Fast, Fresh, and Fun

★ FOOD FROM FIRST 5 ★

FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA

Some of my earliest and fondest memories as a child include the wonderful aromas that came from the kitchens of both my mother and my Noni. It was not only the heavenly smells but the love and caring that went into the preparation of our meals.

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 the cups of flour to make bread, or shape cookie dough into circles, hearts, and triangles. Of course at the time, I never realized all the learning that was going on; for example, they were helping me build my vocabulary, teaching me to count, and demonstrating the science of yeast. But most of all, I was learning to be part of a family. Needless to say, it was much more than just learning to cook!

This First 5 California recipe book includes plenty of easy-to-make, nutritious recipes, with simple ideas for making food preparation a fun and educational experience for little ones. You also will find nutritional advice and tips on how you can incorporate "teachable" moments into every dash and stir.

We hope this book becomes a staple in kitchens for deliciously fun, easy ways to prepare and eat healthy food together as a family. Most of all, we hope you and your child will have the opportunity to build life-long memories in the kitchen.

For even more tips and activities for children ages 0 to 5, please visit the First 5 California Parent Website at: www.First5California.com/parents.

Happy cooking!

Warmly,

Camille Maben

Camille Maben
Executive Director

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Healthy Options for Hungry Kids

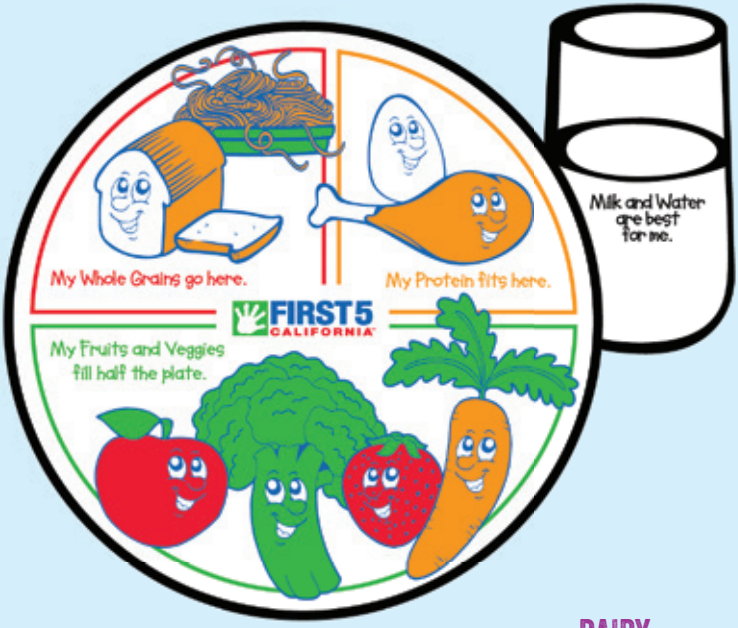
Divide the plate into three sections. Fill half of the plate with fruits and vegetables, a quarter of it with lean protein, and the last quarter with whole wheat carbohydrates. Keep meat portions small—about the size of the back of your child's fist.

WHOLE GRAINS

Oatmeal
Brown rice
Whole wheat bread
Whole wheat pasta
Whole wheat tortillas

PROTEINS

Extra lean turkey
Chicken
Eggs
Black beans
Salmon



VEGETABLES

Spinach
Corn
Sweet potato
Green peppers
Red peppers

FRUITS

Melons
Bananas
Oranges
Blueberries

DAIRY

Reduced
or low-fat milk
(from age 1 to 2,
offer your child whole milk)
Low-fat cheese
Reduced-fat yogurt

Healthy Cooking the Speedy Scratch Way

Speedy scratch cooking is quicker than making everything from scratch. With speedy scratch, you combine items from your cupboard and refrigerator with fresh foods. Cooking this way is less expensive than buying processed foods and ready-to-eat meals. It is also a smart and fun way to teach your children about different fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients, as well as various kitchen techniques, such as measuring, chopping, and stirring. Many processed foods are high in sodium, high-fructose corn syrup, saturated fats, and additives that are unhealthy for you and your family.

A good example of speedy scratch cooking is to use store-bought chicken broth to start a soup or stew instead of making the broth from scratch. Then all you need to add is fresh vegetables, meat, pasta or rice, herbs and spices, and you'll have hearty, delicious, and nutritious family soup. Or, you can make a great supper dish of spaghetti with tomato sauce if you have pasta and canned tomatoes on the shelf.

HERE IS A LIST OF PANTRY BASICS FOR SPEEDY SCRATCH COOKING:

Canned whole tomatoes (salt-free or low-sodium)

Chicken or vegetable broth (fat-free and salt-free or low-sodium)

Canned beans (salt-free or low-sodium)

Spaghetti and/or other whole wheat dried pasta

Brown rice

Dried beans

Onions, garlic, and potatoes

Healthy cooking oils (see page 16)

Vinegar

Salt and black pepper

Dried herbs and spices

Salads

Salads are among the healthiest dishes you can make for your family, and they can be assembled quickly. An important part of every healthy salad is a healthy dressing, which is why it is always best to make your own.

QUICK DRESSING FOR SALAD GREENS, COLESLAW, OR GRATED CARROT SALAD

To make a quick dressing:

1. Mix together 3 parts oil with 1 part vinegar (any type) or fresh lemon juice.
2. Season to taste with salt and black pepper, and stir well.

To make a basic salad:

1. Toss your homemade dressing with salad greens, such as spinach, lettuces, or chard, torn into bite-size pieces.
2. To dress up a basic salad, add a fresh vegetable, such as carrot or celery slices, or a diced or sliced fruit, such as apple, orange, or mango.

To make coleslaw:

1. Finely chop cabbage and toss it with the dressing.

To make grated carrot salad:

1. Mix 1 teaspoon mustard into the dressing.
2. Toss grated carrots and a little chopped fresh parsley with the dressing.

Quick Vegetable Soup

When you start with store-bought low-sodium or salt-free, fat-free chicken or vegetable broth, it is easy to make a tasty homemade soup. Bring the broth to a boil and add chopped vegetables, such as onions, potatoes, carrots, celery, summer squash, mushrooms, and/or chard. Turn down the heat to medium-low and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. You also can add canned tomatoes and some herbs and spices, such as parsley, red pepper flakes, or oregano.

Cooking with Beans

Beans are an inexpensive way to increase plant protein in your diet. Many different varieties are available, all of them nutritious. They are a good source of fiber, of lean protein that helps build muscles, and of complex carbohydrates that provide a sustained energy source, all of which are important for growing children.

USING CANNED BEANS

Using canned beans is the quickest way to incorporate these nutrient-rich foods into the family meal. When you're shopping, look for cans labeled "no salt added" or "salt-free." Always rinse and drain canned beans in a colander to remove the salted canning liquid before mixing them with other ingredients.

COOKING DRIED BEANS

There are two ways to ready dried beans for cooking: an overnight soak in water, or a quick soak. For the latter, combine the beans with water to cover them, bring to a boil, remove from the heat, and let the beans soak for 1 hour. Both methods will reduce cooking time. Or, you can cook the beans with no prior soaking as described here:

1. Rinse the beans and remove and discard any damaged beans and small stones or grit.
2. Put 4 cups water for each cup of beans into a pot and bring to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon salt and the rinsed beans, and boil for 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cover.
3. Cook the beans until they are tender to the bite, about 1 to 1½ hours.

Baby Foods,

SPEEDY SCRATCH STYLE

The healthiest foods you can serve your baby are those you prepare from scratch. It is quick and easy to do, and requires no special equipment other than a sharp knife and a potato masher, fork, or blender. Baby foods can be made ahead of time by using fresh or frozen fruits or vegetables, frozen into individual servings in ice cube trays, plastic containers, or reclosable plastic baggies, and then thawed when needed. Most foods can be frozen for up to 3 months before their flavor diminishes.

Healthy Advice

Doctors advise breastfeeding for the first year.

Don't be afraid to add a little seasoning to your homemade baby food. If you are breastfeeding, your baby is already getting a taste of whatever spices and herbs you are eating through your breast milk. In cultures all over the world, spices and herbs are introduced to babies through breast milk and homemade baby foods. In Latin countries, cumin, cilantro, and even chiles are common. In Southeast Asian countries, lemongrass, tamarind, and chiles are typical seasonings. In European countries, herbs like basil, thyme, dill, and parsley are frequently used.

Using such herbs and spices for flavor means that additional salt and sugar can be reduced or omitted entirely from your baby's diet. Many processed baby foods contain high levels of both salt and sugar. By making your own baby food, you can offer your child a wide variety of flavors, which will ensure that he or she establishes a taste for food that doesn't rely on salt or sugar for its appeal.

The early introduction to a broad array of foods and flavors can help your child develop healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. It can start when they are babies, with their earliest solid foods at around 6 months, and continue until around 1 year, when they begin to eat the regular foods your family eats.

SWEET POTATO WITH CINNAMON MAKES 5 SERVINGS

1½ pounds sweet potatoes (about 3 large)

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Place the sweet potatoes on a baking sheet or in a shallow baking pan and bake until soft, 45 minutes to 1 hour.
3. Let the sweet potatoes cool until they can be handled, then remove and discard the skin and put the potatoes in a bowl.
4. Using a fork or potato masher, mash the sweet potatoes to a soft puree. Add the cinnamon and mix well.

Per serving (1/2 cup): 122 calories; 0.2 g fat (0 g saturated, 0 g monounsaturated, 0.1 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 48 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrate (5 g dietary fiber), 3 g protein, 1.39% calories from fat

CARROTS WITH CILANTRO MAKES 5 SERVINGS

1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro

1. In a saucepan, combine the carrots with water to cover them by 2 inches and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat to medium, and cook, uncovered, until easily pierced with a fork, about 15 minutes.
2. Drain the carrots and transfer to a bowl. Using a fork or potato masher, mash the carrots to a soft puree. (Alternatively, puree the carrots in a blender.) Stir in the cilantro.

Per serving (1/2 cup): 31 calories; 0.2 g fat (0 g saturated, 0 g monounsaturated, 0.1 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 52 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrate (3 g dietary fiber), 1 g protein, 4.52% calories from fat

Cooking Tips

- Many fruits, such as pears, apples, plums, cherries, peaches, and nectarines, can be poached in water, then pureed and seasoned with spices.
- Almost any vegetable can be cooked, then pureed and seasoned with herbs or spices.
- When your baby is at least 9 months old, he or she can usually begin eating yogurt. Instead of purchasing pre-flavored varieties, make your own by buying plain yogurt and stirring in homemade poached and pureed fruits. (Check first with your pediatrician.)
- Seasoning suggestions for baby foods include cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, allspice, onion and garlic powder, fresh or dried basil, oregano, marjoram, and black pepper.

Children in the Kitchen

Having your children in the kitchen with you while you prepare a meal is a good way to spend time with them. It's fun to watch both their early efforts at helping you and their amazement at seeing you turn ingredients into delicious dishes for the family table. Saturday or Sunday mornings are good times to make breakfast together. Weekends also are ideal for making a special lunch or dinner. Time in the kitchen also offers many learning opportunities, such as pointing out the different colors and shapes of the various fruits and vegetables, and counting ingredients.

Before you start cooking, here's a handful of safety tips to keep in mind whenever children are around hot stoves and sharp knives.

- Show your children how to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, and explain that careful washing helps to keep germs away.
- Tie back long hair into a ponytail, and roll up shirt sleeves to keep them away from food, water, and the stove top.
- Clean off a work area large enough so that everyone can move freely.
- Always turn pan handles on the stovetop away from the edge of the stove to avoid bumping them by accident.
- Let your children use dinner or butter knives to chop soft items like bananas. Sharp knives should be handled only by adults.
- Clean up the work surface regularly as you cook. Keeping the area tidy ensures fewer mistakes.
- Outfit the kitchen with a first aid kit and fire extinguisher, and know how to use them.

Cinnamon Oatmeal

WITH APPLES AND MILK

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Oatmeal is an early favorite food of children, so it's good to know about the different types, as their cooking times vary. Rolled oats, also known as old-fashioned or regular oats, are processed by steaming oat kernels and then rolling them into flakes. These cook faster than steel-cut oats, which are oats that have been hulled and cut, rather than rolled. Quick oats and instant oats are processed the same way as rolled oats, but are rolled more thinly and cook the quickest. All of these types are whole grain, so the nutrition stays the same even though the texture changes. Let your children choose their own fresh or dried fruit toppings, such as chopped apple or banana, raisins, or dried cranberries.

INGREDIENTS

3½ cups water

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, plus more for serving

2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

2 medium-size apples, cored and chopped

2 cups 1% low-fat milk, for the table (nonfat milk or soy, almond, or rice milk can be substituted)

½ cup raisins (optional)

PREPARATION

1. In a saucepan, combine the water, salt, and cinnamon, and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Stir in the oats and apples, turn down the heat to low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the oats are tender, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Spoon the oatmeal into individual bowls and add 1/4 cup milk to each bowl. Sprinkle with raisins, if age appropriate, and cinnamon, if desired.

Per serving (1/2 cup oatmeal, 1/4 cup milk): 127 calories; 2 g fat (0.6 g saturated, 0.6 g monounsaturated, 0.5 g polyunsaturated), 2 mg cholesterol, 106 mg sodium, 23.4 g carbohydrate (3.2 g dietary fiber), 5 g protein, 13.38% calories from fat

WITH KIDS!

Wash the apples, measure the water, salt, cinnamon, and oats, and set the table.

Health Tip

Various types of milk are available. The most common milks are from animals, primarily cows and goats, and from plants, such as soy milk, almond milk, and rice milk. Plant-based milk is generally safe for people who have dairy allergies or who are lactose-intolerant. These milks also are naturally low in fat and free of cholesterol, but they don't have as much protein as cow's or goat's milk. Soy milk is made by grinding dried soybeans with water and is usually mixed with some type of natural sweetener. Almond milk is made from ground almonds and is often sweetened. Rice milk is made by processing unmilled rice and its sweetness is typically a product of a natural enzymatic action.

Healthy Advice

Breakfast is like fuel for your body – but the key is to keep it healthy. Many breakfast pastries and cereals often are loaded with sugar and calories, so be sure to read labels carefully.

WHOLE WHEAT

French Toast Fingers

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Quick to make, French toast is a good way to use leftover or stale bread, and making it is a fun family activity for a weekend breakfast. Firmer bread, at least a day old or older, soaks up more of the egg mixture, which ensures sturdier toast. Very soft bread slices soak up less of the mixture, so the toast is soggy. Using multigrain, oatmeal, or raisin bread provides extra nutrition.

The usual topping of maple syrup or powdered sugar is replaced here with low-sugar jam, but fresh strawberries, banana, mango, or pineapple also are good.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: Divide each slice into thirds or quarters and have your children count how many "fingers" each piece of bread yields. Then ask them to put the pieces back together to make a whole slice, counting each piece as it is put in place.

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup 1% low-fat milk (nonfat may be substituted)

2 eggs

⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon

3 tablespoons canola or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16)

6 slices whole wheat bread, at least 1 day old, each cut into 3 or 4 equal rectangles

Low-sugar jam, for serving

PREPARATION

1. In a bowl, combine the milk, eggs, and cinnamon, and whisk or stir together until blended.
2. In a frying pan, warm 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat.
3. Meanwhile, one at a time, dip the bread pieces in the egg mixture and leave for about 20 seconds to ensure they are coated with the egg mixture. As you remove each piece, let the excess egg mixture drip back into the bowl.
4. Working in batches to avoid crowding, place the bread pieces in the hot oil and cook, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. As the pieces are ready, transfer them to a platter and keep warm. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan as needed to prevent sticking. Repeat until all of the bread is cooked.
5. Serve the toast with the jam for spreading on top.

Per serving (1 slice without jam): 168 calories; 9.9 g fat (1.4 g saturated, 5.6 g monounsaturated, 2.4 g polyunsaturated), 72 mg cholesterol, 172 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 7 g protein, 52.38% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Mix together milk, eggs, and seasoning, and dip the bread pieces into the egg mixture.**

Cooking Tip:

To make the French toast fingers savory instead of sweet, substitute salt and black pepper for the cinnamon and serve with fresh salsa or grated cheese instead of the jam.

Breakfast Burrito Scramble

WITH FRESH VEGETABLES

MAKES 4 BURRITOS; 4 SERVINGS

You can assemble this tasty breakfast burrito the night before. Cut it in half, wrap it in aluminum foil or waxed paper, and store it in the refrigerator. Then, the next morning, all you need to do is warm it up for a perfect grab-and-go meal. Other vegetables can be substituted for the zucchini and green onion, such as red, yellow, or green bell pepper and yellow or white onion. For most young children, half of a burrito is a perfect size serving.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: This recipe is a great class in shapes. The breakfast wrap can be cut into triangles or squares, the egg is an oval, the measuring cup is a cylinder, and the tortillas are circles.

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16)

6 eggs, lightly beaten

8 green onions, including tender green tops, chopped

2 zucchini, very thinly sliced (about 4 cups)

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (optional)

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

4 (10-inch) whole wheat flour tortillas

PREPARATION

1. Warm a large frying pan over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the oil and let it warm for about 30 seconds. Add the green onions, zucchini, salt, and pepper, and cook, stirring, until the zucchini is tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the eggs to the hot pan and stir with a fork until they are barely set, about 1 minute.
3. Just before assembling the burritos, place a dry frying pan over medium-high heat. One at a time, put the tortillas in the pan and heat them, turning them once, until warm and softened. Transfer them from the pan to a plate.
4. Put ½ cup of the cheese in the center of each tortilla, leaving about 2 inches uncovered around the perimeter of the tortilla. Divide the egg scramble evenly among the tortillas, placing it on top of the cheese.
5. Fold the right and left sides of the tortilla over partway, so that the body of the tortilla is about 6 inches wide. Starting from one open end, fold the tortilla up about 3 inches, and then gently roll the filled tortilla over to seal. Serve immediately.

Per serving (1 burrito): 507 calories; 30.9 g fat (14.7 g saturated, 11.3 g monounsaturated, 2.4 g polyunsaturated), 377 mg cholesterol, 758 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrate (12 g dietary fiber), 30.4 g protein, 53.85% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Crack the eggs into a bowl and beat with a fork, wash the green onions and zucchini, and grate the cheese.**

Pumpkin Pancakes

MAKES 12 PANCAKES
6 SERVINGS

Flavorful pancakes made from pumpkin puree, rich in vitamin A, and seasoned with cinnamon and other spices give your family a nutritious start to the day. To keep this breakfast healthy, top the pancakes with low-sugar jam, plain nonfat yogurt, or fresh or frozen fruits such as strawberries.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground cloves

1 egg

1½ cups low-fat milk

½ cup canned pumpkin puree

3 tablespoons canola or other healthy cooking oil (see Health Tip below), plus more for the frying pan or griddle

12 to 15 strawberries, stemmed and sliced (optional)

PREPARATION

1. In a medium bowl, whisk or stir together the flour, baking powder, salt, sugar, nutmeg, and cloves.
2. In a large bowl, whisk or stir together the egg, milk, and pumpkin puree just until blended. Stir in the oil.
3. Add the flour mixture all at once to the pumpkin mixture and stir just until blended, forming a batter. Do not over mix.
4. Place a frying pan or griddle over medium-high heat and oil lightly. When the pan is hot, scoop up about 1/4 cup of the batter and pour it onto the hot surface to form 1 pancake (about 4 inches in diameter). Repeat to form more pancakes, being careful not to crowd them. You can usually cook about 3 pancakes at a time.
5. When the edges of the pancakes begin to bubble and the centers puff a little, after about 2 minutes, turn the pancakes and cook the other side until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer the pancakes to a plate and keep warm while you make the rest.
6. Serve the pancakes with the optional sliced strawberries.

Per serving (2 pancakes without strawberries): 188 calories; 6.5 g fat (1.1 g saturated, 3.5 g monounsaturated, 1.6 g polyunsaturated), 38 mg cholesterol, 446 mg sodium, 27 g carbohydrate (1 g dietary fiber), 6 g protein, 30.32% calories from fat

WITH KIDS!

Whisk or stir the flour mixture, whisk or stir the pumpkin mixture, and stir together the flour mixture and the pumpkin mixture.

Health Tip

Cooking oils are fats made from plants. The best oils are high in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and other important nutrients, such as oleic acids and omega-3 fatty acids. The flavors of the oils vary. Canola, safflower, sunflower, and avocado oils are mild—even neutral—in flavor. Extra-virgin olive oil ranges in flavor from mild to intense. See page 26 for more information about olive oil.

Whole Wheat Quesadilla

WITH CORN AND BROCCOLI

MAKES 2 QUESADILLAS
4 SERVINGS

Quesadillas are popular with children and are a speedy answer for lunch or snack time. Here, vegetables are added along with the usual cheese to increase the nutritional value of the dish. Broccoli, a key ingredient in this recipe, is known as a superfoods because it is high in vitamins A, C, K, and B complex and in fiber. One-fourth of a quesadilla may be a good-size serving for a young child.

INGREDIENTS

2 heads broccoli, thick stems removed

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

¼ teaspoon salt

4 (10-inch) whole wheat flour tortillas

1½ cups shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese, or a mixture

1 cup fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels

Serving Tip

When you are introducing new foods to your child, try only one new food at a time, serving it with other foods that you know your child already likes. Too many new foods at once, with their unfamiliar tastes or textures, can cause a child to reject them all.

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Cut the broccoli into 1-inch pieces. You should have about 1½ cups. Put the broccoli pieces on a baking sheet and sprinkle evenly with the oil and salt. Turn several times to coat well, then spread the pieces in a single layer.
3. Roast the broccoli until slightly golden and tender, about 10 minutes.
4. Let the broccoli cool until it can be handled, then coarsely chop.
5. Heat a dry frying pan over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add a tortilla and warm it, letting it brown lightly. Top evenly with ¾ cup of the cheese, half of the chopped broccoli, and ½ cup of the corn. Lay a second tortilla on top, let the cheese melt briefly, and then press down on the tortilla with the back of a spatula so the cheese binds the tortillas together.
6. Using a wide spatula, turn the quesadilla over and cook until the bottom tortilla is lightly browned and the cheese has melted, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate, then repeat with the remaining ingredients to make a second quesadilla.
7. Cut each quesadilla in half to serve.

Per serving (1/2 quesadilla): 421 calories; 18.7 g fat (8.7 g saturated, 6.9 g monounsaturated, 1.4 g polyunsaturated), 38 mg cholesterol, 474 mg sodium, 45 g carbohydrate (17 g dietary fiber), 25 g protein, 38.95% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Drizzle the broccoli with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, and turn to coat.**

Easy CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

A bowl of hot soup, especially when cooler weather hits, is both a healthy and a tasty meal. When you make chicken noodle soup the speedy scratch way, it allows you to control which ingredients go into the pot, so that salt and fat, for example, are kept in check. Other vegetables can be added to this soup, such as parsnips, broccoli, yams, potatoes, or peas. You also can vary the recipe by substituting different types of short pasta. For example, using alphabet pasta would be a fun way for your children to practice their ABCs.

INGREDIENTS

4 cups fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth

2 cups water

½ teaspoon salt

1½ pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 4 thighs)

3 carrots, peeled and chopped (about 3 cups)

2 stalks celery, chopped (about 1 cup)

1 yellow onion, chopped (about 1½ cups)

1 cup chopped fresh parsley

6 ounces dried egg noodles

PREPARATION

1. In a soup pot, combine the broth, water, salt, and chicken and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Add the carrots, celery, and onion, turn down the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the chicken is opaque throughout when tested with a knife, about 25 minutes.
3. Remove the chicken thighs from the pot and let cool until they can be handled. Remove the skin and bones, and discard and pull the meat apart into bite-sized pieces. Return the chicken to the pot.
4. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring the soup back to a boil. Add the parsley and noodles and cook, uncovered, until the noodles are just tender to the bite, 5 to 7 minutes, or according to package instructions.
5. Ladle the soup into bowls and serve hot.

Per serving (1 cup): 135 calories; 5.7 g fat (1.1 g saturated, 1.5 g monounsaturated, 0.9 g polyunsaturated), 31 mg cholesterol, 280 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 11 g protein, 37.78% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Measure the water and salt, and wash the carrots, celery, and parsley.**

Health Tip

The meat of any animal—beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish—is high in protein, and chicken thighs are no exception. Chicken thighs are dark meat, which has more flavor than the light meat of chicken breasts. Here, because the skin on the thighs is removed after the thighs are cooked and before the meat is returned to the soup, it adds flavor to the soup without adding extra calories or fat.

Egg Salad SANDWICH

MAKES 4 SANDWICHES
4 SERVINGS

Eggs are among the healthiest foods you can feed your family. They are called a perfect protein because the body can absorb and use all of their protein. Eggs also contain all 9 essential amino acids for a healthy body, many vitamins and minerals, and are among the best sources of choline, a vitamin B complex nutrient important for adult brain health.

Egg salad is traditionally made with mayonnaise, but this recipe mixes low-fat yogurt with a small amount of low-fat mayonnaise. If you opt to use lettuce, choose a dark green type, such as romaine, green leaf, or red leaf. The darker lettuces are high in potassium and vitamins B and K, unlike paler types, such as iceberg. For a young child, half a sandwich (two triangles) is a good-size serving.

INGREDIENTS

4 eggs

3 tablespoons plain nonfat yogurt

1 tablespoon low-fat mayonnaise

2 stalks celery, finely chopped

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (optional)

8 slices whole wheat bread

4 lettuce leaves (optional)

PREPARATION

1. Place the eggs in a saucepan, add water to cover them by 2 inches, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat, cover, and let stand for 20 minutes.
2. Remove the eggs from the water and let cool. Crack each egg and peel away the shell. (Alternatively, refrigerate the unpeeled eggs for up to 4 days before continuing.)
3. Coarsely chop the eggs and put them in a bowl. Add the yogurt, mayonnaise, celery, parsley, salt, and pepper and turn all of the ingredients with a spoon or fork to mix well.
4. Divide the egg mixture evenly among 4 of the bread slices and spread it evenly. Top each sandwich with a lettuce leaf, if desired, then close each sandwich with another bread slice.
5. Cut each sandwich into triangles to serve.

Per serving (1 sandwich): 235 calories; 8.1 g fat (2.3 g saturated, 3.1 g monounsaturated, 1.4 g polyunsaturated), 214 mg cholesterol, 645 mg sodium, 26 g carbohydrate (4 g dietary fiber), 14 g protein, 31.06% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Crack and peel the eggs, cut them up with a dinner knife or butter knife, and mix the egg salad in the bowl.**

Cooking Tip

Cook 6 to 8 eggs rather than only 4 eggs. The extra eggs will keep in the refrigerator for up to 4 days and are good to have on hand for making sandwiches or as a healthy, tasty snack on their own.

Corn Bread

WITH PINTO BEANS

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Quick breads can be sweet, such as cakes and cookies, or savory, such as biscuits and soda bread. The word *quick* refers to the speed of the leavening agent, which is generally baking powder or baking soda rather than yeast. This corn bread, made from nutritious whole-grain cornmeal, is combined with protein-rich beans to make a simple dish that is both healthy and tasty. One square of corn bread may be enough for a young child.

WITH KIDS!

For the corn bread, measure the dry ingredients and stir together. Measure the buttermilk, crack the eggs into a bowl and beat them with a fork, and stir together the cornmeal mixture, eggs, buttermilk, and oil.

INGREDIENTS

For the corn bread:

2 tablespoons canola or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16), plus ½ teaspoon for greasing the pan

1 cup yellow cornmeal

¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup buttermilk, 1% low-fat milk

2 eggs, lightly beaten

Butter, for serving (optional)

For the beans:

3 cups cooked pinto beans plus 1 cup of their cooking liquid (see Cooking Dried Beans, page 5), or 3 cups well-drained and rinsed canned beans (about two 15-ounce cans) plus 1 cup water

1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped (about 1½ cups)

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon salt, if using home-cooked beans

Finely chopped white onion, chopped fresh cilantro, shredded cheddar cheese, for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

1. To make the corn bread, preheat the oven to 425°F. Grease an 8-inch square cake pan with the 1/2 teaspoon oil.
2. In a large bowl, whisk or stir together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
3. Add the buttermilk, eggs, and oil to the cornmeal mixture and stir to mix well.
4. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Bake until the bread is puffed, lightly browned, and pulling away from the sides of the pan, about 20 minutes.
5. Let the corn bread cool for about 10 minutes before cutting into 2-inch squares.
6. While the bread is baking, prepare the beans. Put the beans and the 1 cup liquid in a saucepan and add the onion, garlic, bay leaf, and the salt, if using home-cooked beans. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook for 20 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf.
7. To serve, spoon the beans into individual bowls and garnish as desired. Serve the corn bread on the side.

Per serving (2 squares corn bread): 248 calories; 8 g fat (1.2 g saturated, 4 g monounsaturated, 1.9 g polyunsaturated), 72 mg cholesterol, 421 mg sodium, 37 g carbohydrate (1 g dietary fiber), 7 g protein, 27.42% calories from fat

Per serving (3/4 cup beans without garnishes): 141 calories; 1 g fat (0.1 g saturated, 0.01 g monounsaturated, 0.2 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 197 mg sodium, 27 g carbohydrate (8 g dietary fiber), 8 g protein, 3.78% calories from fat

Hummus

WITH CRUNCHY VEGETABLE DIPPERS

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS
8 SERVINGS

Children like to dip foods, and this nutritious dip made with chickpeas (also known as garbanzo beans), olive oil, and a little tahini is a good one to introduce to your family. Tahini is a thick, flavorful paste made from sesame seeds, and is available in the international foods aisle of well-stocked supermarkets and in Middle Eastern grocery stores. If you cannot find it, this dip is still delicious using only olive oil. Chickpeas not only are tasty, but also are a good source of fiber and protein.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: Have your children name the vegetables, count the pieces, and then sort the vegetables by color.

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup dried chickpeas, rinsed, or
1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained

⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
(from about 2 lemons)

2 tablespoons tahini
or extra-virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, finely minced

Celery sticks, carrot sticks, jicama sticks, broccoli florets, radishes, green beans, and/or crackers, in any combination, for dipping

PREPARATION

1. If using dried chickpeas, put them in a saucepan, add water to cover them by 2 inches, and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until tender, 1½ to 2 hours. Drain the beans, reserving the cooking liquid. (The chickpeas can be cooked a day ahead.)
2. If using canned chickpeas, put them in a colander, rinse well under cold running water, and drain.
3. In a blender or food processor, combine the chickpeas, lemon juice, tahini, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, and the garlic and process until smooth, adding 2 to 3 tablespoons cooking liquid or water as needed to make a creamy paste.
4. Transfer the dip to a shallow serving bowl and drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil.
5. Arrange the vegetables and/or crackers on a platter or plate and serve alongside the hummus.

Per serving (1/4 cup hummus with dippers using canned chickpeas): 133 calories; 7.7 g fat (1.0 g saturated, 4.6 g monounsaturated, 1.7 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 162 mg sodium, 14 g carbohydrate (3 g dietary fiber), 3 g protein, 50.15% calories from fat

Health Tip

It has long been known that extra-virgin olive oil contributes to a healthy heart, but now researchers are reporting that it may help cognitive function, too, because it contains vitamins E, A, and K, as well as iron, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. It is also good for your eyes, skin, bones, and immune system.

MAKES 12 STICKS

Cheese and Grape Sticks

This is an especially fun and creative snack to make with your children. They can do almost all the preparation themselves except for slicing the cheese. Other fruits, such as strawberries, bananas, or pears, can be substituted. You also can use other types of firm cheeses such as mozzarella, Gouda, Edam, or Swiss. Or, you can leave out the cheese and make this a 100 percent fruit snack. Note: If your children are young, cut the grapes in half to help guard against choking. And be sure to monitor the children as they use the skewers. You will snip off the ends of the skewers before serving.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: When threading the grapes and cheese cubes onto the skewers, ask your children to choose a pattern, such as 2 grapes, then 1 cheese cube, and then ask them to repeat the pattern.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup seedless green grapes

1 cup seedless red or purple grapes

8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese

8 ounces mild cheddar cheese

12 (10-inch) skewers, to be used with caution and supervision (if using shorter skewers, reduce the number of grapes)

PREPARATION

1. Wash the grapes and remove the stems.
2. Slice the cheeses into ½-inch cubes. You should have 24 cubes total.
3. Carefully thread a green grape and then a red grape sideways onto a skewer and follow them with a cube of white cheese. Thread 2 more grapes, 1 green and 1 red, onto the skewer, and follow them with a cube of yellow cheese. Repeat until you have 12 filled skewers.
4. Refrigerate the skewers until you are ready to serve. Just before serving, be sure to cut off the sharp end of each skewer with scissors.

Per serving (1 stick): 162 calories; 12 g fat (7.5 g saturated, 3.4 g monounsaturated, 0.4 g polyunsaturated), 36 mg cholesterol, 216 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate (0 g dietary fiber), 9 g protein, 64.20% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **If your children are old enough, let them thread the grapes and cheese; if not, ask them to pass you the grapes and cheese according to number and color.**

Health Tip

Cheese is a complete protein, which means that it contains all of the essential amino acids in the correct proportions to meet a person's dietary needs. In general, proteins derived from animal foods, such as cheese, meat, and fish, are complete proteins.

Banana Milk Shake

WITH STRAWBERRIES

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS
5 SERVINGS

Almond milk, a dairy-free product made from ground almonds processed with water, is thicker than cow's milk and contains no saturated fat. It is high in many nutrients, such as calcium, potassium, and vitamin E, and is sold unsweetened, sweetened, unflavored, and flavored.

Bananas are a good fruit to have on hand for snacks and salads. If you buy bananas that are yellow, have green tips, and no black spots, they will keep at room temperature in your kitchen for up to a week. As the banana ripens, its starch converts to sugar. The riper the banana, the sweeter it tastes, so use ripe bananas for this recipe if you want a naturally sweeter milk shake.

If you like, nonfat or low-fat milk can be substituted for the almond milk. To make a thicker shake, add ¼ cup plain nonfat yogurt. If fresh berries are unavailable, use frozen berries.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: Have children count the strawberries. Then ask them to name the color of each ingredient and to name something else they know that is the same color.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups unsweetened almond milk

15 fresh strawberries,
stems removed,
or ¾ cup frozen strawberries

2 ripe bananas, peeled and cut up

PREPARATION

1. In a blender, combine the almond milk, strawberries, and bananas and process on high speed until smooth, about 45 seconds.
2. Divide the milk shake evenly among 5 glasses.

Per serving (1/2 cup): 67 calories; 1 g fat (0.1 g saturated, 0.5 g monounsaturated, 0.2 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 1 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 1 g protein, 12.83% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Wash the strawberries and peel the bananas.**

Healthy Advice

Eat your berries and bananas for fiber, potassium, and vitamin C.

Food Tip

Bananas are harvested green and begin ripening as soon as the banana stem is cut from the plant. As they ripen, they turn from green to yellow with green tips, to yellow, to yellow with brown flecks, to brown. You can peel ripe bananas and store them in a reclosable plastic baggie or other airtight container in the freezer for up to 4 months.

Spaghetti
WITH HOMEMADE TOMATO SAUCE

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

It is easy to make homemade tomato sauce for pasta the speedy scratch way with canned tomatoes. The important thing is to purchase salt-free or low-sodium tomatoes. Many prepared tomato sauces are high in sodium, so when you make your own sauce, you can be sure it will contain less salt. Tomatoes, both canned and fresh, are high in vitamins A and C, calcium, potassium, and lycopene, making them good choices for making all kinds of nutritious dishes.

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup minced yellow onion

1 (28-ounce) can crushed salt-free or low-sodium tomatoes

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 cup water

½ teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon fresh thyme, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme

6 fresh basil leaves, chopped, or 2 teaspoons dried basil

1 teaspoon salt

10 ounces regular or whole wheat spaghetti or other dried pasta

¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

PREPARATION

1. In a saucepan, warm the oil over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add the garlic and onion and sauté until softened, about 3 minutes.
2. Add the crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, water, oregano, and thyme and stir well. Turn the heat down to low and simmer until the flavors have blended and the sauce has thickened, about 20 minutes.
3. Fill a large pot with water, bring to a boil, and add the salt. Add the pasta, stir well, and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, about 8 minutes, or according to package instructions. Drain the pasta.
4. Transfer the pasta to a platter or large bowl. Spoon about one-fourth of the sauce over the pasta and toss to coat evenly. Top the pasta with the remaining sauce and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese, if desired. Serve immediately.

Per serving (3/4 cup sauce and 1/2 cup pasta): 144 calories; 2.1 g fat (0.3 g saturated, 1.5 g monounsaturated, 0.3 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 331 mg sodium, 26 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 5 g protein, 27.45% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Measure the herbs and sprinkle on the Parmesan cheese, if desired.**

Cooking Tip

Herbs add flavor to a dish, which means less salt is needed. Thyme, rosemary, oregano, and marjoram are known as woody herbs and are rich in aromatic oils and low in moisture. That means they retain their flavor and intensity when dried. Basil, parsley, dill, and cilantro, which are known as green herbs, are higher in moisture and very aromatic when fresh. They are not as flavorful when dried. Whenever possible, use these green herbs fresh rather than dried.

Quick Green Beans

WITH BEEF AND RICE

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

This is a simple recipe for speedy scratch cooking with Asian flavors. The combination of brown rice, vegetables, and beef makes a healthy and balanced meal. Start the rice first, so that when the green beans are done, the rice will be ready to serve.

INGREDIENTS

For the rice:

4 cups water

2 cups long-grain brown rice

½ teaspoon salt

For the green beans and beef:

1 tablespoon canola or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16)

2 yellow onions, coarsely chopped (about 3 cups)

8 cloves garlic, minced (about 3 tablespoons)

1 pound extra-lean ground beef (95 percent lean)

½ cup water

5 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce

1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed, or 1 pound frozen

PREPARATION

1. To make the rice, bring the water to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the rice and salt, stir well, and return to a boil.
2. Turn down the heat to low, cover, and cook until all of the liquid has been absorbed and the rice is tender, about 45 minutes.
3. While the rice is cooking, make the green beans and beef. In a frying pan, warm the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic and sauté until softened, about 4 minutes.
4. Add the beef and, using a fork or a spatula, break it into crumbles. Sauté until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.
5. Add the water, soy sauce, and green beans, stir well, and turn down the heat to low. Simmer until the beans are tender when pierced with a fork, about 10 minutes.
6. When the rice is ready, remove from the heat and fluff with a fork. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes before serving.
7. To serve, spoon the rice onto individual plates and top with the green beans and beef. Serve hot.

Per serving (1/2 cup rice): 108 calories; 0.9 g fat (0.2 g saturated, 0.3 g monounsaturated, 0.3 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 292 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 3 g protein, 6.76% calories from fat

Per serving (3/4 cup green beans and beef): 139 calories; 4.8 g fat (1.5 g saturated, 2.3 g monounsaturated, 0.7 g polyunsaturated), 34 mg cholesterol, 369 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate (3 g dietary fiber), 13 g protein, 31.15% calories from fat

Health Tip

Brown rice has only the hull of the kernel removed, which means the bran and germ are still intact. That makes brown rice more nutritious than white rice, because the bran is rich in fiber and selenium and the germ contains several essential nutrients, including vitamin E.

Turkey and Pork

MEATBALLS WITH MASHED POTATOES

MAKES ABOUT 24
1-INCH MEATBALLS AND
4 CUPS POTATOES; 8 SERVINGS

Turkey and lean pork are both "white" meats, which means they are lower in fat than red meats such as beef and lamb. That makes this dish a healthy alternative to more common beef meatballs. Call the kids into the kitchen to help you with this dish. They'll have fun shaping the meatballs with their hands.

INGREDIENTS

For the meatballs:
Extra-virgin olive oil or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16), for greasing the pan

12 ounces ground turkey

12 ounces lean ground pork or extra-lean ground beef (95 percent lean)

1½ cups low-sodium tomato sauce, homemade (page 23) or store-bought

¾ cup coarse dried bread crumbs or old-fashioned rolled oats

1 egg, lightly beaten

¼ cup chopped yellow onion

¼ cup grated, peeled carrot

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

For the potatoes:
6 potatoes, peeled or unpeeled and quartered

¾ cup 1% low-fat milk

1½ tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

PREPARATION

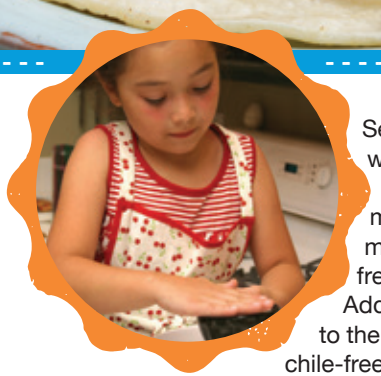
1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a large baking sheet generously with olive oil.
2. In a large bowl, combine the turkey, pork, ½ cup of the tomato sauce, the bread crumbs, egg, onion, carrot, salt, and pepper. Mix the ingredients together with your hands or a spoon until well blended.
3. Using your hands, form the mixture into balls about 1 inch in diameter. Place them on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 1½ inches apart. Turn each ball several times to coat it with the oil.
4. Bake the meatballs, turning them once or twice, until they are browned on the exterior and no longer pink in the center, about 30 minutes.
5. While the meatballs are baking, prepare the potatoes. Fill a large pot with water and bring to a boil. Add the potatoes and cook until tender when pierced with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes into a colander, then return them to the hot pan. Add the milk and butter, and mash with a potato masher or fork until smooth and creamy. Stir in the salt and pepper.
7. When the meatballs are ready, transfer them to a bowl or platter. Spoon the potatoes into a serving bowl and serve alongside the meatballs. Warm the remaining tomato sauce for use at the table.

Per serving (3 meatballs): 220 calories; 11 g fat (3.6 g saturated, 4.6 g monounsaturated, 1.8 g polyunsaturated), 86 mg cholesterol, 362 mg sodium, 10g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 18 g protein, 46.36% calories from fat

Per serving (1/2 cup mashed potatoes): 118 calories; 2 g fat (1.5 g saturated, 0.6 g monounsaturated, 0.1 g polyunsaturated), 7 mg cholesterol, 538 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 3 g protein, 18.31% calories from fat

Fish Tacos

MAKES 4 TACOS
2 SERVINGS



Serving your children fish provides them with a good source of protein that is low in saturated fat and high in vitamin D and many of the B vitamins. Tilapia or pollock, mild, lean white fish available frozen and fresh, is a good choice for these tacos. Adding a little shredded cabbage and cilantro to the taco boosts nutrition, but not calories. The chile-free salsa is a simple, speedy scratch sauce, and easy to make. For a full meal, serve with rice and cubed fresh fruit. One taco is a good-size serving for a young child.

INGREDIENTS

For the salsa:

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons chopped yellow onion

1 clove garlic, chopped

2 tomatoes, chopped

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

For the fish:

8 ounces tilapia, pollock, or other mild, lean white fish fillets

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon salt

4 (6-inch) corn tortillas

1 cup finely shredded cabbage

½ cup low-fat sour cream or *crema* (Mexican sour cream)

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. To make the salsa in a frying pan, warm the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until softened, about 3 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes, salt, cilantro, and the cinnamon, if using, and cook, stirring, until the tomatoes are soft and have broken down, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. The salsa can be served as is or processed in a blender until smooth.
4. To prepare the fish, put the fillets on a baking sheet and brush the tops with the olive oil. Sprinkle with the garlic powder and salt.
5. Bake the fish until it flakes with a fork, about 5 minutes.
6. While the fish is cooking, place a dry frying pan over medium-high heat. One at a time, put the tortillas in the pan and heat them, turning them once, until warm and softened.
7. Remove the fish from the oven. Place one-fourth of the fish down the center of each tortilla, then top with one-fourth each of the cabbage, salsa, and sour cream. Fold each tortilla in half and serve warm.

Per serving (2 tacos): 441 calories; 19.6 g fat (6.3 g saturated, 9.8 g monounsaturated, 2.7 g polyunsaturated), 83 mg cholesterol, 429 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrate (6 g dietary fiber), 36 g protein, 39.46% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Brush the fish with the oil and season the fish with the garlic powder and salt.**

Chicken Enchilada

CASSEROLE

MAKES 12 SERVINGS

This versatile dish has the flavor of enchiladas without the individual wrapping, which will save you time in the kitchen. It includes corn and slivered zucchini in addition to chicken, so you are getting extra nutrition from vegetables.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts

2 cups water

1 teaspoon salt

1½ tablespoons canola or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16)

1 yellow onion, minced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed

5 canned whole green chiles, seeded if desired and chopped (about 4 ounces)

2 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, seeded and minced (optional)

2 zucchini, grated on the large holes of a box grater and squeezed dry

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 (28-ounce) can salt-free or low-sodium crushed tomatoes

12 (8-inch) corn tortillas

1 (10-ounce) can enchilada sauce, or 1½ cups homemade enchilada sauce

½ cup shredded cheddar cheese

½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Chopped fresh tomatoes, chopped romaine lettuce, and finely chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish (optional)

Cooking Tip

For a spicier version, increase the chipotle chiles. For a milder version, omit them altogether.

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. In a saucepan, combine the chicken, water, and salt, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and cook until the chicken is opaque throughout when tested with a knife, about 20 minutes. Drain, let cool to room temperature, then shred the chicken with your fingers.
3. In a large, deep frying pan, warm the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until softened, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Add the corn, green chiles, and chipotle chile (if using) and stir well. Add the zucchini, chicken, cumin, and oregano, and stir again to mix well. Finally, stir in the tomatoes and simmer for 10 minutes to blend the flavors. Remove from the heat.
5. Spread ¼ cup of the enchilada sauce in the bottom of a 13-by-9 inch baking dish. Arrange 6 of the tortillas over the sauce, overlapping them as needed and allowing them to extend partway up the sides of the dish.
6. Spread half of the vegetable and chicken mixture evenly over the tortillas and sprinkle with about one-third each of the Cheddar and Jack cheeses. Spread the remaining vegetable and chicken mixture evenly over the top.
7. Arrange the remaining 6 tortillas over the vegetable and chicken mixture, again overlapping them. Tuck the edges of the tortillas down the sides of the dish.
8. Pour the remaining enchilada sauce evenly over the top. Sprinkle the surface evenly with the remaining cheeses.
9. Bake until the cheese has melted and the sauce is bubbling around the edges, about 20 minutes.
10. Let stand for 15 minutes, then cut into 12 squares to serve. Accompany with the garnishes, if desired.

Per serving (1 square): 177 calories; 5.2 g fat (2.3 g saturated, 1.3 g monounsaturated, 0.7 g polyunsaturated), 13 mg cholesterol, 697 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate (4 g dietary fiber), 8 g protein, 30.67% calories from fat

Split-Pea Soup
WITH HAM HOCK

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS; 4 SERVINGS

Homemade split-pea soup is easy to make, economical, and, most important, delicious. It also is good for you, as the peas are an excellent source of protein and fiber.

Cooking the ham hock separately, which can be done the day before, and then adding the meat to the soup results in a healthier soup than cooking the ham with the split peas. This soup is especially good served with corn bread (page 23).

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: Put 5 or 6 carrots on the countertop and ask your children to count out 2 carrots and set them aside for the soup.

INGREDIENTS

1 (1-pound) smoked ham hock, or 8 ounces ham steak

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

½ yellow onion, finely chopped (about ¾ cup)

2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped

1 cup dried split peas

5 cups water

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Flavor Tip

Adding a small amount of meat to a vegetable soup is a good way to increase flavor without adding excessive fat or calories.

PREPARATION

1. Put the ham hock in a saucepan, add cold water to cover by 2 inches, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Turn the heat down to low and simmer, uncovered, until the meat easily pulls away from the bone, about 1½ hours.
2. Drain the ham hock and let cool until it can be handled, then remove the meat and trim away any fat. Coarsely chop the meat and set aside. If using ham steak, cut into ½-inch cubes and reserve.
3. While the ham hock is cooking, begin cooking the soup. In a soup pot, warm the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and carrots and sauté until softened, about 3 minutes.
4. Add the split peas and stir once or twice. Add the water, bay leaf, salt, and pepper, bring to a boil, turn down the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the peas are soft, 30 to 40 minutes.
5. Using a fork or whisk, mash the peas to make a creamy soup. If the soup seems too thin, cook it longer to evaporate some of the moisture. If it is too thick, add a little more water and continue to simmer until it is the correct consistency.
6. During the last 10 minutes of cooking, add the meat from the ham hock or the ham steak.
7. Ladle the soup into bowls and serve.

Per serving (1 cup soup with 1 ounce ham): 183 calories; 8.7 g fat (2.5 g saturated, 3.1 g monounsaturated, 0.8 g polyunsaturated), 32 mg cholesterol, 307 mg sodium, 14 g carbohydrate (5 g dietary fiber), 13 g protein, 42.84% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Pour the split peas into the measuring cup.**

Quick Curry Bowl

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Curry refers to both the spice-rich dishes popular in South Asia and Southeast Asia, and to the mixture of ground spices used to flavor them. Typically served over rice or with flat breads, curries are usually a mixture of vegetables or of vegetables and meat or fish, making them an ideal way to combine a variety of healthy foods in a single dish.

INGREDIENTS

For the rice:
6 cups water, divided

2 cups medium-grain brown rice

1½ teaspoons salt

For the potato and pea curry:
3 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons curry powder

8 medium-size russet potatoes, unpeeled, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 cup plain low-fat yogurt (do not use nonfat; it will curdle the sauce)

1 pound frozen green peas

Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish (optional)

1 teaspoon cumin, or ½ teaspoon powdered cumin

PREPARATION

1. To make the rice, bring 4 cups of the water to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the rice and 1 teaspoon of the salt, stir well, and return to a boil.
2. Turn down the heat to low, cover, and cook until all of the liquid has been absorbed and the rice is tender, about 45 minutes.
3. While the rice is cooking, make the curry. In a large, heavy frying pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the salt, cumin seeds, and curry powder and stir until the mixture is fragrant, about 1 minute.
4. Add the potatoes and stir to coat them with the mixture. Continue stirring until the potato cubes are lightly crisped, about 10 minutes. Add the remaining 2 cups water and stir well. Turn down the heat to low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes.
5. Add the yogurt and peas and stir to distribute the yogurt evenly. Cook until the peas are tender and the yogurt is well blended, about 5 minutes.
6. When the rice is ready, remove from the heat and fluff with a fork. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes before serving.
7. To serve, spoon the rice into shallow individual bowls and top with the curry. Garnish with cilantro, if desired.

Per serving (1/2 cup rice): 109 calories; 0.8 g fat (0.2 g saturated, 0.3 g monounsaturated, 0.3 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 292 mg sodium, 23 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 2 g protein, 0.73% calories from fat

Per serving (1 cup curry): 227 calories; 5 g fat (3.1 g saturated, 1.4 g monounsaturated, 0.4 g polyunsaturated), 13 mg cholesterol, 216 mg sodium, 39 g carbohydrate (6 g dietary fiber), 7 g protein, 20.79% calories from fat

WITH KIDS!

For the rice, measure the water, rice, and salt. For the curry, wash the potatoes and measure the salt, cumin seeds, curry powder, and yogurt.

Cuban-Style

BLACK BEANS WITH PINEAPPLE

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

In this version of the Cuban favorite "black beans and rice," the beans get a sweet but healthy boost from pineapple. One of the world's most popular tropical fruits, pineapple is an excellent source of vitamin C and manganese, which is good for bone and nerve health. Chunks of pineapple are also delicious in salads, with meats, mixed with bell peppers and onions or other vegetables, or as an anytime-of-the-day snack.

You can substitute home-cooked black beans for the canned beans. See page 5 for cooking directions.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups water

1 cup medium-grain brown rice

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons minced yellow onion

1 cup well-drained juice-packed pineapple chunks, plus
2 tablespoons reserved juice

2 cups drained canned black beans, rinsed and well-drained

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

PREPARATION

1. To make the rice, bring the water to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the rice and salt, stir well, and return it to a boil.
2. Turn the heat down to low, cover, and cook until all of the liquid has been absorbed and the rice is tender, about 45 minutes.
3. While the rice is cooking, make the beans. In a frying pan, warm the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté until softened, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Add the pineapple chunks and sear them, turning them once or twice, until lightly golden on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the reserved pineapple juice and scrape the bottom of the pan to loosen any clinging bits.
5. Stir in the beans and turn down the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer until the beans are warmed through, about 4 minutes. Uncover and stir in half of the cilantro.
6. When the rice is ready, remove from the heat and fluff with a fork. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes before serving.
7. To serve, spoon the rice onto individual plates or into shallow individual bowls and top with the beans. Garnish with the remaining cilantro.

Per serving: (1/2 cup beans): 116 calories; 2.7 g fat (0.4 g saturated, 1.7 g monounsaturated, 0.4 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 308 mg sodium, 19 g carbohydrate (6 g dietary fiber), 2 g protein, 20.69% calories from fat

Per serving (1/2 cup rice): 109 calories; 0.8 g fat (0.2 g saturated, 0.3 g monounsaturated, 0.3 g polyunsaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 292 mg sodium, 23 g carbohydrate (2 g dietary fiber), 2 g protein, 0.73% calories from fat

Shopping Tip

When purchasing canned pineapple, make sure it is packed in 100 percent natural juices. Canned pineapple packed in syrup contains extra sugar—and calories.

Healthy Advice

Fresh fruit is more nutritious than fruit juices. When you read the labels on fruit juice containers, you'll see that many are high in sugar and contain only a small amount of pure fruit juice, if any.

Pork Chow Mein

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Most children like noodles, so this speedy scratch chow mein is likely to be a hit at the dinner table. Although chow mein literally means "fried noodles," the noodles are boiled here instead of fried, reducing the amount of fat in the dish.

Healthy Tip

Leafy greens, such as bok choy, spinach, and chard, are low in calories and high in nutrients. They can be added to stir-fries, soups, stews, and pasta sauces.

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces fresh Chinese wheat noodles, or 8 ounces dried whole wheat spaghetti

2 tablespoons canola or other healthy cooking oil (see page 16)

1 yellow onion, chopped (about 1½ cups)

2 cloves garlic, chopped

8 ounces boneless lean pork, cut into bite-size pieces

½ cup chopped celery

1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped

4 cups chopped bok choy (about 2 medium heads)

3 green onions, including tender green tops, chopped

5 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce, plus more for serving (optional)

2 tablespoons peeled and minced fresh ginger

Toasted sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

1. If using fresh noodles, bring a pot filled with water to a boil, add the noodles, stir well, and cook until just tender to the bite, 2 to 4 minutes, or according to package instructions. (If you have purchased precooked Chinese noodles, they usually need to be boiled for only 1 minute.) Drain the noodles and set aside.
2. If using dried noodles, add them to a pot of boiling water and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, about 8 minutes, or according to package instructions. Drain the noodles and set aside.
3. To make the pork and vegetables, in a large frying pan, warm the oil over high heat. Add the yellow onion, stir briefly, and then add the garlic. Cook, stirring constantly, until the onion is lightly browned, about 3 minutes.
4. Add the pork and continue to cook, stirring constantly to avoid burning, until the pork is lightly browned, about 5 minutes.
5. Add the celery, red pepper, and bok choy and cook, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the green onions, soy sauce, and ginger and stir to combine. Turn down the heat to low, cover, and cook gently until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
6. To serve, spoon the rice on a platter, top with the vegetable mixture, and sprinkle with the sesame seeds, if using.

Per serving (2/3 cup pork and vegetables and 1/2 cup fresh Chinese wheat noodles):
414 calories; 24.2 g fat (4.2 g saturated, 6.3 g monounsaturated, 10.3 g polyunsaturated), 18 mg cholesterol, 806 mg sodium, 38 g carbohydrate (4 g dietary fiber), 13 g protein, 50% calories from fat

WITH KIDS! **Wash the vegetables and let your child sprinkle the sesame seeds.**

Nutritional content is based on the first ingredient listed, not the suggested alternatives. Optional ingredients are not included.

Although the information provided is presented in good faith and believed to be correct, First 5 California makes no representations or warranties as to its completeness or accuracy, and all information, including nutritional values, is used by you at your own risk.

Talk. Read. Sing.℠

Your words have the power to shape their world.

The moment babies come into this world, their brains are forming the connections that will determine how they learn, think, and grow. In fact, 90% of their brains are developed by age five, and it starts from day one. Just remember:

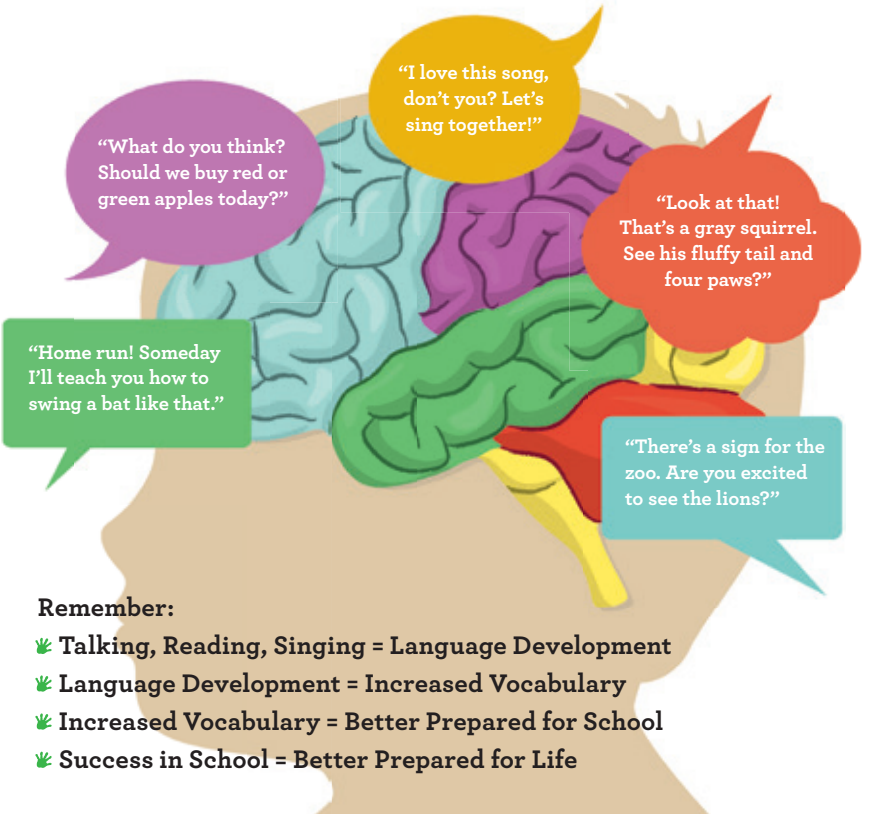
- Talk, read, and sing with your baby every day.
- Use the language you use with your friends—it helps build your child's vocabulary.
- Start early. Don't wait until your child is four or five to start talking and reading aloud with them.

Babies who are talked to and read to from the time they're born are better prepared by the time they start school. Kids who aren't have a 50% chance of falling behind and have a hard time catching up.

Go to **First5California.com/parents** for great ideas about talking, reading, and singing with your child every day.

FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA℠

www.First5California.com/parents



Remember:

- **Talking, Reading, Singing = Language Development**
- **Language Development = Increased Vocabulary**
- **Increased Vocabulary = Better Prepared for School**
- **Success in School = Better Prepared for Life**