

Cinnamon Apple Cake

Make this sensory treat with cinnamon graham crackers and apples

With only five ingredients, this cake is easy to make, and it smells like cinnamon and apples. It's delicious served warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a dusting of powdered sugar.

With each step, we provide sensory suggestions for you to try with your child. You can follow one or all the suggestions – touch, taste, see, smell, and hear.



Utensils

- 8 x 8-inch baking pan
- Large mixing bowl
- Measuring cup
- Mixing spoon
- Small bowl or saucepan for melting the butter
- Ziploc bag
- Rolling pin

Ingredients

- 28 squares cinnamon graham crackers (about 1½ sleeves)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 stick (8 tablespoons) butter, plus a tablespoon for greasing the pan
- 3 large eggs
- 1 medium apple, Red Delicious or Honeycrisp variety

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>1. Gather the ingredients and utensils. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grease the baking pan with a tablespoon of butter.</p>	<p> What do the utensils feel like? Are their textures rough or smooth? Does the mixing bowl feel warm or cold?</p> <p> What happens when you bang the utensils together or against the bowl?</p> <p> If your child likes shiny objects, use a metal mixing bowl.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>2. Open a sleeve of graham crackers and break them into smaller pieces. Put the pieces into the Ziploc bag and zip the bag closed.</p>	<p> When you open the sleeve of crackers, smell the cinnamon. What else smells like cinnamon, especially during the holidays?</p> <p> As you break apart the crackers, do they feel rough or smooth? Notice how one cracker splits apart into two crackers, or more! Count the pieces as you break them. Putting the pieces into the Ziploc bag increases fine motor skills. Pinching and zipping the bag closed when you're done builds strong fingers.</p> <p> Graham crackers are a favorite snack for very young children because they're easy to eat. They're called "meltables" because they soften easily in your mouth and require minimal chewing.</p>
<p>3. Pound the graham crackers into crumbs with your fists or roll the bag with a rolling pin. Pour the crumbs into the mixing bowl.</p>	<p> Let your child place their hands over yours as you pound the plastic bag or roll a rolling pin over the plastic bag.</p> <p> Listen for any crunching sounds the mixture makes when you pound it with your fists or roll it with the rolling pin. Take turns pounding the plastic bag. Talk about how your rolling pin is moving back and forth over the plastic bag.</p> <p> How can you create visual contrast? Graham cracker crumbs in a white or shiny bowl are easier to see than a dark bowl.</p> <p> If any crumbs spill on your work surface, let your child touch them with their hands or feet. Trace some shapes. Do they feel coarse and crumbly?</p> <p> Smell the crumbs. They still smell like cinnamon graham crackers!</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>4. Slowly melt the stick of butter in a saucepan on the stovetop or in a bowl in the microwave oven. Use low heat and watch it carefully so it doesn't brown.</p>	<p> Let your child watch you melt the butter. Notice how a stick of butter turns into a liquid.</p> <p> Talk about how the stove is hot. If you're microwaving the butter, listen to the sound the microwave makes when it's done melting the butter.</p>
<p>5. Measure one cup of sugar and add it to the mixing bowl. Stir the crumbs and sugar together and add the melted butter. Stir some more.</p>	<p> Do the crumbs and sugar make a sound when you stir them together? Talk about how you're mixing the ingredients together. Use action words like "scoop," "pour," and "stir."</p> <p> What does the batter smell like? Cinnamon? Butter?</p> <p> Allow your child to squeeze some of the dough between their fingers. What does it feel like? Is it sticky? Soft? Crumbly?</p> <p> Taste the buttery mixture with your fingers or put a little bite on your child's feeding tray. It doesn't taste just like cinnamon graham crackers anymore!</p>
<p>6. Add the eggs and continue mixing.</p>	<p> Allow your child to hold an egg in their palm. If that is too much, let your child touch the shell. It's smooth.</p> <p> Notice how eggs roll on your work surface, but they are not round like balls. Don't let the eggs roll off the counter!</p> <p> Talk about where eggs come from. Even if you bought them at the grocery store, eggs really come from chickens!</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
7. Peel, core, and dice the apple into small chunks. Add them to the cake mixture and stir. The batter will be wet and chunky.	<p> Knives are sharp. Let your child watch you prepare the apple pieces.</p> <p> Count out loud how many apple pieces you made from one apple. Talk about all the different apples there are and where they grow. There are so many ways you can eat an apple – eat it whole or sliced, cooked into applesauce, or baked in a pie, or liquified into apple juice. Sing a song about apples, such as “Way Up High in the Apple Tree.”</p> <p> Taste a slice of apple. Is it sweet or sour?</p> <p> Allow your child to put their hand over yours as you stir the batter.</p>
8. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan and put it in the preheated oven for 40-45 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.	<p> Use action words like “scoop,” “pour,” and “scrape” as you spoon the batter into the prepared pan and wipe the bowl clean with a spatula.</p> <p> The oven is hot!</p> <p> Listen for the “beep” of your timer when the cake is done baking.</p> <p> Your kitchen will smell like cinnamon and apples as the cake bakes. Just like apple pie!</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
9. Let the cake cool for a few minutes. Then sprinkle the top with powdered sugar or serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.	<p data-bbox="846 258 1425 422"> Try putting the confectioner's sugar in a shaker with holes in the top so it's easier for your child to sprinkle the cake. The sugar falls like snow!</p> <p data-bbox="846 443 1425 632"> As you sprinkle the cake with powdered sugar or serve it with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, notice how the white color contrasts with the toasty brown of the cake.</p> <p data-bbox="846 653 1425 751"> Take a bite of the cake. Can you taste the apples?</p>
