

## **Enhance Your Sensory Systems in the Kitchen**

### **Suggestions from Occupational Therapist Registered, Karen R, 2019**

Awakening one's sensory systems (taste, touch, smell, and sight) can make cooking more interesting, possibly enjoyable, comforting, and nourishing! Ideas to awaken the systems include:

1. Spices: some will wake up your sense of smell and/or taste and others will relax them. When you smell the different scents, how do you feel? Happy, energized, relaxed?  
You will also experience different flavors; is it bitter, tangy, sweet, sour or something else? Does your tongue like the way it feels?
2. Food textures:
  - a. In your mouth! Do they feel smooth, mushy, or feel crunchy or grainy? Does your mouth like the way it feels? Can you guess how the food feels without seeing it first?
  - b. Touching with your hands! Again, it can feel soft and mushy, hard and tough, smooth, textured, and grainy. Do your hands like the way it feels?
3. Temperature! Cold, warm, hot? Your mouth and your hands can both experience this.
4. Color, shape, and size! This information is seen through our eyes! Our eyes provide us with so much information about our world. Take time to observe this when you are cooking.

### **Some ways to combine sensory experiences:**

1. Use ingredients of different textures and tastes such as smooth, creamy, sweet whipped cream with hard, yummy chocolate chips.
2. Use your sense of touch to handle textures and temperature when kneading, flattening cookies, mashing potatoes, and stirring batter. Use the same techniques to prepare your mouth for more textures such as chewing gum (if allowed), sucking ice, chewing firm food like cheese or crunching a cracker. Try different foods to see what works best for you.
3. Clean up! Bringing dishes to the sink, rinsing/washing the dishes, putting dishes in the dishwasher, and drying the dishes! All these tasks provide lots of input and information to your sensory systems!
4. Lastly, get in the kitchen and HAVE FUN!