



How to Manage a Food Revolution in your School Kitchen



Big love to lunch ladies!

I have a message for school cooks everywhere: You are some of the most important people in America! You feed tomorrow's moms, dads, employees, leaders!

With your help, we can change the way kids eat and give them good health, good grades and the best start in life. A change in every school kitchen will change the whole of America, but without you, this can not happen.

So please, support the Food Revolution, your country needs you now!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jamie O'.



Jamie's Food Revolution in schools is about getting rid of the junk and replacing processed food with meals cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients. It starts in the kitchen and it's going to be up to you and your fantastic team of cooks to make it work. Take it slowly, plan things out and expect to make a few mistakes along the way. Just be prepared to keep trying and remember the reason you're doing this: it's for the kids in your school; it's their future on the line.

This pack tells you about the things we have learned and will help you start your own school food revolution. Use it with the catering recipes on www.jamiesfoodrevolution.com. They are for the two week menu cycle which is being used in schools in Huntington, WV. Additional dishes are being developed and will be added to the website, so keep going back to look for new ideas. You can also look at Chef Ann Cooper's site, which has many more, www.thelunchbox.org.

The website also has a section with advice for school Superintendants and Principals, and a list of other organisations across America, which can help you with training, food sourcing, farm-to-school programs and many of the other practicalities which you will have to think about.

The "original" recipes were developed on site in Huntington, WV. The other recipes were developed by school food consultants Sustainable Food Systems, LLC (<http://www.sustainablefoodsystems.com/>) for Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution. The team used Renegade Lunch Lady Ann Cooper's site for reference (<http://www.chefann.com/>) and recipes from the Massachusetts Farm-to-School Cook Book which is available to download from Amy Colter's site. (<http://www.amycotler.com>) as well as recipes from Jamie' UK School Dinners pack. We've added a note to let you know where they came from.



STEP 1 Make a plan

Use the menus as the backbone of your plan. They do half the work for you – giving you all the information on what dishes to prepare and when, what ingredients you need to order etc. Work out how long it will take to reorganize things and start replacing the processed food with your fresh meals. Plan it out with a countdown: one month, one week, one day before, and work out what needs to be ready by each date.

- Does anyone need to boost their knife skills or hygiene training to handle raw food?
- Who will prep the ingredients?
- Do you have the right equipment for food prep?
- Plan out the ordering and when it needs to be done by.
- Create a 3x5 sheet or dry erase board to hang on the kitchen wall, that has one line for menu, a second line for prep and a third line for ordering on the horizontal rows. The vertical rows will be the days of the week. Use this to get organized.
- Work out what support you will need out front from the rest of the school staff, in the serving area, assembly hall and classroom.
- Think of the challenges you might face and put together contingency plans.

STEP 2 Work it through with the staff

The cooks and kitchen staff need to get behind this if you're going to succeed. So work through any changes and issues with all of your kitchen team. Their collaboration is key to the success of your school's Food Revolution. Start by talking through the idea and see what everyone thinks. Consider any problems that might need to be dealt with to get the process started.

- Make a list of changes and get everyone involved. Go slowly and help them get it right.
- Why not try out one or two of the recipes at home on your families and see what they think. Suggest the rest of the team do the same to help them become familiar with the new ingredients, recipes and prep procedures.



- Don't just leave them to do it! Make sure you give each other loads of encouragement.

STEP 3 Check your staff schedule

Switching from processed and pre-prepared to fresh foods will change the way you need your staff to work. You may need to adjust the schedules and ask some of them to start earlier in the day. But some of the prep can be done the day before or even two days before. So look at their work rosters and see if you can find a way of changing those to accommodate the new menus without adding extra hours to the day.

STEP 4 Do a skills refresher

Some of your kitchen staff may need support to refresh their prep and cooking techniques. You will need to find out how much they know and work with them to help them learn how to make the new dishes.

It's really worth investing in training and mentoring. We have found that bringing in professional help to run a training day and give support in the kitchen during the first week can make the difference between success and failure.

STEP 5 When you're ready - tell everyone!

Launch the new menus.

- Get the superintendent to write to the school board.
- Get the principal to write to all of the parents to tell them what's happening and why you believe it's important.
- Show off your new dishes at parents' evenings.
- Put information about some of the new food on the school notice board to let the kids know too.
- Have an open day. Invite kids and parents to come and try your new dishes.



- Do an assembly and tell the whole school. Don't forget to talk about your delicious fresh ingredients.
- Before you serve lunch, announce to the students what you are serving. Also have it written down on a board when they come through the lunch line.



STEP 6 Get the kids involved!

- Give them small tasting cups of each new dish the first time you serve it.
- Don't take NO for an answer. If they don't like the look of the food because they haven't tried it before, don't give them an alternative until they've tasted it.
- Get them to give you ideas of things they want on the menu. Have an ideas box. It will probably be subject to abuse, but you'll get some good suggestions as well and the kids will be proud to see their ideas being served up as dish of the day. Invite the kids into the kitchen for a demonstration or cooking lesson and prepare one of your new dishes.
- Get teachers to teach your dishes in cooking class.
- Have teachers work with you to integrate the new school food in their lessons.

STEP 7 Change your school cafeteria

- Use the food revolution logo on the website and print out some new menu cards.
- Put out a basket of the ingredients on the counter top so kids know what's in the meal.
- Label each dish clearly.
- Put the new dishes first, it seems to encourage more people to try them.
- Make your new food feel special. Serve it with a knife and fork and, if you can find the extra budget, replace the meal trays with proper plates.
- If timing's a problem, see if you can work with the Principal to change the lunch hour, to keep the lines down and ensure everyone has time to sit down and enjoy the delicious meal you've cooked.



Core values for school food

F is for food quality

- Quality fresh **food** ingredients.
- Understanding **food**, and knowing how it should taste.
- Cooking **food** with love.

M is for must haves

- Every child **must have** protein, carbohydrate and vegetables on their plate.
- Children **must have** what they need, not just what they want.
- Children **must have** a try.

B is for belief

- **Belief** that you can do it.
- **Belief** that you are making a difference.
- **Belief** that you and your school cooks are some of the most important workers in the country today.

Feed Me Better!



Kitchen Equipment

To change from a processed to a fresh meal program it would be good to have the following basic equipment in the kitchen:

Large equipment:

- Combi oven
- Stovetop
- Steam kettle
- Tilting skillet
- Steamers

Small equipment:

- Institutional food processors (such as a Robot Coupe)
- Wand mixers (eg: Burmixers)
- Storage containers
- Pots
- Pans
- Strainers
- Refrigerators for storing meat and fresh produce separately
- Freezer space
- Sharp knives and cutting boards



Using the recipes and menu cycles

The recipes and menu cycles we've suggested aren't set in stone. We've compiled them to get you started. We've tried them out in Huntington, WV, over four months and we know they work.

- Take it slowly. Allow plenty of time for your kitchen staff and the kids to try out the new dishes and get used to them. Remember change isn't always easy.
- Don't be put off if something doesn't go to plan, try other recipes and build up your repertoire based on success. Over time this will work.
- Once you're up and running, you can add your own ideas too. Think of seasonal dishes, calendar events and special activities in the school which you can use to theme your menus.

Following the recipe

Be patient with yourself – following a recipe takes time and the more you practice, they faster you'll get. For recipes to work you need to follow them step-by-step. Once you have cooked each of the weekly menus a couple of times, your confidence will naturally increase and you'll learn to follow your instincts a little more.



Placing your orders

- Read through the menu for the week so you know what's coming up.
- Be well prepared with all the ordering. Thinking ahead and getting familiar with the weekly menu and all the ingredients will give you confidence to concentrate on preparing lovely food each day.
- Don't forget to check the order off when it's delivered to make sure it all came in as you expected, especially as you may be working with an unfamiliar list of supplies.
- As you switch over to fresh foods, remember to order in bulk as much as possible as this will help keep costs low. This is especially important with items that have a longer shelf life such as onions, carrots, cabbage, dried beans.

Preparing the salads

- These are best prepared on the day of use, with the exception of coleslaw and salad leaves, which can be done the day before. The leaves must be stored dry and covered in the fridge.
- Get all your salad ingredients in the fridge as soon as they are delivered so they do not deteriorate, with the exception of tomatoes, which should be kept in dry stores until ripe.
- All dressings can be made once a week and stored in plastic bottles or containers.
- Once a salad is dressed it will not keep as long, so always dress your salad leaves or vegetables at the last minute.
- Make the most of seasonal ingredients. There are loads of different leaves and crunchy veggies which look and taste great throughout the year. In season produce also tends to be cheaper.
- Keep changing your salads to keep the kids interested. We've found that the younger ones in particular like a bit of variation.
- Utilize unused portions to make special or 'composed' salads to add to a salad bar or as a topping on a salad. This is a great way to manage costs and keep the menu exciting and delicious.



Fruit and veggies

- Always plan ahead to the next day or two – that way any prep can be done when there's a spare pair of hands.
- There are basic ingredients that may repeat in each recipe throughout the week such as onions, carrots, garlic, ginger and chillies, which can all be prepped ahead, so work out the quantities you need for the week's recipes and order these things for a Monday. They can be prepped then and kept in the fridge so they're to hand when you need them. For example chop fresh garlic bulbs once a week. It sure beats the jarred stuff!
- As you get more confident with the recipes, you'll be able to adapt them to use up various fresh and leftover vegetables, so check what's in the fridge each day before you put the orders through.
- If you have processing equipment like shredders and dicers you should utilize these to help minimise the time it takes to prepare fresh produce.

Meat

- It's best to get your fresh meat order delivered the day before you need it, so you will be able to start cooking early and not waste time waiting for a delivery.
- Be sure to have a good plan for thawing frozen meat. Use a refrigerator over several days and not a sink with running water.
- By ordering a day in advance (other than Monday) your meat could be marinate for longer, preferably overnight, to let the flavours really soak through and make it even more delicious.
- If you're cooking chicken on a Monday you can put it in the marinade on Friday and leave it over the weekend in a very cold fridge.

Fish

- Any frozen fish can be ordered in advance and put in the freezer until needed.
- Don't forget that seasonal fish is usually cheaper.



Vegetarian Options

If you can, include a vegetarian option on the menu at least once a week. It will ensure that you are catering for the children in your school from vegetarian or vegan families, or who avoid meat for religious, health or ethical reasons. Cheese, eggs, tofu and pulses are good meat alternatives and, with the right sauces, herbs and spices, can taste just as delicious. We've found that many non-vegetarian kids will choose a vegetarian meal, and it's a great way to get all of the kids to eat more vegetables.

Dry stores

Again, read through the whole menu on Thursday or Friday and make a list of all the other bits you need, things like dried herbs and spices, canned beans or tomatoes, tortillas, oils and vinegars, flour and pasta and anything else on the recipe list other than fresh veggies and meat. These stores can all come in early in the week if you have the storage space. That way you won't have to worry about them or be caught out later in the week.

Desserts

When it comes to desserts 'everything in moderation' is the key. There is no sense in completely taking desserts off the menu because adults and kids love them. So we need to be a bit sensible about it. Things like fruit salad are the healthiest option, and you can stew any leftovers to include in a fruit crumble. Here are some guidelines to help you:

- Try serving fresh fruit as a dessert. If not every day, at least a couple of days a week.
- Use as little sugar as you can get away with, avoid high fructose corn syrup and replace refined sugar with unrefined sugar or honey where you can, or even pureed dried fruit.
- Try to balance the sweetness of the puddings with things like fresh fruit, natural yogurt and other accompaniments that are low in sugar and fat. For example, serve a chocolate sponge with a bit of light cream, not chocolate sauce or ice cream.
- Yogurts are good instead of cream – but make sure they are good-quality natural ones, not the ones full of additives and sugar.
- When serving desserts, make sure that you monitor closely who is having what so that they don't skip the main course and just have the pudding.



- A great alternative to ice cream is good-quality yogurt whizzed up with fruit then frozen until ready to serve.
- Try to avoid serving rich gooey cakes and high sugar, high fat things like flapjacks more than once a week.
- If you can afford it, replace the sweet pudding with little portions of cheese and biscuits now and then.

General tips

- When adding water or base sauce to a dish, always add it gradually as you may not need it all and can always add more at the end if necessary. Remember you can always add but never take away.
- Always taste each dish while cooking and think about flavours; add seasoning and any extra herbs or spices to taste.
- When using a veg prep machine, try and do all the vegetables you need for that day at the same time.
- Any fresh vegetable trimmings and stalks from herbs can be saved to go into your tomato base sauce.
- The menu is not set in stone, so be creative and utilize any extra fresh produce you may have or swap dishes from different days to suit your school's needs.
- Base sauces can be made in advance in bulk and stored in the fridge or freezer. Make them in bulk on Monday, then you can use them throughout the week.
- If you're using a few processed foods, read ingredient labels. If you don't know what's in it, do you really want to serve it? Ask your supplier to help you find cleaner alternatives.

Remember:

Keep it simple. One step at a time. Serve *real* food!

Have fun and be proud!