

Kid's TABLE

By Rosemarie Perla

Teach your Children Well.

When we think of gifts we want to give our children, ideas like: money, safe housing, medical attention, education, may come to mind. How about teaching them how to cook? How to garden? Perhaps not our first thoughts, however these are the skills that can be with them for the rest of their lives, allowing them ways to support themselves, as well as their health.

When my young adult son calls and tells me he is making Nana's Tomato Sauce from the tomatoes he grew, my heart swells. Or, my daughter asks me permission to invite four of her high school friends over to cook them dinner...why—yes! Somehow, I think, their father and I did something right. They are learning how to fend for themselves using the cooking and gardening skills passed on to them from one generation to the next.

What better way to teach children about eating fresh (and locally!)? Growing the luxuriant tomato from seed and then, plunking it into a pan of oil and garlic...this sweet fruit, with fresh basil or parsley, turns into a tasty meal in 15 minutes! No need to have a conversation with them about "fast-food". One taste of this sauce and they easily discover a new definition of fast and easy eating.

Learning to cook is a basic life skill. When we teach our children how to cook, we teach them not only how to feed themselves, but we also give them an opportunity to connect with nature. Cooking for, and with others at the family dinner, allows them to experience connection, ritual and relaxation. Cooking and gardening opens the door to other skills which they carry into adulthood – more fortified for a stronger, healthier life.



Last summer, at the Farmers at the Firehouse Market in the Strip, Slow Food Pittsburgh sponsored a cooking class where I taught kids about cooking a quick tomato sauce made with fresh tomatoes bought from Local Farmers. With eyes alight, these kids learned how to use a knife, chop the tomatoes and basil, turning these fresh ingredients into a tomato sauce that made their parents swoon.

This summer, I invite you to teach your children how to grow their own tomatoes with Doug's instruction. Then, I'll meet you back here in the fall issue to teach them how to make their own tomato sauce to eat now or can for later. If you can't wait, then join me this summer at Whole Foods Market by signing your kids up for one of our cooking classes. Hope to see you soon! (For information on the cooking classes call Kim at Whole Foods: 412. 441.7960.

