

Mum hacks: Get your hands dirty!

As this issue is all about things that are good for the soul, *Kate Farr* focuses on a couple of simple, messy activities that are highly tactile, cheap and, most important of all, enjoyable!

Special family time doesn't have to mean theme parks, cinema visits or even involve leaving the home, so it's time to put away the homework, switch off the smartphone and enjoy some family-focused fun... with some busy-parent hacks thrown in, of course!

What's cooking?

There is something fundamentally good for the soul (if not the waistline) about baking something delicious, and you can even argue that by teaching your kids how to cook, you're imparting crucial life lessons for the future. Or maybe you just fancy a bit of afternoon tea. Either way, baking is a firm favourite when it comes to messy play, with the added bonus that you can eat the results! We sat down for a chat over a cuppa and some freshly baked scones with Sharon Maloney of Hong Kong food blog *Jasmine and Ginger* (www.jasmine-ginger.com).

"There's no greater feeling than getting your hands into food and having a good play. It makes children much better eaters because they get a sense of pride and achievement from having made something to feed their family. It's also incredibly educational – as they get older and can read, it's about using maths and science to measure, weigh and taste. Most of our memories of



childhood are intrinsically wrapped up in food and smells and tastes, so why not create some great memories for them?"

I couldn't agree more! Sharon's top baking hack? "Getting my child baking IS the hack! Basically, I can pour myself a nice glass of wine and direct him to do things! Joking aside, having an extra pair of hands in the kitchen, no matter how small, cuts down on prep time and cleaning, so get them involved in that too."

For a super-simple recipe that's great for kids and that even the most kitchen-averse can follow, Sharon's failsafe scone recipe is available on her blog. Pass the jam!

Get crafty

If, like me, you're somehow missing the arts and crafts gene, then don't despair as it's actually quite easy to hack your way to creativity – particularly with younger kids.

Pinterest has literally thousands of great kids' craft suggestions, but you can't go too far wrong with a few sheets of paper, some round-edged scissors and some glitter glue (a basic shower curtain protects your table and is cheaper and easier to fold away than a fancy oilcloth). If you have a balcony, tape paper across it, set up trays of paint

and make multicoloured hand- and footprints, potato stamps, or sponge paintings.

Rainy days are ideal for making your own playdough; mix half a cup each of salt and water with a cup of flour and a few drops of food dye, then store in ziplock bags to prevent your dough from drying out.

Alternatively, if you've exhausted your full repertoire of art inspiration, a subscription to *Sqool* (www.sqool.com) sees a whole box of art and craft materials delivered to your door, complete with instructions and all tied in to a fun monthly theme, taking the hassle out of creative play. 