



Photo: Michael Cooper

# Kiddos *in the* Kitchen

Culinary studio teaches children to eat green veggies, roll sushi, master table etiquette and more

By Natasha Ball

**T**uesday: Gymnastics and dance. Thursday: Softball practice and piano lessons. The weekend: Spent in transit from scrimmage to tournament to recital.

When families keep hectic schedules packed with kids' activities, healthful, home-cooked meals are one of the first things to fall off the plate. Years pass, and the children of the American soccer mom go out into the world barely knowing how to boil water, left to subsist on a diet of Ramen noodles and Pop Tarts.

Enter Sage Culinary Studio, 3746 S. Peoria Ave., a cooking school for kids that aims to recover the dying tradition of cooking from scratch and turn it into a way to empower kids and reconnect families.

When Sage owner Catherine deCamp, a Tulsa mother of three, decided to enroll her youngest daughter in cooking school last summer, she discovered a gaping hole in the local kids' activities market.

"I thought, 'I have her in art and piano lessons; I ought to just find a cooking school for her once per week. That way she could get all of the mixing, stirring and measuring out of her system; and she'd be learning a life skill.' But, there wasn't anything like that here."

By October, Sage was open and enrolling for its four age-graded classes: Kinder Chef Couples, for toddlers aged

3-4 and their parents; Foodies, for elementary schoolers aged 5-8; Sous Chefs, for kids aged 9-13; and Teen Chefs, for teens to age 18. Cooking school, which ranges \$30-40 per class with discounts for siblings and kids who take multiple classes, is in session for each of the age groups once per week.

If it's hard to imagine corralling a group of children for a snack, let alone to bake one from scratch, just think of this: Kids in classes at Sage not only roll their own sushi and whip up edible creations like Salmon Croquettes and Chocolate Ganache Purses from raw ingredients, but they are also schooled in the lost art of table etiquette.

"They're so thrilled they've done all of that themselves," deCamp said.

Thus emboldened, Sage kids have been known to cozy up to even the greenest of vegetables. When kids cook for themselves, they can't help but be curious about the taste of their dish.

"Once they're sitting at the table with their peers, and they see them take a bite, they will give it a try, too. Plus, they have some buy-in. They put it together," deCamp said.

India Carter, a Tulsa mother of three Sage students under age 10, is reaping the benefits of the culinary classes at her dining room table.

While her kids would often refuse what was put in front of them at supper, "since they've gone through the experience of cooking their own meals at Sage, they realize how much it takes to do that everyday.

"Now, if we sit down to dinner and they don't like something, at least they don't complain about it – there is more of an understanding there."

Part and parcel of the experience at Sage is exploring and learning about the raw ingredients that go into creating kids' favorite dishes.

"Take cardamom, for example," deCamp said. "When we were using it to make our Strawberry Lassi, an Indian fruit drink, the kids said, 'Oh, it smells like flowers.' If you think about it, it really does. I love that – that they're using all their senses while they're cooking and eating."

Though the start-up phase has meant seven-day workweeks for deCamp, "we're very happy with the reception we've received from Tulsans. There's something very satisfying about having your own business.

"Also, it's great to see the kids' reaction to this – they're so thrilled. Any child you talk to will tell you he or she loves to cook. To have a place where they can come do that – where it's low-pressure and there are no worries about making a mess – it's perfect."

Call 933-5005 for more. [TUV](#)