

Fun with cooking: The Dinner Station's 'Conductor Camp' introduces kids to kitchen basics

By **STEFANIE WHITE**, McKinney Courier-Gazette

(Created: Tuesday, July 18, 2006 11:28 PM CDT)

Children wanting to get in touch with their inner Wolfgang Puck can test their cooking skills at the Dinner Station's Conductor Camp.

Armed with measuring cups and conductor's hats, the children have to chance to work side by side with their mom, preparing delicious meals and desserts.

Amy Cole, co-founder of The Dinner Station restaurant, says that Conductor Camp mixes food and learning in one experience.

"We threw in an educational slant," Cole said.

The Conductor Camp, for ages 5 and older, introduces the children to kitchen basics such as table setting, measuring and the food pyramid. Cole, a former school teacher, says the children do healthy-food-related activities such as seeing how nutrients are absorbed by the body.



McKinney Courier-Gazette/Stefanie White Deanna Smith and daughter, Shannon, work on a healthy eating activity.

The children and their mothers will learn to make chicken pot pie and dirt cake, all which can be taken home and served to the rest of the family. And Cole says that a spill or to might happen during food preparation.

"We expect messes at Conductor Camp," Cole said.

The Dinner Station opened in McKinney in April. Founded by Cole and longtime friend Kristi Long, The Dinner Station offers a fun environment for people to prepare meals. Given 18 to 20 different meal choices, The Dinner Station is a place for busy families to stock up on a month's worth of meals.

"Basically, we do all of the menu planning, the grocery shopping, the prep and the food cleanup," Cole said. After the meals are prepared, they can be frozen and thawed for later use.

"Therefore, they'll have healthy meals to feed their families, as opposed to Sonic and McDonald's every night," Cole said.

The Dinner Station also has a Junior Chef Camp for children ages 12 and older. At this camp, the children do the same types of things that the adults do during regular sessions. At Conductor Camp, which costs \$30 per child, the kids will receive a T-shirt, conductor hat, train whistle, chicken pot pie and dirt cake.

While they might make a mess and put too much sugar in their cake mix, Cole says that when kids come to Conductor Camp, they want to come back.

"They think it's big fun."

Contact Stefanie White at stefanie.white@sctx.com.