

## Getting started with salads

Salads can be made from countless combinations of different ingredients. Their versatility makes them an ideal dish to prepare with children of different ages and abilities.



### 5-7

With younger children, salads can be made using basic skills, focusing on choosing and combining ingredients. Creating fruit and vegetable based salads not only teaches younger children basic food skills, but also reinforces the importance of eating at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Why not try a layered salad of lettuce, grated carrot, canned sweetcorn, and cress – easy to prepare, attractive, healthy and no need for a knife!

Use the **Fruit and vegetable salad planner** sheet to help children think about different fruit and vegetables they could use in their salads.

### 8-11

With older children, salads can involve more challenging skills, focusing on a variety of ingredients which require more preparation. Challenging children to create a salad composing of foods from a number of different food groups helps them learn about the importance of eating a balanced and varied diet. Why not start your salad with an energy providing base such as cous cous? This can accommodate a host of exciting ingredients such as canned chick pea, fresh mint, grated cheese, chopped pepper and fruit.

Use **The eatwell planner** sheet to help children plan a healthy salad which includes ingredients from different food groups.

### Where to start

- Think about the age and ability of the children. Decide on the skills you want to teach and identify the ingredients which will be suitable for teaching those skills.
- Help the children research different salads, the ingredients they contain and the occasions when they are eaten.
- Organise a tasting session so the children can try possible ingredients.
- Identify a purpose for the salad, e.g. lunch, an event in school, a snack, a side dish.
- Think about growing some of the ingredients in school, e.g. lettuce, cress, herbs.

### Some key skills

**Washing** – Teaching children to wash fruit and vegetables carefully is important.

**Cutting** – Younger children can snip ingredients such as herbs and spring onions with kitchen scissors. They can tackle soft foods with a table or butter knife. As children become more confident with food, they should be taught to use a vegetable knife, applying safe cutting methods, e.g. the bridge and the claw. For more information about these skills, go to: [www.foodafactoflife.org.uk](http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk) Cooking and food skills.

**Grating** – This is a great way to prepare fruit and vegetables, especially those which can be tricky for young children to cut, such as carrots and apples. Grating also make ingredients such as cheese go further.

**Peeling** – It is important to teach children to peel away from themselves. When the unwanted part of the food has been removed, a peeler can be used to create exciting ribbon like pieces of food to decorate or add to salads.

For ingredient ideas for salads, have a look at the **eatwell - ingredient inspirations** sheet.