



Speaking

by Bonnie Neugebauer

Watching Blake build a sandwich is a bit like having your own show on the Food Network! He is thoughtful in choosing his ingredients and precise in assembling them. He likes to see what might be available in the frig and experiment with combinations of flavors. The finished product is carefully plated and — voilà! As an observer you can sense his anticipation of the tastes to come, and you're always hoping he's going to share.

Spending time with my son-in-law helps me remember how much I love to cook. Together we share the pleasures of creating and savoring delicious family meals, and we teach each other things. But I think the most important thing I take away from these times together is the pleasure.

Blake enjoys choosing the pot to cook in, the knife to cut with, the bowl to serve in. Like an Iron Chef competitor, he relishes the challenge of planning a meal around what's in the kitchen, rather than going to the store. He finds excitement in making something new and not knowing exactly how it will turn out. He challenges me to be creative because he will notice a sprinkling of chives as garnish, or the hint of orange in the risotto. Studying recipes, anticipating flavors, taking time to enjoy the process — it's the difference between making dinner and creating a meal. All of our senses are fed.



I think this could make a difference for children, as we struggle to combat the forces at work to make them obese. As we feed their bodies, we can also be stimulating their minds. We can involve them in the process of preparing food and we can encourage them to be mindful eaters. If they know where the carrot comes from, maybe help grow it, wash the dirt from it, compost the carrot tops, collaborate in determining what will happen to it, work with peeler and knife to prepare it — they will have thought a lot about that carrot before they have the opportunity to eat it, and it will just have to taste differently than it will if they just find it on their plate.

It takes much less time, it's less messy, and much more efficient to just fill stomachs. But there are some powerful societal influences working for obesity, so we have to be watchful and consistently mindful.

Our new microwave has three buttons under the title 'Kids Meals.' They are: Mac and Cheese, Hot Dog, Chicken Nuggets! Even an appliance is programmed for obesity.

When we prepare food with and for children, it is our responsibility to give them intellectual opportunities, sensual memories, and healthy experiences. From these they, too, will create patterns of great pleasure around food; and they will live longer to enjoy them.