



Koolkid: Happiness when shared, is doubled

*Design by Lotte Jacobse
Text by Pieter Desmet*

Cooking is a perilous business. Searing hot ovens, boiling pots and sharp knives. Clearly not suitable for young children. After all, there's a reason experts from the Veiligheid-NL safety foundation have declared the kitchen to be an 'unsafe place', and they advise against young children coming in the kitchen at all. In short, kids and cooking aren't a good combination, right? They are! With Koolkid, designer Lotte Jacobse introduced a product line that allows toddlers to help prepare evening meals in a safe, exploratory and playful way.

Shared Happiness

Positive designing is usually aimed at people with shared interests and challenges. But how about designing for the happiness of people who are very *different* from each other? This question formed the starting point for Lotte's project. Her goal was to design a product that contributes to the happiness of both toddlers and their parents. Together with several young families, she investigated which daily experiences contribute to

that happiness. She soon became fascinated by all the activities that surround dinner. For the parents, this is valuable family time. At the same time though, it's also often a struggle. It's quite a challenge to keep your cool while you're attempting to multitask. Because while you're busy trying to cook the meal, your toddler is making a mess of things: with boundless joy, they climb onto the most unsafe objects and explore the kitchen without any notion of danger.

When you've got plenty of time, the presence of your toddler in the kitchen could lead to fun interactions and shared experiences. However, there's often less time to be patient. As a result, the toddlers don't feel included in the activities. This, in turn, makes the transition from cooking to eating very abrupt and confusing for them. They're interrupted while playing and become recalcitrant; re-

fusing to eat or being openly rebellious by throwing vegetables around. In short: a battle. But apart from this battle, Lotte also observed a number of inspiring core qualities in the toddlers' behaviour: curiosity, creativity, love of life and friendliness. Driven by a desire for autonomy and competence, toddlers are very eager to do everything themselves. Starting with the question of 'how can I use those core qualities?' the idea arose to involve toddlers in the cooking process, allowing them to experience the relationship between cooking and eating in a playful way.

Cooking, Playing and Eating

Kookid allows young children to playfully explore the activities in the kitchen. Kookid consists of a series of 11 elements that creatively connect the activities of cooking, eating and playing.





Ethics and Designing

Currently, Lotte works as a professional designer. The seed for her design vision was sown during her graduation project. When you're aware of the impact that products have, this naturally leads to moral-ethical questions. Questions that don't have a simple, unambiguous answer. Questions that encourage you to think about your own values – with regard to yourself, the people you're designing for and the broader social impact. Lotte realised that

designing isn't without obligation: 'I believe it's a designer's privilege to be able to influence the way people interact with each other and the world around us. This creates the obligation to use this privilege in an ethical way.' In my opinion, she has been very successful in integrating the three core competences of Positive Designing (Pleasure, Relevance, Virtue) into a seemingly simple design for shared happiness – and thus for *double* happiness..

Playing

The Kookid elements fit together in various ways. They encourage toddlers to explore the textures of various ingredients in a playful manner. By being able to play with vegetables freely, they can make a positive connection between eating and healthy ingredients.

Cooking

Kookid offers various ways to cut (soft) vegetables. You can push them through one of the two cutting grids or cut or mash them with your mashers. The rubber cups are ideal for breaking nuts and puréeing soft ingredients. This allows a toddler to truly contribute to preparing the meal without any danger.

Eating

Using Kookid while cooking in the kitchen and during dinner helps the toddler understand the

transition from cooking to eating. Daily use encourages acceptance of new ingredients. This, in turn, results in a more pleasant atmosphere during dinner.

Bashing and Waving

Kookid gives children the opportunity to develop a positive attitude towards varied ingredients at a young age. And that makes this a very healthy product. But it's mainly incredibly *fun*: The elements use the motions that toddlers naturally make, such as hitting, bashing and waving wildly, which means they can proudly contribute to preparing the meal. And at the same time, it encourages the parents to be patient and enjoy these shared moments. The safe inclusion of the child gives the parent sufficient room to cook a meal while they enjoy the child's presence in the kitchen.



Lotte Jacobse developed the Kookid product line in 2015 as a graduation project for the Delft Institute of Positive Design for the master's programme Design for Interaction. The project had been initiated by Spuni (a product development company in New York) and was part of a broader study into designing for parental well-being in daily interactions. Supervisors were Anna Pohlmeier, Stella Boess (TU Delft) and Marcel Botha (Spuni). Spuni is currently looking for possibilities to market Kookid. Lotte works as a researcher and designer at Reframing Studio (Amsterdam).

Colophon

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