

# Entertaining the children **out of the scorching sun**

Lots of ideas for inside and outside your home by  
mum-of-three, **Dini Martinez**

## Cooking

Cooking can be a necessary chore, but it is also easily turned into fun for children. Get them involved in choosing and then making dinner; recycling leftovers into new dishes and maybe coming up with a healthier twist on their old favourites. Blogs are a great source for helping with ideas. If it's too hot to even turn on the oven, experiment with raw treats such as bliss balls, light crunchy finger food, home-made lemonade and delicious smoothies. Beyond the cooking, I remember loving to decorate the dinner table as a child before my dad came home and sometimes even writing artsy menus to 'play restaurant'.

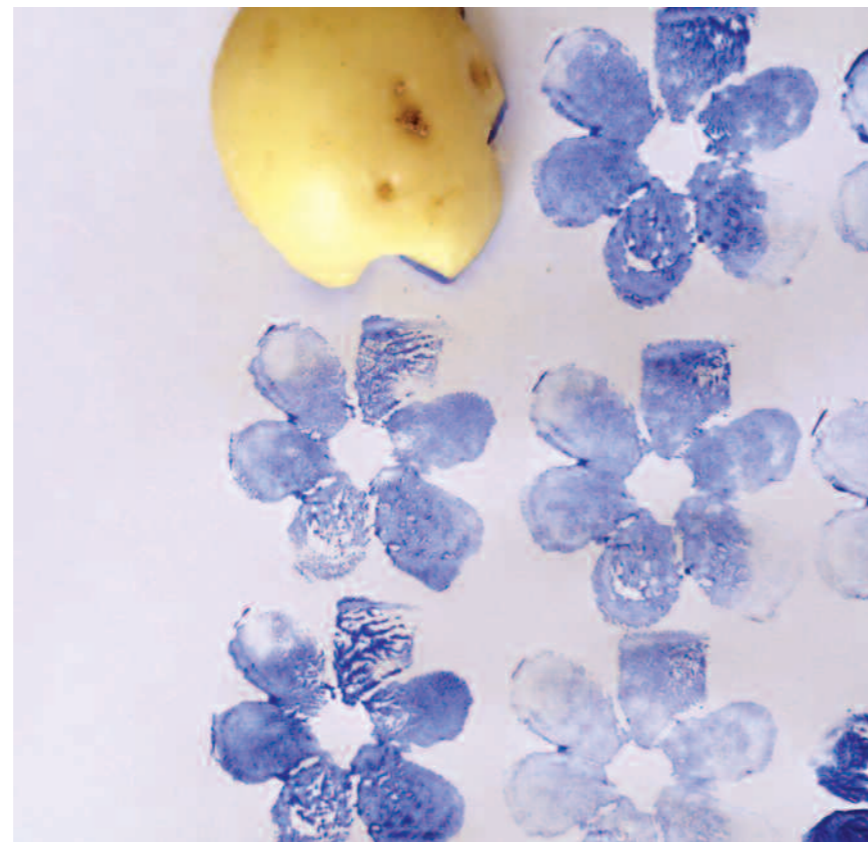
## Arts and crafts

Tap into your children's inner artist while rediscovering yours. Some plain paper and a few crayons or paints can make for such a variety of fun such as simple drawing and painting, finger-print art, imaginative doodling, folding patterned butterflies or making paper aeroplanes followed by a flying race.

Let your creativity wander further and experience with things to make and paint with clay, plaster of Paris, play-dough, cups and hand-puppets made of old socks and buttons.

## Movie stars

One of the things my one, four and six-year-old can have endless fun with – and I'm suspecting this applies older age-groups too – is an old camera. They take pictures and little movies of each other. When girls come over for a play-date, this usually also involves dressing-up and with older children sometimes more elaborate film-making. For mum it can be interesting to watch the end-product on screen later for a glimpse into the world from a child's perspective. »



## Board games

They might be old fashioned, but they are still lots more fun than hours of screen time. So dust off those old board games and see where they take you. The other day, 20 minutes of *Jenga* turned into two hours of entertainment: after our third round, my boys first started building their own towers, houses and structures with the simple wooden blocks and then one decided to draw the whole city they had created while the other one took close-up pictures with the above-mentioned old camera. And then, when the one-year old woke up from her siesta, she had plenty of fun destroying it all!

Then I wanted to show them *Mikado*, and as we didn't have one, we decided to make our own, first painting the leftover wooden skewers from the last BBQ, and then playing the game. On another day we made up our own bowling game in the hall-way with recycled cans, bottles and pots.

## Music

Whether you are a sophisticated family of musicians, or just enjoy a catchy tune, music speaks to all of us in some way or another from birth. If you have some musical instruments gathering dust in the corner, get them out. If you aren't able to teach your children, tap into *YouTube*.

And if there are enough of you, start a little band. And if there are no instruments around, make up your own with your voice, pots and pans and funky rhythms.

If dancing is more your thing, friends of ours have a family disco every Friday afternoon where everyone takes turns in choosing a song and the whole family dances through the house, letting go of any stress that might have accumulated throughout the week.

## Massage

Calming it down, put on some relaxing background music and give each other a massage. There has been a great deal of research proving the benefits of massage to all ages, and any oil from your kitchen will be totally ok on your skin too. If you have coconut oil, it is said to have a cooling effect – great for summer. For a more elaborate version, you could mix a few drops of essential oil with it. And while you are at it, make a bit more and wrap it nicely in an empty glass jar as a gift.

## Read and write

All massage-relaxed, everyone might just enjoy delving into a book in the refreshing breeze near an open window with a glass of home-made lemonade

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close by. For bi-lingual households in particular, reading to and with your children is a great way to expand their vocabulary in their second language and install a life-long joy love of reading and learning. Older children could write their own little book over the course of the holidays or attempt a short story. Why not check the internet for some online competitions with ideas and the potential to get their story published, or win a prize, as an extra writing incentive?

## Outings

When the above ideas begin to lose their appeal, there is still plenty of fun to be had outside the house, yet away from Malta's scorching summer sun. The National Aquarium in Qawra is a beautifully fresh place in which to spend half a day walking through underwater tunnels, learning about captivating species, engaging in educational talks with fascinating insights and more. Do you know, for example, how an octopus eats? Or have you ever looked through a magnifying glass in the baby shark lab, which is actively involved in conservation, rescue and release?

For younger children there is also the Happy Toddlers Club (Facebook: Oscar Malta Ludi) and the Playmobil Fun-Park, an indoor as well as outdoor play area in a safe, friendly and stimulating environment, where differently themed areas allow for play with all the classic Playmobil toys such as City Life, Rescue, Aquarium, Pirates, Police, Knights, and Fairy Tale. Older children might find the factory tour more enjoyable.

Last but not least, why not visit a cooling church, gallery or museum. The choice is plentiful, including *Spazju Kreattiv*, the Roman Villa and St Paul's Catacombs; the prehistoric *Ghar Dalam*; Malta's many museums on war, natural history, aviation and all things maritime or, the new interactive science centre *Esplora* with fun exhibits and hands-on workshops and shows to name but a few. 📍