

# Jamie Oliver's TED Prize wish: TEACH EVERY CHILD ABOUT FOOD

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**M**y name's Jamie Oliver. I'm 34 years old. I'm from Essex in England and for the last seven years I've worked fairly tirelessly to save lives in my own way. I'm not a doctor. I'm a chef; I don't have expensive equipment or medicine. I use information, education.

I profoundly believe that the power of food has a primal place in our homes that binds us to the best bits of life. We have an awful, awful reality right now. America, you're at the top of your game. This is one of the most unhealthy countries in the world.

Can I please just see a raise of hands for how many of you have children in this room today? Please put your hands up. Aunties, uncles, you can continue ... Put your hands up. Aunties and uncles as well. Most of you. OK. We, the adults of the last four generations, have blessed our children with the destiny of a shorter lifespan than their own parents. Your child will live a life ten years younger than you because of the landscape of food that we've built around them. Two thirds of this room,

"I'm not a doctor. I'm a chef; I don't have expensive equipment or medicine. I use information, education."

today, in America, are statistically overweight or obese. You lot, you're all right, but we'll get you eventually, don't worry.

Right? The statistics of bad health are clear, very clear. We spend our lives being paranoid about death, murder,

homicide, you name it. It's on the front page of every paper, CNN. Look at homicide at the bottom, for God's sake. Right?

Every single one of those in the red is a diet-related disease. Any doctor, any specialist will tell

you that. Fact. Diet-related disease is the biggest killer in the United States, right now, here today. This is a global problem. It's a catastrophe. It's sweeping the world. England is right behind you, as usual.

I know they were close, but not that close. We need a revolution. Mexico, Australia, Germany, India, China, all have massive problems of obesity and bad health. Think about smoking. It costs way less than obesity now. Obesity costs you Americans 10 percent of your health care bills. 150 billion dollars a year. In 10 years, it's set to double. 300 billion dollars a year. And let's be honest, guys, you ain't got that cash.

I came here to start a food revolution that I so profoundly believe in. We need it. The time is now. We're in a tipping-

*“Obesity costs you Americans 10 percent of your health care bills. 150 billion dollars a year.”*



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point moment. I've been doing this for seven years. I've been trying in America for seven years. Now is the time when it's ripe -- ripe for the picking. I went to the eye of the storm. I went to West Virginia, the most unhealthy state in America. Or it was last year. We've got a new one this year, but we'll work on that next season.

Huntington, West Virginia. Beautiful town. I wanted to put heart and soul and people, your public, around the statistics that we've become so used to. I want to introduce you to some of the people that I care about. Your public. Your children. I want to show a picture of my friend Brittany. She's 16 years old. She's got six years to live because of the food that she's eaten. She's the third generation of Americans that hasn't grown up within a food environment where

they've been taught to cook at home or in school, or her mom, or her mom's mom. She has six years to live. She's eating her liver to death.

Stacy, the Edwards family. This is a normal family, guys. Stacy does her best, but she's third-generation as well; she was never taught to cook at home or in school. The family's obese. Justin, here, 12 years old. He's 350 pounds. He gets bullied, for God's sake. The daughter there, Katie, she's four years old. She's obese before she even gets to primary

school. Marissa. She's all right. She's one of your lot. But you know what? Her father, who was obese, died in her arms. And then the second-most-important man in her life, her uncle, died of obesity. And now her step-dad is obese. You see, the thing is obesity and diet-related disease doesn't just hurt the people that have it; it's all of their friends, families, brothers, sisters.

Pastor Steve. An inspirational man. One of my early allies in Huntington, West Virginia. He's at the



[www.beach-fitness.com](http://www.beach-fitness.com)

sharp knife-edge of this problem. He has to bury the people, OK? And he's fed up with it. He's fed up with burying his friends, and his family, his community. Come winter, three times as many people die. He's sick of it. This is preventable disease. Waste of life. By the way, this is what they get buried in. We're not geared up to do this. Can't even get them out the door, and I'm being serious. Can't even get them there. Forklift.

OK, I see it as a triangle, OK? This is our landscape of food. I

need you to understand it. You've probably heard all this before, but let's just go back over it. Over the last 30 years, what's happened that's ripped the heart out of this country? Let's be frank and honest. Well. Modern-day life.

### Let's start with the **Main Street.**

Fast food has taken over the whole country. We know that. The big brands are some of the most important powers, powerful powers in this country. Supermarkets as well. Big companies. Big companies. 30 years ago, most of the

food was largely local and largely fresh. Now it's largely processed and full of all sorts of additives, extra ingredients, and you know the rest of the story. Portion size is obviously a massive, massive problem. Labeling is a massive problem. The labeling in this country is a disgrace. They want to be self ... They want to self-police themselves. The industry wants to self-police themselves. What, in this kind of climate? They don't deserve it. How can you say something is low-fat when it's full of so much sugar?



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**Home.** The biggest problem with the home is that used to be the heart of passing on food and food culture, what made our society. That isn't happening anymore. And you know, as we go to work and as life changes, and as life always evolves, we kind of have to look at it holistically -- step back for a moment, and re-address the balance. It ain't happening. Hasn't happened for 30 years. I want to show you a situation that is very normal right now. The Edwards family.

**(Video) Jamie Oliver:** Let's have a talk. This

stuff goes through you and your family's body every week. And I need you to know that this is going to kill your children early. How are you feeling?

**Stacy:** Just feeling really sad and depressed right now. But, you know, I want my kids to succeed in life and this isn't going to get them there. But I'm killing them.

**JO:** Yes you are. You are. But we can stop that. Normal. Let's get onto schools, something that I'm fairly much a specialist in. OK.

School. What is school? Who invented it? What's the purpose of school? School was always invented to arm us with the tools to make us creative, do wonderful things, make us earn a living, etc., etc., etc. You know, it's been kind of in this sort of tight box for a long, long time. OK? But we haven't really evolved it to deal with the health catastrophes of America, OK? School food is something that most kids -- 31 million a day, actually -- have twice a day, more than often, breakfast and lunch, 180 days of the year. So you could say that school food is quite important, really, judging the circumstances.

Before I crack into my rant, which I'm sure you're waiting for ... I need to say one thing, and it's so important in hopefully the magic that happens and unfolds in the next three months. The lunch ladies, the lunch cooks of America ... I offer myself as their ambassador. I'm not slacking them off. They're doing the best they can do. They're doing their best. But they're doing what they're told, and what

they're being told to do is wrong. The system is highly run by accountants. There's not enough, or any, food-knowledgeable people in the business. There's a problem. If you're not a food expert, and you've got tight budgets, and it's getting tighter, then you can't be creative, you can't duck and dive and write different things around things. If you're an accountant, and a box-ticker, the only thing you can do in these circumstances is buy cheaper shit.

Now, the reality is, the food that your kids get every day is fast food, it's highly processed, there's not enough fresh food in there at all. You know, the amount of additives, E numbers, ingredients you wouldn't believe ... There's not enough veggies at all. French fries are considered a vegetable. Pizza for breakfast. They don't even get given crockery. Knives and forks? No, they're too dangerous. They have scissors in the classroom but knives and forks, no. And the way I look at it is, if you don't have knives and forks in your school, you're purely endorsing, from a state level, fast food.

“French fries are considered a vegetable. Pizza for breakfast.”

really clear sense of do the kids know anything about where food comes from.

**Video:**

**JO:** Who knows what that is?

**Child:** Uh, pear.

**JO:** What do you think this is?

**Child:** I don't know.

**JO:** If the kids don't know what stuff is, then they'd never eat it.

**JO:** Normal. England and America, England and America. Guess what fixed that. Guess what fixed that. Two one-hour sessions.

what this is?

**Child:** Potatoes.

**Jamie Oliver:** Potato? So, you think these are potatoes? Do you know what that is? Do you know what that is?

**Child:** Broccoli?

**JO:** What about this? Our good old friend. Do you know what this is honey?

**Child:** Celery.

**JO:** No. What do you think this is?

**Child:** Onion.

**JO:** Onion? No.

**Jamie Oliver:** Immediately you get a

Because it's handheld. And yes, by the way, it is fast food. It's sloppy joes, it's burgers, it's wieners, it's pizzas, it's all of that stuff. 10 percent of what we spend on healthcare, as I said earlier, is on obesity. And it's going to double. We're not teaching our kids. There is no statutory right to teach kids about food, elementary or secondary school. OK? We don't teach kids about food. Right? And this is a little clip from an elementary school, which is very common in England.

**Video:** Who knows



We've got to start teaching our kids about food in schools, period.

I want to tell you about something, I want to tell you about something that kind of epitomizes the trouble that we're in guys. OK? I want to talk about something so basic as milk. Every kid has the right to milk at school. Your kids will be having milk at school, breakfast and lunch. Right? They'll be having two bottles. Okay? And most kids do. But milk ain't good enough anymore. Because someone at the milk board, right -- and don't get me wrong, I support

milk, but someone on the milk board, probably paid a lot of money for some geezer to work out that if you put loads of flavorings and colorings and sugar in milk, right, more kids will drink it. Yeah. And obviously now that's going to catch on. The apple board is going to work out that if they make toffee apples they'll eat more apples as well. Do you know what I mean? For me, there ain't no need to flavor the milk. Okay? There is sugar in everything. I know the ins and outs of those ingredients. It's in everything. Even

the milk hasn't escaped the kind of modern day problems. There's our milk. There's our carton. In that is nearly as much sugar as one of your favorite cans of fizzy pop. And they are having two a day. So, let me just show you. We've got one kid, here, having, you know, eight tablespoons of sugar a day. You know, there's your week. There's your month. And I've taken the liberty of putting in just the five years of elementary school sugar, just from milk. Now, I don't know about you guys, but judging the circumstances, right, any judge in the

whole world, would look at the statistics and the evidence, and they would find any government of old guilty of child abuse. That's my belief.

Now, if I came up here, and I wish I could come up here today, and hang a cure for AIDS or cancer, you'd be fighting and scrambling to get to me. This, all this bad news, is preventable. That's the good news. It's very very preventable. So, let's just think about, we got a problem here, we need to reboot. Okay so, in my world what do we need to do?

“There's our milk. There's our carton. In that is nearly as much sugar as one of your favorite cans of fizzy pop. And they are having two a day.”

Here is the thing, right. It can not just come from one source. To reboot and make real tangible change, real change, so that I could look you in the white of the eyes and say, "In 10 years time, the history of your children's lives, happiness -- and let's not forget, you're clever if you eat well, you know you're going to live longer, all of that stuff, it will look different. OK?"

### So, **supermarkets.**

Where else do you shop so religiously? Week in, week out. How much money do you spend, in your life, in a supermarket? Love them. They just sell us what we want. All right. They owe us, to put a food ambassador in every major supermarket. They need to help us shop. They need to show us how to cook, quick, tasty, seasonal meals for people that are busy. This is not expensive. It is done in some. And it needs to be done across the board in America soon, and quick. The big brands, you know, the food brands, need to put food education at the heart of their businesses. I know, easier said than done. It's the future. It's the



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only way.

**Fast food.** With the fast food industry you know, it's very competitive. I've had loads of secret papers and dealings with fast food restaurants. I know how they do it. I mean basically they've weaned us on to these hits of sugar, salt and fat, and x, y, and z. And everyone loves them. Right? So, these guys are going to be part of the solution. But we need to get the government to work with all of the fast food purveyors and the restaurant industry. And over a five, six, seven year period wean of us off the extreme amounts of fat, sugar, fat and all the other non-food ingredients. Now, also, back to the sort of big brands, labeling, I said earlier, is an absolute farce, and has got to be sorted.

**School.** Obviously in schools we owe it to them to make sure those 180 days of the year, from that little precious age of four, til 18, 20, 24, whatever, they need to be cooked proper fresh food from local growers on site. OK? There needs to be a new standard of fresh proper food for your children. Yeah?



Under the circumstances, it's profoundly important that every single American child leaves school knowing how to cook 10 recipes that will save their life. Life skills.

That means that they can be students, young parents, and be able to sort of duck and dive around the basics of cooking, no matter what recession hits them next time. If you can cook recession money doesn't matter. If you can cook, time doesn't matter.

**The workplace.** We hadn't really talked about it. You know, it's now time for corporate responsibility to really look at what they feed or make available to their staff. The staff are the moms and dads of America's children. Marissa, her father died in her hand, I think she'd be quite happy

if corporate America could start feeding their staff properly. Definitely they shouldn't be left out. Let's go back to the home. Now, look, if we do all this stuff, and we can, it's so achievable. You can care and be commercial. Absolutely. But the home needs to start passing on cooking again, for sure. For sure, pass it on as a philosophy. And for me it's quite romantic. But it's about if one person teaches three people how to cook something, and now they teach three of their mates, that only has to repeat itself 25 times, and that's the

whole population of America. Romantic, yes, but, most importantly, it's about trying to get people to realize that every one of your individual efforts makes a difference. We've got to put back what's been lost. Huntington Kitchen. Huntington, where I made this program, you know, we've got this prime time program that hopefully will inspire people to really get on this change. I truly believe that change will happen. Huntington's Kitchen. I work with a community. I worked in the schools. I found local sustainable

funding to get every single school in the area, from the junk, onto the fresh food. Six-and-a-half grand per school.

That's all it takes. Six-and-a-half grand per school. The Kitchen in 25 grand a month. Okay? This can do





[www.healthierusveterans.vs.us.gov](http://www.healthierusveterans.vs.us.gov)

5,000 people a year, which is 10 percent of their population. And it's people on people. You know, it's local cooks teaching local people. It's free cooking lessons guys, free cooking lessons in the main street. This is real, tangible change, real, tangible change. Around America, if we just look back now, there is plenty of wonderful things going on. There is plenty of beautiful things going on. There are angels around America doing great things in schools, farm to school set-ups, garden set-ups, education. There



[www.fedupwithschool lunch.blogspot.com](http://www.fedupwithschool lunch.blogspot.com)

are amazing people doing this already. The problem is they all want to roll out what their doing to the next school, and the next. But there is no cash. We need to recognize the experts and the angels quickly, identify them, and allow them to easily find the resource to keep rolling out what they're already doing, and doing well. Businesses of America need to support Mrs. Obama to do the things that she wants to do. And look, I know it's weird having an English person standing here before you talking about all this. All I

can say is I care. I'm a father. And I love this country. And I believe truly, actually, that if change can be made in this country, beautiful things will happen around the world. If America does it I believe other people will follow. It's incredibly important. When I was in Huntington, trying to get a few things to work when they weren't, I thought if I had a magic wand what would I do? And I thought, you know what? I'd just love to be put in front of some of the most amazing movers and shakers in America.



And a month later TED phoned me up and gave me this award. I'm here. So, my wish. Dyslexic, so I'm a bit slow. My wish is for you to help a strong sustainable movement to educate every child about food, to inspire families to cook again, and to empower people everywhere to fight obesity.

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