

# A Story of Independence & Contribution



Montessori is not something that just happens at preschool using Montessori materials; it is a philosophy that can provide an approach to life and parenting.

This photo essay is an afternoon in the life of a nearly two and a half-year-old boy in New Plymouth, New Zealand. Eoin is the youngest of four children. Montessori philosophy has been highly influential in the way that his family functions. Supporting each child to become independent and able to contribute has been a strong focus in his family.

In Eoin's family each of the four children has age-appropriate helping roles around certain times; the most prized of these jobs is cooking. The older children can prepare many dishes independently and, as they know that they will get their turn at cooking, other jobs such as sweeping and dish washing also get done!!

These photos were taken one afternoon at home by his mother. You will see how independent Eoin is in his home, the many skills he has at two and a half and the delight he feels in making a contribution to his family.

**1** When I get home from school I hang up my bag



**2** I take out my lunch box and drink bottle



**3** I check the jobs chart, today is my day for cooking!



**4** I go out to the garden to get some vegetables



5 I chop up the scallopini



6 I peel the skin off and flake the fish



7 I spoon out the capers and olives... I try not to eat them all!



8 I wash my hands at the kitchen sink



9 We pick some parsley and chives



10 I peel the potatoes



11 We go out to the compost bin



12 The potatoes are hot so I use my tongs to place them on top



13 I clean the table. I LOVE cleaning the table



14 I help my brother and sister set the table



15 YUM! Time to tuck in!!



Eoin's mother, Rachel enjoys having time with each child as they help her prepare the family dinner. "In a busy life teaching fulltime, it's a guaranteed, locked-in, one-on-one time. I wouldn't swop it for the world!" She explains how the needs of her children are different through the cooking process. "Eoin asks for every word to be repeated; he's in his sensitive period for language. Sadhbh and Cian are very focused on technique and getting thinner slices of vegetables. Oisín is into the science of it all, asking "how come flour was used to thicken in that recipe instead of egg?"

She says that at dinner after playing "What was the Best Part of your Day", the children love to play Masterchef and take turns in guessing the ingredients. The children have got quite good at guessing and, as they each frequently cook, they now add in new herbs etc to make it harder for their siblings to guess.

Rachel believes that after emotional intelligence and sound attachment, knowing how to cook is possibly one of the most important gifts that she can give her children.

### Rachel Amundsen

*Rachel and Monty are the proud Montessori parents of four children, Oisín 9½, Cian 5¾, Sadhbh 4½*



*and Eoin the youngest at nearly 2½. Rachel is from Ireland and came to New Zealand seeking her fortune as a Montessori teacher. She has taught from toddler communities through to 9-12 year-olds. Rachel currently teaches at New Plymouth Montessori School where her youngest three children attend school.*