



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 6, 2015

Contact: Laurel Goddard
(916) 263-1307

FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA RELEASES NEW COOKBOOK

Quick, easy, nutritious recipes encourage family interaction in the kitchen and healthy eating

Making smart food choices is key to an active and healthy life and the development of physical and mental well-being — and it starts early. That's why First 5 California has developed "Fast, Fresh, and Fun – Food From First 5," a collection of quick, easy, nutritious recipes with simple ideas for making food preparation a fun and educational experience for little ones and their families.

Created by award-winning cookbook authors and school lunch activists, Georgeanne Brennan and Ann M. Evans, the cookbook contains the ingredients and preparations of many cultures — "speedy scratch" style — with nutritional advice and tips on how to incorporate fun teaching moments with young children in the kitchen, from sorting vegetables to measuring ingredients.

"Some of my earliest and fondest memories as a child include the wonderful aromas that came from the kitchens of my mother and grandmother," said First 5 California Executive Director Camille Maben. "From a very young age, it was typical to have both fun and serious conversations as I helped to clean and snap green beans, count cups of flour for bread, and shape dough into circles, hearts, and triangles. Those were all learning moments — they were helping me build my vocabulary, teaching me to count, and demonstrating the science of yeast. We know that 90 percent of a child's brain develops before the age of 5 — these are critical learning years. Our cookbook was developed not only to encourage family engagement, but help instill healthy eating habits as well."

Although studies have suggested a national leveling off of childhood obesity rates in recent years, California's numbers remain high, with children ages 2 to 4 from low-income families at almost 17 percent. Overweight or obese preschoolers are five times as likely to become overweight or obese adults, compared with their normal-weight peers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In older children and adolescents, obesity is associated with high cholesterol, high blood sugar, asthma, and mental health problems. First 5 California's latest cookbook is another tool for parents and caregivers of young children to give them a healthy start when it really matters.

With content in both English and Spanish, the cookbook provides nutritional information on each recipe along with health and cooking tips. It also includes a bonus section on brain development and how talking, reading, and singing to your child from the time they're born leads to language development and increased vocabulary, making children better prepared for school and ready to learn — the recipe for success in life.

“Everyone knows children learn readily by doing,” said Evans, “so we were thrilled to create a cookbook for First 5 California that combines our international and easy recipes with ideas for very young children to help adults in the kitchen.”

The free cookbook is available for download at www.first5california.com/parents/videos-downloads.aspx?id=29.

About First 5 California

First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, which added a tax on tobacco products to fund education, health, child care, and other services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. Its programs and resources are designed to educate teachers, parents, grandparents, and caregivers about the critical role they play during a child’s first five years — with the overarching goal of helping more California kids grow up healthy and ready to succeed in school and in life. For more information, please visit www.first5california.com/parents.

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