

# My Daddy, the Cook



Nick Coffey, 38, is a stay-at-home dad with a difference – he has fans all over the world, his own culinary radio show and a brand new cookery book. His luck first changed when he started a blog at [mydaddycooks.com](http://mydaddycooks.com) about his experiences in the kitchen with his three-year-old son, Archie. Nick tells his story...

#### Why did you become a stay-at-home dad?

I used to run a business distributing bottled waters to restaurants, cafés and hotels, but in early 2009, I closed it down as it wasn't doing very well in the credit crunch.

I opted to be a stay-at-home dad, looking after Archie, then aged one, until a work opportunity turned up, while my wife Jo, 38, returned to work part-time.

#### How did you and Archie start cooking together?

When I started out looking after Archie, I'd make his lunch every day. Sometimes Archie would rather continue playing with his puzzle or toy, but at other times he'd come in to the kitchen and help.

Archie and I now cook together two or three times a week – he's my sous chef with his own chef's hat and apron to wear. He has developed a real feel for food, and can help for anything from 10 minutes to an hour and a half.

#### Why did you start writing a cookery blog?

By September of 2009, I was really fed up with the lack of work and my morale was crashing. All the things that I had tried to do to create a new revenue stream hadn't worked out. On the plus side, I was really enjoying spending time with Archie – I was well aware that once he went to school, that would be it.

One day, I just thought that I'd start a blog about the cooking we did together. The blog was supposed to be a creative outlet for me while looking after Archie. I now realise it's also a great way to record his childhood. I filmed us working in the kitchen, thinking that a video would be the best way to put across how we cooked. A friend with video experience gave me some pointers about filming and editing.

Luckily, Archie loves the whole experience – he especially enjoys watching himself on the videos and laughing at himself. While it remains fun for him, I'm happy.

#### What sort of foods do you cook together?

Anything really. I'm not a trained chef, so I just use what's in the store cupboard and fridge. I cook spontaneously and make it up as I go along.

I've always enjoyed food but when I went to live in France in my twenties, I really fell in love with cooking – in particular, cooking really good quality, fresh ingredients in a simple way.

We have made sea bream baked in a parcel, chicken tarragon hotpot, pan-fried sea bass with oven-roasted cherry tomatoes, shepherd's pie and cheese and vegetable muffins.

We're pasta fiends, eating it three times a week. One of Archie's favourite meals is breaded escalopes because he likes all the dipping you get to do. We also make lots of cakes and no-bake desserts. One of his favourite things to do is press the buttons on the food mixer.

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### Does Archie eat the meals he has helped to cook?

He's a toddler and fussy, so he doesn't eat everything. But he likes Chinese and Thai food, and when he's been involved with cooking something, he'll eat it nine times out of 10.

### What sort of things do you do with Archie when you're looking after him, apart from cooking?

I take him to see his grandparents, who live close by, or we go to the park or the fishmongers. We just hang out really, playing puzzles and reading.

### Tell us about your new cookery career?

The blog spawned a career that I didn't know I wanted but that I really love – I was contacted by publishers and now have my own cookery book coming

out, plus a weekly cookery show on local radio. I've evolved from 'stay-at-home dad' to 'work-at-home dad', but count myself very lucky in that I'm at home 80 per cent of the time.

I still get to cook with Archie, eat breakfast with the kids and put them to bed. Our baby, Matilda, is only four months, but when she is bigger, I'd love to cook with her too. I know Archie is keen to have her help us in the kitchen. It will be a whole new experience. ♦

*My Daddy Cooks* (Hodder & Stoughton, £18.99) is published on 26 May. See his blog at [www.mydaddycooks.com](http://www.mydaddycooks.com).

