

# PLAYFUL FAMILY "DINNIGHT" FOR THE UNDER 5S

With [Melitsa Avila](#)



*Monthly ideas to encourage playful moments during dinner and family night*

*"Dinnight"*

Family dinner + Family night = Family Dinnight (Yep! I did make up that word)

Let's face it dinner isn't always fun with the under 5s. By the time everyone is sitting ready to eat there might be a lot of tension around. Dinnertimes have changed a lot since having children. Dinner used to be a long leisurely affair with conversation and laughter. It can be again.

Right now there are many of us who eat dinner with the children alone while our partner is not yet home or alone as single parents. We eat with our children or they eat and we eat when our partner gets home or just later so we can eat what we want. We cook two or more meals. All of this takes time and so much energy. It's hard to see how dinner can be anything but busy chaos full of strong emotions.

You've planned to have a family night but well it's just not happening or consistently so you are looking for some suggestions for your multi-aged family.

### **How to use these suggestions?**

Whether you eat family meals together every night or once a week try some of the conversation starters or bring your own. It might take their mind of that Pak Choi you slipped onto their plate.

**Quick:** Print the questions and leave in the centre of the table

**5-10mins more:** Print and cut out each question. Fold and place in a clear vase in the centre of the table.

**10-15mins:** Print and laminate a set of questions to use for the week/month. Use a dry erase marker to add questions.

Family dinner is a good time **to reconnect, share and become 'our' family** by learning the customs. For our family our focus is on manners, taking turns, and responding appropriately.

We can't say we get it right all the time. But we can say we try and have a lot of fun along the way.

I had a little fun with the dinner courses but we all love having dessert first so take these in whatever order that suits your family.

Melitsa Avila

## Appetizers- Conversation starters

*Bring your own list of questions to the table that reflects your age/stage.*

### Stuck? Try these questions to get the conversation going

1. Describe our house/apartment etc to a stranger what would you say?
2. What's your best memory of something we did together?
3. Share a photograph or picture prompt from your past. Let the kids ask you question about it.
4. If you see your friend push another child what could you do?
5. What would be the perfect breakfast?
6. ....

## First Course -Recommended family game

### **Homemade playdough**

This is a really fun family activity as you get to find, measure and make the playdough.

Why we like it

- ✓ Easy to make massive amounts for a giant construction or individual amounts for each child.

- ✓ Unlimited amount of ways of working with the dough from no colour and lots of texture through rice, cloves, tea leaves to making your own colours.
- ✓ No matter the age everyone loves playdoh.
- ✓ You can have a theme you all work toward like food for pretend play or no theme and everyone does something different.
- ✓ You can find easily instruments in the kitchen to help shape, flatten and use the dough.

**This is our favourite recipe I share over in [the weekly activities newsletter](#).**

### **Materials**

Cooked version-can be used over.

Ready to use 10 mins after cooking.

- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cup water
- Wooden spoon
- 2 medium sized bowls
- A few drops of food coloring ( optional)

### **Preparation**

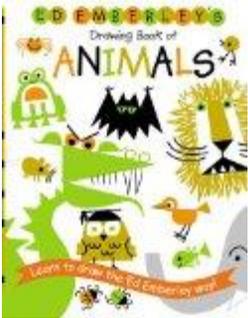
### **Idea(s)**

- Encourage your child to measure and pour the ingredients
- Mix the dry ingredients
- In a separate bowl, mix the wet ingredients including the food coloring
- Combine the wet and dry ingredients.
- Encourage your child to stir the ingredients together.
- Cook the ingredients over low heat on the stove, stirring constantly, until dough is the consistency of thickened mashed potatoes.

- Cool and store in a zip-seal bag.
- Place the bag in a coffee can or airtight plastic container.

## Second course -Book recommendation

Ed Emberley's Drawing Book of Animals



Spend time together with drawing ideas. Make fun animals step by step. No drawing skills necessary.

[Buy it](#)

## Salad course -Podcast recommendation for kids or parents

Listen on the go with your mp3, in your car, at the gym, computer or through your mobile phone. Most of us have part of the school run and *our* time when you want to grab an audio.

Kids: Barefoot books podcast- new song or story from a Barefoot book each week

[Barefoot Books Podcast](#)

## Dessert Course- Music to listen to via Internet radio:

Listen: [Peruvian](#)

Genre: World music

Watch: [Youtube video](#) ( 58secs)

Grab a world map or globe. Guess where in the world? Try and identify instruments (from as broad as string, wind, electric, voice etc to cello, saxophone or guiro!) Ask the children how it makes them feel or to move to the music.

Cheese course-Blogs to visit :( via [RPTI](http://raisingplayfultots.com/raising-playful-tots-index)- <http://raisingplayfultots.com/raising-playful-tots-index>)

Plan your next play activities for the month by visiting these play blogs for inspiration

- <http://adventureskids.blogspot.com/>
- <http://adventuresofmommyness.blogspot.com/>
- <http://amommysadventures.blogspot.com/>
- [http://www.playfulearning.com/Playful Learning/Blog/Blog.html](http://www.playfulearning.com/Playful_Learning/Blog/Blog.html)
- <http://theimaginationtree.blogspot.com>
- <http://raisingcreativechildren.com/>
- <http://countingcoconuts.blogspot.com/>
- <http://pinkyslearningworld.blogspot.com>
- <http://blog.memetales.com>
- <http://babybrainstorm.blogspot.com>
- <http://whatdidweddoallday.blogspot.com/>
- <http://buildingrainbows.blogspot.com/>
- <http://filthwizardry.blogspot.com/>

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Melitsa Avila is a military wife and busy mum to three young boys. She's a former primary school teacher. She started Play-Activities.com, a free play activity weekly email for children under 5 after having her first child.

She's passionate about empowering parents to engage in practical play activities that cover all the developmental areas at home without having to buy special onetime use products, flashcards or electronic equipment; just like it used to be.

Melitsa is an advocate for keeping the under 5s playing creatively using everyday materials mums will find in their homes using educational and fun activities. It's amazing how everyday objects such as a: wide open space, pine cone, marching song, colorful scarf, yarn, pudding, cereal boxes and paper can be put to so many playful age appropriate experiences....you'll be amazed too!



[Raising Playful Tots](#)