or blueberry tarts
- ◆ *Jamerry* by Bruce Degen (HarperCollins 1983): toast or muffins and jam
- ◆ *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* by Eric Kimmel (Holiday House 1988): fruits and vegetables
- ◆ *Chicken Soup with Rice* by Maurice Sendak (Scholastic 1976): chicken soup

See also: **25 49**



All parents want their children to learn to read. But many have heard about strategies to help children learn letters or words, such as drilling with flashcards, that are not suited to the way young children learn best.

The following three articles describe appropriate activities through which families support children's emergent literacy and prepare them for conventional reading. When you model these activities with children in your program, parents see that you value this approach.

During family meetings, point out the environmental print in your room and explain the labeling process. Consider letting parents know what labels and other kinds of environmental print have been added to the room each week. Suggest that parents look for similar environmental print or label similar items at home.

See also: **52-54**

Letter Learning

Learning the names of alphabet letters - like all early learning - is best done in the context of what is meaningful to young children.

Many children first learn the initial letter of their own name, which has a great deal of meaning and importance to them. For the child who loves jello, *J* may be an important letter, while the child who knows that Daddy works at the Texaco station may begin to notice the letter *T*.

Some children learn to read without knowing the names of letters or the sounds associated with them. But research shows that for most children, associating names and sounds with the alphabet comes before conventional reading.

However, this finding does not mean that letter names should be drilled into young children. There are far more effective and enjoyable ways for children to learn about letters. For instance, children enjoy labeling items that they choose. Sound out the name of the object together to determine which initial letter to use, then cut out big letters from magazines or newspapers and invite the child to tape them on items that she wants labeled.

At home or out together, point out letters and words that are likely to be of special interest to your child. Try simple activities such as reading logos of favorite foods and stores, identifying street signs, writing grocery lists together, and playing with magnetic letters on the refrigerator door while singing the alphabet song. Remember, children learn through play!