

## **Kids in the Kitchen This Christmas** – December 2010

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Ellie Lee was only three when she began to bake.

She washed her hands and stood on a chair to reach the kitchen counter. Ellie and her dad had already made homemade granola two days ago. Today, Ellie and her mom were going to make cookie mix. Ellie had a big bowl, measuring cups and spoons, and a big wooden spoon. Ellie's mom had the recipe written down. She would tell Ellie the next ingredient and hand her the appropriate measuring utensil. Together they would count the correct number of scoops of flour and sugar, baking soda, salt and chocolate chips that Ellie needed to put into the bowl. Ellie's job was to scoop, pour, count and stir. When the cookie mix was prepared, Ellie's mom poured the mixture into a large glass jar while Ellie drew a picture of grandpa eating cookies on a sticky label she would attach to the outside of the jar.

Ellie is making Christmas gifts for her grandparents. Ellie is having fun and learning what it means to give something of herself to others.

What else is Ellie Lee who is only three learning? Math, reading and writing!

Learning to cook, bake or create things in the kitchen are fabulous opportunities for math concepts like numbers, measurement, fractions, order and sequence to become meaningful to children. When Ellie measures out 1 cup of sugar and 2 cups of flour, she can see how numbers represent quantities. When her mom tells her to fill up the cup measure to the top, or when they experiment to see if two  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup measures hold the same amount as a 1 cup measure, Ellie is gaining basic and concrete information about fractions.

Ellie's mom reads the recipe. Together they discover new words like 'oatmeal' and 'soda'. Ellie excitedly tests out the meaning of 'vigorously' when the recipe directs them to 'stir vigorously'. They follow the directions by putting the ingredients into the mixing bowl in order. Ellie begins to understand words that convey sequence like 'first', 'next' and 'last'.

The picture Ellie draws on the label will show her grandpa that the cookies are for him. The only letter in grandpa's name Ellie knows yet is "G". Ellie prints a large shaky "G" on her picture of delicious chocolate chip cookies. Ellie is starting to print a few letters. Ellie has also realized that she can show the ideas that are in her head by drawing, scribbling and printing on paper. Ellie is in the early stages of learning how to write.

Ellie and her parents have found a few websites with gift ideas they can make together this Christmas. Should they make bath salts for Aunt Kath and gingerbread tree ornaments for Aunt Jane?

Ellie Lee, who is three, can hardly wait to see.