

How to Set Up a Montessori Kitchen for Toddlers (The Ultimate Guide)



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When you start applying the Montessori principles at home, it influences every room. The kitchen is no exception.

In this simple guide, we'll take a look at what it means to have a Montessori kitchen, what are the best food-related activities you can do with your toddler, and the best products Montessori families use and love.

Let's dive in...

What exactly is a Montessori kitchen?

A Montessori-friendly kitchen is an environment that (unlike play kitchens) invites the toddler to participate in real-life activities like preparing food or cleaning. It should enable the children to move freely, encourage independence, and teach table manners and dining with grace and courtesy.

Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is one of the basic principles of the Montessori method.

Kids need to explore the world around them. Of course, it doesn't mean letting your little one unguarded with the drawer full of potentially dangerous kitchen utensils.

What you can do is to **babyproof the area to create a friendly environment** where the toddler can experience the world of cooking together with you.

Independence

The common mindset in many households is that a kitchen is a place where children should spend only the minimum time necessary or else they'll break something sooner or later.

The Montessori approach is different – a kitchen (like any other room in the household) is a place that provides **great opportunities for a child to learn new things and participate in everyday activities.**

We spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Let your little one be part of it

Grace and courtesy

Montessori Primary Guide [has summed up](#) the importance of grace and courtesy in the Montessori education very well:

“Grace and Courtesy lessons give the child the vocabulary, actions, and steps required for him to build his awareness and responsiveness of those around him. This in turn gives the child a better sense of orientation in his social structure.”

When it comes to a Montessori kitchen, there are several ways you can encourage grace and courtesy through table manners. **For example, you can teach your little one to:**

- help with the table setup
- wash the hands before every meal
- eat politely
- use the correct utensils
- say “thank you” or “yes, please”

We recommend [this great post](#) about table manners by How We Montessori.

How do you make a Montessori kitchen?

Now let's take a look at some basic tips you can start applying in your kitchen to let your child be part of all the activities.

1) Get the child to the counter height

There's no Montessori kitchen without a learning tower. It's a safe and convenient tool that allows the child to be part of the cooking process.

Providing a raised platform is one of the first steps you should do to make your kitchen a Montessori-friendly place. Many times kids are impatient just because they're curious and want to see what's going on at the kitchen counter.

Once your little one gets to the same level as you, **there are endless possibilities for engaging them in various kitchen activities.**

Here's our favorite toddler learning tower:

Montessori kitchen step stool by Toddler In Family



[Check on Etsy](#)

- sturdy wooden construction
- convertible into table/chair
- different styles
- various color combinations

One of the best things about this learning tower is that it can be easily converted into a table and chair and provide a nice weaning table or an “arts and crafts” place for your toddler. It is available in various color combinations to fit the decor of your kitchen.

Tip: Check out our guide to [best learning towers](#) (including models with adjustable height or models for 2 kids).

Montessori kitchen activities you can do in a learning tower

Here are some examples of kitchen activities you can do with your little one.

Just don't forget to never leave your child alone with potentially dangerous objects, or near a stove, kettle or other appliances.

- observing the cooking process
- washing the fruit (*running water is always fun*)
- peeling/slicing fruit and vegetables
- mixing the ingredients
- kneading dough
- washing the dishes
- loading and unloading the dishwasher
- pouring water for drinking
- setting the table
- cleaning the mealtime messes

We did not categorize the activities by age. The important thing is to “[follow the child](#)” – meaning – to observe your child to see what sparks their interest.

2) Make things accessible

Use a small cupboard, low shelf or just a bottom drawer to store all the instruments, plates and utensils your child can use.

The top surface of a shelf can serve as a “snack place” with healthy snacks and a water dispenser so that the little one can help themselves to a drink.

3) Use real cutlery and glasses

Instead of plastic cups, forks or plates, use child-sized versions of real items. Yes, there is a higher chance of breaking something, but it also leads the child to responsibility.

For younger kids, it is perfectly fine to use steel cups and wooden knives to keep it safe.

4) Provide the cleaning materials

The Montessori method teaches the child to become more aware of the environment. This includes practical life activities like sweeping and cleaning the table or wiping up spills.

The kitchen is a great place to start with this as there's always something that needs to be taken care of. **All you need is to provide the right tools** – a child-sized dustpan, brush, and a piece of cloth will be just fine – and we guarantee your little one will love taking care of the rest.

It is also important to get Child-Sized Working Tools that small hands can use.

[A List of Kitchen Tools for Children 1 to 4 years](#)



I wanted to make a list of the kitchen tools we have used over the years. The ages listed below are approximate. When you introduce these materials to your child depends not only on your child and their previous work in the kitchen but also on you and how much you want to do. We also know that some children love making snack, love baking while others aren't so interested. Follow the child!

Please feel free to add anything I have missed. I have provided links to products we have used and where the link might be helpful, some materials can be found easily and other may take some tracking down. Ikea and thrift stores are good for a few bits and pieces, you might find some materials at specialist kitchen stores. My advice is to look at the list and plan ahead a little bit, keep an eye out for materials you might like your children to use in the future. Remember children will need a demonstration on how to use these materials, they may need assistance and supervision is always required.

12-18 months +

[Spreader](#)

[Tongs](#)

[Mini Tongs](#)

[Crinkle Cutter](#), [Crinkle Cutter with a Handle](#) or [First Knife](#) (Australia [here](#) and [here](#))

Small Wooden Spoon

Spatula

Masher (Australia [here](#))

Wooden Scoop

Pastry Brush

Small Colander

Vegetable Brush

Small Mixing Bowl

Chopping Board

[Apron](#)

Compost Bucket

2-3 years +

[Peeler](#)

Grater

Rolling Pin

Cookie Cutters

Sifter (1 Cup is a good capacity for children)

Chopsticks

Measuring Cups and Spoons

Measuring Jug

[Whisk](#) (Australia [here](#))

[Ladle](#)

[Hand/Egg Beater](#)

Kitchen (Egg) Timer

[Flip/Turner](#) (Australia [here](#))

[Strawberry Slicer](#)

[Egg Slicer](#)

[Apple Slicer](#) (Australia [here](#))

[Cherry Pitter](#) (Australia [here](#))

Pasta Maker, Ravioli Cutter

Small Serrated Knife

Melon Baller (Australia [here](#))

[Butter Maker](#) (Australia [here](#))

[Juicer/Citrus Reamer](#)

[Apple Peeler and Slicer](#)

Mortar and Pestle

[Spice Grinder](#) or Nutmeg Mill

Electric skillet (Australia [here](#))

3-4 years +

[Nut Cracker](#) (similar Australia [here](#))

Garlic Crusher

Pizza Cutter

[Potato Ricer](#)

[Spiralizer](#)

Toaster Oven

[Grain Mill](#)

[Hand Crank Juicer](#)