By involving your child in cooking activities, you are not only teaching them valuable life skills, but can also target tons of speech and language goals! Here are some ideas & tips!

LANGUAGE

Vocabulary: Cooking provides multiple exposures to novel ingredients and utensils. Vocabulary like grater, zest, sage, baste, whisk (etc.) is not commonly used in every day conversation, so you will be able to introduce your child to these new concepts by having them help you out while preparing a meal.
Following Directions: This skill automatically gets targeted when following a recipe.
Sequencing: Following a recipe provides an opportunity to work on sequencing skills. Talk to your child about what to do first / next / last.
Describing: Exposure to a large variety of ingredients and dishes will allow you to work on describing them. You can talk about textures, smells, tastes, as well as physical appearance of a specific food item.
Categorizing: You can practice categorization skills by grouping the ingredients for a particular recipe by food group: dairy, meat, vegetable, etc. For younger children, you can have them sort by size or color.
Answering Questions: You can work on targeting simple Wh-questions during and after the meal preparation process. *What* ingredients do we need? *Who* helped you? *Why* did we need to measure? *How* many eggs do we need? *When* do we need to take the turkey out of the oven? *Where* is the oil? etc.
Listening Comprehension: You can read the recipe to your child and have them tell you what they remember.
Narrating Personal Events / Recall: Have your child explain to someone how they helped out in the kitchen and / or how they prepared a particular dish.
Problem-Solving: Throughout the cooking process, ask your child questions that will stimulate their critical thinking skills. How can we keep the lemon seeds from falling into the juice? How can we separate egg yolk from egg white? How can we make a triangle out of this square cheese slice?

ARTICULATION

Word level: Have the child find ingredients that have their speech sounds and have them practice saying it out loud.
Sentence level: If the child is a reader: have them read the recipe to you while paying attention to their speech sounds.
Conversation level: Encourage the child to use their best speech sounds while having a dinner conversation.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Taking Turns: Practice taking turns during dinner preparation.
Perspective Taking: Have your child help set the table – have them think about who is coming to dinner and how many plates will be needed.
Conversation Skills: Meal time is a great opportunity to practice working on conversation skills (eye contact, turn-taking, topic maintenance).
Manners / Etiquette: Meal time is also great for targeting manners – frontload your child prior to the meal by talking to them about etiquette: chewing with their mouth closed, not taking the last food item without asking, etc.

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