

GET THE KIDS IN ON THE ACTION!

Having your children help with meal preparations does more than just make your life less stressful at the end of the day. It adds purpose to kids' lives and gives them something constructive to do after school, a reason to tell their friends they cannot just "hang out" with them—they have something to do at home. Give them responsibility and help them rise to it and they will build self-confidence from the inside out. Make and post assignments at the beginning of each week, then also make spontaneous requests as meals are prepared. Children will come to learn that such activities are part of a family's daily life.

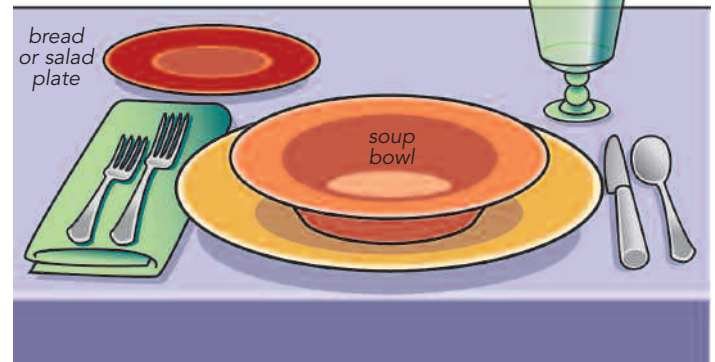
Single parents especially need the extra help of their children. You're all trying to make your family work. The time together in preparing, eating, and cleaning up will allow for much family communication that otherwise would not take place. Preparing and having dinner together lends itself to so many good sharing experiences that would be lost otherwise.



These girls make and proudly serve vegetable lasagna (p. 91) to their mother, aunt, and grandparents.



Teach your children the correct way to set a table and assign that as a rotating responsibility. Dinnertime will be easier on you and they'll learn something they'll use for a lifetime.



Follow the diagram above to set the table for a casual meal. More formal occasions have more "rules" and that information can be found on the Web. Glasses are always above the knife. Knives and spoons are always to the right and forks to the left of the plate. The small fork is a salad fork, which would be used if a salad were served before the main course. The napkin can also be put in a napkin ring, or let the kids get creative with their napkin folding and presentation.