

**A SPECIAL
REPORT**

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ONLY ACCELERATING** PAGE 108

Esquire

MAN AT HIS BEST

JUNE/JULY 2014

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In the Kitchen, with Kids

BY MICHAEL LEVITON

Executive chef, Area Four, Cambridge, Massachusetts, father of two

> **Young kids** can measure flour for pancake batter, make cookie dough. Our four-year-old son loves to crack eggs.

> **It's better** to cook earlier in the day. They're toast after five o'clock, so undertaking a big project in the evening is asking for trouble.

> **We've been** teaching my eleven-year-old daughter some knife work for a while now, but I'm not going to say, "Go dice four onions and call me when you're done." I don't turn my back on her when she has a knife in her hand.

> **Bring them** with you to the market so they can learn how to pick out quality produce. It's good for them to see that part of the process, too.

> **Whenever** I'm cooking at home, I try to minimize the mess as much as possible—roasting is great for that. Line a sheet pan with tinfoil to make cleanup easy.

> **If you have** a good chicken, it's easy to make dinner with your kids.

Dry the **chicken** and coat with **butter or olive oil**. Put herbs and aromatics inside the cavity—**whole garlic cloves, cut-up lemon, a few sprigs of rosemary**. Then get the kids involved in seasoning. This is one of those moments where I say, "You



sort of want to make a mess." I'll hold the bird and rotate it a little as one of my kids lets the **kosher salt** fall in an even snow. Then cut **another lemon** into halves or quarters and let them squeeze it all over the chicken.

Place the chicken breast-up in a roasting pan that's just a bit bigger than the bird. Throw in a mess of **seasonal vegetables**. Break up

a head of **garlic**. Add a handful of **marble potatoes** and a bunch of young **white turnips** the size of golf balls, quartered. Add whole **radishes** and **shiitake mushrooms**, halved. Let your kids do as much as they can.

Throw everything into a 375-degree oven. For a three-pound bird, roast about an hour. Periodically stir the vegetables so they get

coated with the chicken fat and juice. If you want, add a bunch of jumbo **asparagus** later on and/or a handful of blanched **fava beans** right at the end.

When the chicken has rested, let the kids have at it to see how it breaks down. My daughter's of an age where she can begin to appreciate how the muscles function, the difference between dark and light meat, and

how the chicken breast tastes different from the leg and thigh.

There's potential for a lesson here: As a culture, we've become divorced not just from where our food comes from but how we get it on the table. When our kids see raw ingredients and watch how we transform those into food, that's a good thing.

—INTERVIEWED BY JESSIE KISSINGER