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# A child care centre chef teaches children to cook 'to set them up for life'

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A typical morning for the children at [Bluebird Early Education Soldiers Hill](#) sees them popping into the kitchen to say hello to in-house chef Lyne.

'I have lots of children come and visit me in the kitchen as they arrive and before they go into their studios,' says Lyne.

'Some come in to say good morning, others want a cuddle, some want

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Children are often in their own kitchens watching their parents cook, and at child care it's a place where they feel at home. 'They see me, not so much as an educator, but as a special friend,' explains Lyne.

## Cooking classes

Lyne conducts weekly cooking classes for the children at Bluebird Soldiers Hill, and they love preparing healthy lunches for their friends. 'Three of their favourite recipes to cook with me for lunch are Lyne's Pumpkin Soup, Spinach Chicken, and Curry Beef,' says Lyne.

She has found the best way to conduct the classes is to take the ingredients to the children. 'I get all the ingredients on a trolley and take it into the studios. The children help place the ingredients on the prep bench. We wash our hands, and then the lesson begins. I bring in the recipe and a picture of what we are cooking.'

It's not just a watch and learn experience, it's very much hands-on for the little ones, as that's how they learn best.

'The children measure out the ingredients and then they follow what I am

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## Safety first

Taking the ingredients to the children means that Lyne can keep the children away from hot ovens and sharp knives. 'The cooking lessons are done in the studio so I take everything in with me,' Lyne explains.

'We have child-friendly knives and chopping boards. If we are using the oven I will take it back to the kitchen. Once cooked and cooled I will take it back to the studio for the children to try.'

## Family feedback

Lyne says she gets lovely feedback from the children and their families about the cooking lessons and the meals that she makes. 'One family tells me that at each meal, they compare it to Lyne's cooking, they make a game of it now. Another family know that Lyne's soup is the best so now they don't make it at home.'

Lyne enjoys the funny conversations that come from interacting with children. 'Often they'll just ask funny things like 'why is your hair that colour?'

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Lyne admits that when cooking for such large numbers, sometimes things can go wrong. But you've got to just smile and keep going.

'Once I cooked quiche for 114 children and forgot to put an ingredient in,' she says with a chuckle. Luckily the children aren't too harsh with their feedback - they love the food that Lyne prepares from scratch each day for their meals and snacks.

## Learning through cooking

For the children, it's not just about the end result of eating a meal. They are learning the whole time that they are cooking. 'They learn fine motor skills, listening skills, sharing, and just how to have fun.'

It also makes them more likely to try the food, as they've had a hand in preparing it. 'I also let the children try it as we are cooking so they get to taste different things raw and cooked,' Lyne explains.

## Teaching the next generation

Lyne feels lucky to be teaching these tiny humans to cook. 'It warms my

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## Try this child-friendly recipe

Lyne was kind enough to share her famous pumpkin soup recipe with us. It makes a big batch, so you could even freeze some to use another time.

Ingredients:

- ½ Queensland blue pumpkin, peeled and de-seeded
- 1kg potatoes, peeled
- 1kg sweet potatoes, peeled
- 1kg carrots, peeled
- 1 whole cauliflower, washed and cut into florets
- 250g broccoli, washed and cut into florets
- 3 zucchinis, washed and chopped
- 1 large onion, peeled and diced
- ½ tin Massel chicken stock powder

Method:

Place all ingredients in a large stockpot, cover with water and simmer for 2.5 hours.

When all of the vegetables are soft, use a stick blender to puree the soup

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## **Bluebird Early Education Soldier's Hill**

Meals are often enjoyed outdoors, and for the younger ones a comfortable nap in the shade is encouraged. Bluebird Early Education Soldiers Hill prides itself on being a home away from home for the children in its care.

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