

## Share a Meal Together

Regular meal times encourage social behaviour, improve appetite, support independence and promote self esteem.

For a person with dementia, being included in the preparation of a meal can be particularly beneficial. The activity has an obvious purpose, it provides an immediate reward and is, therefore, highly motivating. It also offers a multi-sensory experience which helps stimulate long-term memory.

When including the person with dementia in food preparation, choose a simple task or recipe that can be broken down into steps. Good choices might include making baking powder biscuits, no-bake cookies, fruit salad, apple crisp, soups, stews, etc. Repetitive tasks such as peeling potatoes, chopping vegetables or fruit can also easily involve the person with dementia. Food-related activities that are associated with the current season (such as making strawberry shortcake in summer) offer delicious reminiscence opportunities. Why not expand the activity by looking at old cook books? Have a discussion about favourite foods and recipes, or play a bit of trivia that includes the completion of a familiar food-related phrase or saying:

"I'm so hungry; I could eat a \_\_\_\_\_."

"This meat is as tough as \_\_\_\_\_."

"Feed a cold starve a \_\_\_\_\_."

Finish the activity by setting the table together. Remember to make the place settings simple by including only the essentials. And does it really matter if the cutlery ends up in the wrong order? Once everything is ready, sit down, relax and enjoy the fruits of your labour together.

