

Should three year-olds learn to cook?

We quite happily give children messy paints and brushes, scissors to snip a zillion pieces of paper, play dough to roll, cut and shape, and sticky glue to spread around. But, to some, cooking at three years old sounds... dangerous, messy, too much effort.

The result of keeping kids out of the kitchen is that children are less knowledgeable about where their food comes from. A 2013 study showed that one-third of primary school children think cheese comes from plants and bread comes from meat. It sharply illustrates how disconnected we've become from our food.

There are all kinds of reasons not to involve your kids in cooking. With most parents working, there isn't always time to cook from scratch – let alone at a child's pace.

In fact, the average time people spend cooking dinner has nearly halved in the last 20 years – people now spend just 32 minutes making dinner. Compulsory cooking lessons will shortly be introduced into all primary schools for children aged 5 and up. Can and should we actually start kids cooking earlier? And are lessons what we really need?