

# The Tots Times

Summer 2016



Summer is finally here! In this last issue of The Tots Times for this year I'd like to thank everyone involved in Tots & Co for their input into the group. This has been a busy year and there have been many changes to our situation and to our membership. We started the year in a brand new location in Seilh and with the support of the mayor and the help of our secretary Sarah Lemee we have been welcomed very warmly into their town.

We said goodbye to Naomi Riviere as Kids Club Teacher and welcomed Becky Coles as

her replacement alongside Claire Hansen. Tracy Moxey and Gemma White continue to do sterling work organising Kids Club for the school age kids who attend this monthly activity and without them, well we don't know what would happen!

The month of May brought The English Fair, which was organised for the first time by non committee members, bringing a really fresh feel to this fundraising event. Such a success it was that we managed to raise over 5700 for Association Dominique, despite the weather! A

fantastic result, and a huge thank you for the collective efforts of Jacqui Glanville, Katie Tolchinsky & Helen Saks.

We have had many new members this year, and I'm so glad to say that many of them have thrown themselves with huge enthusiasm into the activities at Tots & Co. and we were very glad to have lots of new members sign up for Core Committee and general committee roles for next year. You know who you are and I look forward to working with you from September.

In the issue of The Tots Times we have lots of varied contributions, an incredibly personal account of miscarriage by an anonymous member as well as some great insights into life as a stay-at-home Dad by one of our few male members, Sam. I think it shows what a trusted and supportive group we are that our members feel comfortable offering personal contributions such as these. Thank you to all of our contributors.

Our Vice President Sally Onn gives her firm and frank views on Tots & Co. which I deeply respect. It's important to remember that we are indeed a playgroup and that every time we take on an extra challenge or add an extra activity or decide to raise money for charity, that this adds pressure on our members and the Committee. We are volunteers and we are busy parents and when the balance changes from being fun to being a pressure filled chore then it is time to make a change. We'd be very interested to hear your views on how you think Tots & Co. is managed, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me anytime: [president.tots@gmail.com](mailto:president.tots@gmail.com).

Wishing you a fabulous summer break, I hope to see lots of you at our wonderful & varied Summer Meets, organised by Carol & Kariann.

Celia Green, President, Tots & Co.

## News

New Babies: Rachael Sutton gave birth to twin boys Arthur and Thomas on 1st March. Jadranka Glavic gave birth to baby Aila on 29th May weighing 3.67kg. Claire Blanc gave birth to Emeline Hannah Rose on 31st May weighing 3.51kg. Raquel Wojtowicz gave birth to Emilio on 5th June weighing 3.54kg. Sally Flood gave birth to Rafe on 11th June weighing 4.5kg. On the 7th July Susan Kaiser gave birth to baby Finn and Eileen McInerney gave birth to 4.36kg Jacques and Diane Rafla had Emma Elizabeth on 12th July. Congratulations ladies!



Little Readers: Tots and Co's library of story books for 0-3-year-olds has been re-stocked with loads of new titles. So if you are tired of reading the same old bedtime story then please have a rummage. The books are available to borrow during the Friday Funday meet up every week and you can keep them for up to four weeks at a time.



In June we proudly presented Jacquie Delpech from Association Dominique with a cheque for over €5,700. All the money raised came from the English Fair held on 22nd May in Sept Deniers. A HUGE thank you to all of those who gave their time to help support the organisers and to everyone who came on the day. Association Dominique has earmarked the money for a new project for autistic children. They were thrilled to receive it!

Our annual Sports Day took place on 11th June in Sept Deniers and was great fun, especially because there was no rain! A big thank you to the team of organisers.



Night Away: 20 mums got to enjoy a relaxing night away, thanks to the generosity of Charlotte Gibson in lending us her family holiday home and catering for everyone, as well as the organisation skills of Lisa Allen in planning the event. Former Tots and Co member LJ Desmeulles, who moved back to Paris last year, was a 'surprise guest' which made the weekend extra special.

Goodbye Big Tots: It's the time of year we have to say goodbye to those big tots who will be starting school in September. Pictured are: Grace, Emeline, Olivia and Joshua. Not pictured are: Luana, Heath, Sebastian, Chloé, Louis, Nicole, Emilia, Noah, Jack, Otto, Evie, Harrison, Max, Flynn, Mya and Alex.



## In The Spotlight

### Lisa McCowan



#### **What brings you to Toulouse?**

My husband Gareth has a job with Airbus

#### **How long have you been here and for how long will you stay?**

We moved over on 12th March this year. Gareth's contract is for 13 months to two years. Ideally we would like Gareth to get another contract after his current one because we love it here and would like to stay for longer.

#### **Tell us about your family.**

Gareth my husband is from Northern Ireland and I am from Cornwall. We have two children together. Harry who has just turned four and Ella who will be one this month.

#### **What did you do before motherhood/ what do you do now?**

Before motherhood I worked full time for a diving equipment manufacturer as a company accountant. When I had Harry I was lucky enough to be able to work part time. After having Ella last year I returned to work in January 2016 also part time. I had just celebrated my 10 year long service award when I had to give my notice to come here. Now I'm a full time mummy, although Harry goes to school at IST and in September Ella will be starting with a *nounou* for two days a week.

#### **What do you do in your free time?**

Free time? What's that?! Cleaning, shopping, Tots and I have been going to Charlotte Garvey's bootcamps for the past few weeks.

#### **What are your favourite things about France?**

The beautiful parks and lakes, we still have lots of exploring to do but what we have found is fantastic. Wine, Tots - I'm pretty sure if Tots wasn't here I would have had a completely different outlook living here.

#### **What do you miss about 'home' and what noticeable differences do you find between France and your home country?**

I miss my friends a lot. I also miss the beach - we used to be at the beach every weekend. The main difference I have found is the food shopping. There are a lot of items the supermarkets don't have, also the quality, no more steak for us! And they don't deliver. I know I have more time to do the shopping now but it's just easier when you don't have a baby trying to climb out of the trolley every two minutes (as they do not have harnesses on their trolleys).

## Sarah Davies



### **What brings you to Toulouse?**

Airbus, of course.

### **How long have you been here and for how long will you stay?**

We arrived on the 10th November 2015 and time is flying! We aim to be here at least five years.

### **Tell us about your family**

My husband is called Chris, he works for Airbus, likes running and LOVES football (especially Liverpool). We have one daughter, Amelia, who is 22 months old. Finally, my name is Sarah and my New Years' resolution is to learn to speak a bit more French.

### **What did you do before motherhood/ what do you do now?**

In the UK I was a scientist, I returned to work full-time when Amelia was 11 months old. Since moving to Toulouse I'm glad to say I'm a stay at home Mummy.

### **What do you do in your free time?**

I enjoy a bit of running and Pilates. I love reading and watching murder mysteries!

### **What are your favourite things about France?**

The weather, the food and the wine!

### **What do you miss about 'home' and what noticeable differences do you find between France and your home country?**

My husband and I both miss good curries and good pubs but, more than anything our families and friends. The UK is a much more convenient place than this part of France but, we've really enjoyed the more family focused way of life.

## Top Picks for Summer Picnics

Summer has finally arrived so it's time to enjoy a favourite French pastime. Here is a list of beautiful and fun spots to have a summer picnic as recommended by Tots & Co members.

### Lakeside picnic location: Lac de Saint Ferréol, near Revel

Best for: a pleasant walk or cycle around the lake followed by a swim.

Facilities: plenty of picnic tables, nice family friendly restaurant with terrace overlooking the lake, many extra activities including mini golf, pedalos and accrobranche.



### Picnic spot to keep older children entertained: Quinze Sols, between Beauzelle & Blagnac

Best for: relaxing under a large tree near the Garonne river whilst older children use the large BMX track.

Facilities: easy parking, lots of green space for ball games, wooden park with large swing and picnic tables.

### Picnic location to enjoy a show: Château de Laréole, near Cadours

Best for: watching free 'spectacles' over the summer months.

Facilities: guided tours of the castle. Gardens to explore and a cafe for a coffee.



### Toulouse Centre picnic: Toulouse Plages, Prairie des Filtres

Best for: enjoying the many free activities for children of all ages. Activities include bouncy castles, sports, accrobranche, a large sand pit & hundreds of toys and games to borrow from the outdoor ludotheque.

Facilities: large park with plenty of space and shade, free loungers to relax on, cafes and toilets. Near to tram and metro stations.

**Picnic spot for younger children: Portet sur Garonne Parc (Chemin de la Drague)**

Best for: taking a blanket and relaxing under a tree whilst children enjoy the great play park suitable for younger children (from 2 - 8 years). Take a stroll into the pretty village of Portet sur Garonne.

Facilities: flat open green space with trees for shade. Small, easy BMX bumps for younger children. Good, flat paths to take a stroll with a buggy or scooter.



**Farm picnic location: Ferme Pédagogique de Cinquante, Ramonville Saint Agne**

Best for: spending a whole day visiting the farm (small charge), enjoying a picnic by the play park and then taking a leisurely stroll along the Canal du Midi.

Facilities: easy parking, large green space, toilets and flat canal paths.



**Forest picnic location: Base de Loisirs de Brioude, Muret**

Best for: enjoying a walk (or the fitness trail) in the forest before having a picnic overlooking the beautiful the countryside views.

Facilities: Large car park, wooden play park, BMX track, great kite flying if weather is windy!

**Picnic location to see wildlife:**

Best for: walking round the lakes and stopping at the observatory to look for birds & wildlife.

Facilities: large car park, picnic tables, shade and play park.



**Picnic spot to show daring: Base de Loisirs de Solomiac**

Best for: enjoying a day swimming in the large pool, playing in the children's pool and if you are really brave going down the super high toboggan (one of 12 slides).

Facilities: playground for children, picnic area in the shade and snack bar.

## My Manifesto for Tots and Co

By Sally Onn

For those of you who don't know me, I am your current vice president and a regular at Tuesday Tunes and Friday Funday with my children, Olivia, three, and Sébastien, 17 months. Although I have found the role of vice president challenging in many respects, I am happy to carry on alongside our fabulous president, Celia, for another year (provided, of course, that the membership confirms my reelection at the October AGM). However, if I am to continue on the core committee, I feel very strongly that Tots & Co needs to make some changes.

We need to refocus our energies on our core purpose, that is to say we are a playgroup for little tots and their mums (and dads and other carers). Strictly speaking, our *statuts* (which govern our association under French law) state as follows (my translation from the French): "This association has as its goal the bringing together of foreign and French mums with their young children to share their culture and their experiences and to offer to each other support, help and friendship."

I know that there will be those who argue that our association has changed in the decades since it began and that this goal is no longer up-to-date. However, aside from the obvious need to include dads and other caregivers alongside 'mums', I am firmly of the view that the mission statement remains absolutely spot-on at its core. The bringing together of parents with their young children. Somewhere along the line, this principle has become obscured and I fear that Tots & Co and its committee members are suffering as a result.

In my view, the following are our core activities, which fit with our mission statement, and should take up 99% of our funds and energies:

- Tuesday Tunes
- Friday Funday
- Bumps to Babies (formerly known as the "pregnancy and new mums support group")

The following I consider to be non-core, but for as long as there is an audience for them and, most importantly, willing volunteers to organise them, I will continue to give them my wholehearted support:

- Kids' Club (including the Nativity play and Sports Day)
- The newsletter
- Thursday morning baby tots & toddler tots get-togethers
- Local group activities
- Children's parties, such as for Halloween, Christmas or Easter
- Activities arranged during the school holidays
- Evenings out for parents
- The annual night away

On the other hand, the following I consider to be absolutely irrelevant to our association and should, in my opinion, be discontinued for the 2016/17 Tots year:

- The Spring or English Fair or any other major fundraising event, whatever it might be called
- The secondhand toy stall at the TWIG Christmas Fair, or indeed any sort of stall where we sell things at any sort of fair or event
- Any activity where we are required to ask our membership both for donations (of books, home baked cakes, toys, clothes...) and then to part with their cash to purchase these items
- Any activity where we are required to apply for a licence (as is the case for a raffle), or hire a hall (other than our usual halls for Tuesday Tunes, Friday Funday and Kids' Club) or take out insurance (additional to the cover we already have in place for our core activities).

Don't misunderstand me. I think the work of Association Dominique is fantastic and I absolutely think they are worthy of the support of our members, to the extent that they are willing and able to donate of their own accord. It is simply not the role of Tots & Co to raise money endlessly for a charity. It is quite inappropriate that we even have a 'nominated charity'. Like I said, we are a playgroup.

Events such as the Spring/English Fair and the Christmas toy stall absorb huge amounts of time, energy and good humour to pull off. This is the case for the individuals at the coal face organising the nitty-gritty, but also inevitably, for the Tots & Co. committee and for our wider membership. We are all already extremely busy looking after our families, working and, in most cases, continuing to learn the language and adjust to life in France. We are already extremely generous in the donation of our time to hosting get-togethers (such as local coffee mornings and baby tots/toddler tots) and to preparing for and tidying up after our regular hall activities. We should absolutely not come under pressure to do more besides this.

It is also worth pointing out that, as things currently stand and thanks in no small part to the diligence of our amazing treasurer, Carol, our financial situation should not require us to raise any funds additional to normal membership income for the 2016/17 year. As such, our presence at the TWIG fair (where typically the takings from the toy stall are split between the TWIG charities and Tots & Co) is wholly unnecessary from the point of view of our own association's balance sheet.

As a lawyer, I also find it impossible to ignore the argument that undertaking activities for which we (Tots & Co, as a playgroup) are under equipped and unqualified to manage puts us at risk, legally. If we have applied for a licence, or advertised something and it goes wrong, we could find ourselves in hot water, regardless of whether it's all for charity or not. Ultimately, it is the president and vice president who bear personal responsibility should anything go wrong.

I am proud to be a part of Tots & Co and it always warms my heart when I hear people say how much the association helped them feel welcomed when they first arrived in Toulouse, or cope with the shock of new parenthood, or entertain their energetic pre-schoolers, week in, week out. This is what we are for. Tots & Co is a fantastic playgroup. Let's ditch all the stress-inducing, administratively complicated, time-consuming peripheral activities and focus on nurturing and developing a playgroup that meets the needs of our young children and of which we can all be proud.

*\*This article does not in any way reflect the views of your current president or core committee.*

## The Daddies on the bus...read their paper? Talk about sport? What's the bias?

Every Dad can empower their child, just watch out for the bias.

By Sam Crawley



Often on a Friday, Emeline and I hop on a bus into the town centre to wander around and find a coffee and croissant. It's a nice way to end the week, usually we're both tired from various 'organised' activities and time constraints. The bus allows us to cruise along in amicable companionship, talking about what we see out of the window without having to 'do' too much. Emeline enjoys the changing scenery, things to see and I enjoy the sense of journey and objective (and that my daughter is content).

We often get smiles from the other passengers, especially the older folks seeing this Daddy-daughter pair out and about, and I find myself wondering what they think of us. Is it assumed that I've got the morning off 'work' and am catching up on time with my daughter? Giving hard-working mummy a much-needed childcare break? Estranged husband making a dash for the border with my child or worse?! OK, probably not the last one, but I think it interesting what bias may be at work and what bias assumptions I may be making about others too.

I became aware of new areas of my own bias three years ago in the run up to Emeline's birth. Notably at the scan where we found out whether 'it' was going to be 'she' or 'he'. Now I consider myself a fairly modern, educated man with all the exposure to a vast variety of ideas that the modern age allows. I also have been blessed with some very strong female role models in my life. So of course I had the 'I don't mind whether 'it' is a boy or a girl, it's the same to me'. Ignorance is bliss, as they say.

However, in that moment of being told we were to have Miss Crawley, I realised that I had been building my expectation towards a Master Crawley. Now, I would say that my justification is 'I know boys, because I am one' and so had just assumed that bringing up a child I would 'best' interact with one who's gender-based experience would reflect mine. This raised an interesting question for me: Why would my child raising plans be different based on the gender of my child?

And yet, apparently they are, studies have shown (See p133 'Playful Parenting', L.J.Cohen,2001), that babies are treated differently based on whether the adult taking part believes the baby to be a boy or a girl. Boys are left longer to cry and 'sort it out', left longer to explore potentially challenging situations. Whilst girls are more quickly comforted when crying, sooner 'helped' or assisted when faced with a challenge. Sometimes we talk about giving our children 'roots and wings' however it seems we instinctively are more prone to giving our girls roots and our boys wings, and both miss out for a lack of the other.

I'm not sure what the answer is, if you've any good ideas, do let me know. What I do know, is I look forward to a world where teenage boys are emotionally connected and able to discuss their feelings. Where teenage girls are empowered to feel confident in themselves and their ability to face the challenges of life.

So for now I try and spend time encouraging adventure in my daughter, she can be courageous, daring, mischievous even, and still be compassionate, empathetic and sensitive. Whether that's a small-scale Friday bus adventure or to chat with the older couple smiling at us on the back seat.

Sam is thinking of blogging more about being the 'stay-at-home-expat-dad' – let him know what you think about this article at [sparcdaddy.wordpress.com](http://sparcdaddy.wordpress.com)

## Days Out

By Charley Sheffield

### **Cité de L'Espace**

After you have been here a few years and your parents and in laws have visited a few times, you tend to find you have 'ticked off' all the main tourist attractions and find yourself pondering how to entertain them.

I had exactly this conundrum earlier this year when my parents-in-law came to stay. Until I realised that one of the main attractions was still on our 'to do' list.

Cité de l'Espace initially seemed far beyond the levels of interest my three year old is capable of sustaining, but after chatting to people who had been I was reassured.

He was immediately won over by the gigantic rocket and satellite on display at the entrance to the park, despite his engineer father's detailed description of how a rocket works falling on deaf ears.

Even my then-18-month-old was enraptured and has been saying 'wocket, wocket!' ever since.

Inside there are displays on things like the weather, with child-friendly activity stations to bring everything to life. They can stand inside a real space suit or walk through a model of the International Space Station and feel what it must be like to live in space.

There is a separate area specifically for children where they can 'build' a rocket by sticking parts on a special wall - they must stick them on in the correct way for it to 'take off'. Then they watch in delight as parts of it fall off, accompanied by sound effects, to leave the shuttle in space.

Outside there are demonstrations for children on basic rocket science, using a water pump to fire a 'rocket' as far as they can.

Surprisingly, both my boys even both loved the Imax cinema and sat through almost the entire length of the film about the US shuttle programme (parents be warned: you might have to do some delicate explaining when the footage of the doomed shuttle landings comes up).

My tip would be to eat lunch in the restaurant in the main building, not the one right by the cinema, which was pretty average.

Going out of season was a bonus, as it was quiet, as was getting pre-paid tickets from Airbus that were discounted and meant we didn't have to queue to get in.

With Airbus discount, adults pay €14,50 and children €10,50 (under 5s go free). Without the discount, adults pay €21 in low season/€24 in high season and children €15.50/€17.50.

### **Jardins des Martels**

One of the failsafe places to take parents or in laws is the Jardins des Martels.

At just over an hour's drive away from Toulouse, towards Gaillac, it's the perfect place to relax and breath in some fresh air.

The olds love the flowers, water features and garden design, the toddlers love trampling over the prized hellebores, chasing the peacocks or seeing the animals at the little farm at the bottom of the valley.

We have been a few times before and never been bored - we take a picnic lunch and eat at the picnic tables before you go into the gardens.

To complete this image of tourist-friendly perfection, there is even a little steam train that runs on certain days during the summer beginning and ending at the gardens.

The train had never been working on previous visits so this time I didn't tell the children before we went just in case they were let down.

They were so excited to sit on the train, smell the coal burning in the firebox and hear the familiar 'choo, choo!' they know from Thomas the Tank Engine.

The train ride takes an hour to and from the gardens, but I would recommend visiting the Steam Train museum up the road first and then getting on the train to the gardens and back again.

Steam trains and country gardens - it's little piece of England in the south of France!

## Potty Training – an unconventional approach

By Sally Onn

My daughter Olivia was potty-trained at 18 months and dry at night a few weeks after her little brother was born, so 21 months. I am not suggesting I have any magic formula for this (I am sure it was mainly luck or genetics) and I am certainly not the only parent who has achieved this (thank you Catherine Savage for the tips!) but the newsletter team asked me if I'd turn my unconventional approach into an article for the summer edition, so here goes.

Step one: washable nappies. Not for everyone, I realise, but these help in two key ways. First, they are nowhere near as efficient as modern disposables at wicking wetness away from your baby's bottom, so the child learns very quickly the link between doing a wee and feeling wet. Second, they can be a major pain-in-the-proverbial to wash, day in day out, so the motivating factor for getting on with toilet training is huge!

Step two: start young. None of this waiting until your toddler can say: 'please Mummy I rather need to use the toilet now, if you don't mind'. Get them on the potty at every nappy change as soon as they can sit up. In fact, my two were both being propped up on the potty once weaning began at about six months, before they could actually sit well on their own. This helps make using the potty a total normal part of their young lives, plus I found it instantly cured any random episodes of constipation.

Step three: have high expectations. I believe that kids rise to the standards we set for them. Expect poor results and that's what you will set yourself up for. My sister is only 19 months older than me and I am reliably informed by my parents that she was completely out of nappies by the time I came along. So I thought, if my sister can do it, then so can my daughter. Nothing like a bit of competitiveness to get me going.

Step four: books. Get your toddler sitting on the potty after every meal. Keep him there until he produces the goods by looking at books together. Perhaps even buy a couple of new books (with noises or flaps or whatever interests your child the most) for potty time. Even if your kid is not a big book fan, think of something else to do together, he'll surely love the one-on-one time. Both my kids loved this and I'd usually get a result within ten minutes or so, often straight away. Give up after a quarter of an hour; life's too short.

Step five: the first summer that your little one is walking, have a bare-bottom-at-home policy (not you of course! Unless you want to...). You come in the door, shoes off, nappy off. Have at least one potty upstairs and one downstairs. If your toddler starts to pull his 'poo face' or you notice any other toilet action, then sit him down on the potty. Even if you're too late (hardly matters in this wonderful carpet-free part of the world), sit him down on the potty so he gets the message about what it's for. (Obviously the nappy goes back on for the highchair, naps or polite company at this stage.) This is the stage I'm currently at with Sébastien, 17 months. It's week two and I'd say we're about 70/30 to the good.

Step six: knickers. Once you're in a good routine of your toddler using the potty (or toilet, no reason they shouldn't go straight on there if you've got a reducer-seat) after meals, there's nothing stopping you from ditching the daytime nappies altogether. I used to carry a potty around with me for the first couple of weeks and, since Olivia was too young to tell me whether or not she needed to go, I'd just sit her down on the potty once an hour or so. She virtually never went when we were out and about though. I was amazed (and still am) at her ability to hold it in.

Step seven: night-time dryness. Everything I have read tells me that a child's capacity to stay dry overnight is dependent on the age at which he starts to produce enough of a hormone called vasopressin, which suppresses the production of urine overnight. This age varies from child to child and, I believe, bedwetting up to the age of seven is considered normal from a doctor's perspective. That said, there must be some link to daytime toilet usage, as Olivia would never have been spontaneously dry at night at 21 months if she was still in nappies at that age. Do the obvious things: no nighttime drinks; make sure your child has a wee before bed; get them on the toilet the very second they open their eyes in the morning, but don't sweat it. He'll get there when he's ready.

So that's what worked for me. It was of course a hugely inefficient process: from start to finish took over a year. And it remains to be seen whether it is repeatable with young Sébastien. Watch this space...

## Crafts

### Paper Weaving Fish

You will need:

An A4 sheet of coloured paper

Strips of coloured paper

Scissors

Black felt pen

How to make the fish:

From the sheet of coloured paper cut out a simple fish shape. Fold the fish's body in half and cut several horizontal lines, about 1cm apart. Open out the fish.

Weave the coloured strips through the horizontal cuts. The paper strips must overlap the edge of the body.

With the scissors, trim the ends of the woven paper strips so they form the fins of the fish. Use your pen to give your fish a face.



### Paper Spinners

You will need:

A sheet of white paper

A scrap of cardboard

String

Circular template eg a jar lid or cup

Coloured pens

Glue

Scissors

Kitchen skewer

How to make the spinner:

Using the circular template and white paper cut out two identical circles, a third circle then needs to be cut from the scrap of cardboard.

Decorate one side of each of the white circles using your coloured pens. The more colourful you make your circles, the more fun it will be to watch them spin.

Glue the coloured circles on to each side of the cardboard circle

Using the skewer make two holes a small distance apart in the centre of the circles. Thread the string through both of the holes and tie the ends together to form a loop.

You are now ready to start spinning. Take an end of the string in each hand. Keeping one hand still and moving the other in circles, twist the rope. Pull the string tight to start spinning, then relax, pull, relax the string.

## Recipes

By Kirsten Miller

I am always on the lookout for ways to hide nutritious ingredients into my kids food, wherever possible. With summer on our doorstep, I am looking forward to still getting some goodness into my children while satisfying their sweet tooth, and mine, at the same time. Here is one of my favourite desserts which, so far, has been a winner every time - with friends, family and children alike. Its super nutritious and easy - no-one will believe it only has three ingredients (or four if you add some raspberries as I do).

### **Raw Banana Ice-cream Cake**

*Makes about eight slices, easily multiplied*

2 ripe medium bananas

1 cup dates (room temperature)

1 cup raw cashews

Small handful of raspberries (optional - I find it gives it a nice, fruity twist, plus a nicer colour)

Line a baking tin with baking paper or use silicone cupcake cases (metal tins tend to let the mix freeze solid, whilst silicone cases and tins keep the mixture quite soft)

In a food processor, process your cashews until they look like crumbs.

Add in your dates and process until finely chopped.

Add in your bananas, processing until the mix has combined.

Pour your mixture into your tin/silicone cups and freeze until solid.

When serving, serve quickly as it will begin to melt.

Recipe courtesy of [www.southerninlaw.com](http://www.southerninlaw.com)

I recently read about this next recipe, and can't wait to try it. Unfortunately I am going to have to wait a bit longer as our current living conditions (going on 6 weeks in a Park & Suites hotel apartment) are restricting my creativity in the kitchen somewhat... Again, just four ingredients for these.

### **Mint Choc Chip Pea Pops**

1½ cups vanilla yogurt (non dairy or dairy)

⅔ cup frozen peas

¼-1/3 cup fresh mint leaves, loosely packed  
~1/8 cup mini chocolate chips

Place the yogurt, peas, and mint in a blender and blend well.

Add a few chocolate chips to each ice lolly mould.

Pour a small amount of the mixture into the mould.

Add more chocolate chips. Continue to alternate the mint mixture and chocolate chips until the moulds are full.

Freeze at least 4-5 hours before removing from moulds.

Recipe courtesy of [www.happyhealthymama.com](http://www.happyhealthymama.com)

### **And finally...**

Ever felt like writing your own children's book? Let these titles inspire you...

Guess How Much I Love You... When You're in Bed

We're Going on a Gin Hunt!

That's Not My... Little Darling Throwing Another Tantrum

That's Not My... Mummy Screaming into the Fridge

Spot Goes to the Parenting Course!

The Tiger Who Went to Bed Hungry Because He Didn't Eat His Tea

What the Ladybird Heard But Ignored Despite Mummy Asking a Thousand Times

Room on the Broom for Mummy to Fly Away For a Few Hours

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