

# Taking Food Revolution to the masses

## ◆ Fresh look at lunch:

Hollis chef Liz Barbour is taking the fresh message to school lunchrooms around the state.

By **NANCY BEAN FOSTER**  
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**HOLLIS** — Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution is coming to New Hampshire as cooking instructor Liz Barbour takes on the celebrity chef's challenge to improve school lunches across the state.

Owner of the Hollis-based Liz Barbour's Creative Feast, Barbour has begun working

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Hollis mom Liz Barbour, cooking instructor and owner of The Creative Feast, is bringing celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution to New Hampshire schools.



## Food

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with cafeteria staff, food service directors and school administrations to do away with processed foods and give kids a chance to eat healthy lunches.

Inspired by famous chef Jamie Oliver's ongoing campaign to improve the way people eat called his "Food Revolution," which calls for an end to eating processed foods and a return to local fresh, whole foods, Barbour is reaching out to schools with ideas for making some changes.

Barbour said she became interested in improving the quality and nutrition of the food eaten both in school and at home about eight years ago while establishing her business as a cooking instructor.

"The more I did my classes, the more directed my programs came to be at preparing whole foods," Barbour said. She focused on fresh, raw, locally produced foods that hadn't been run through processing plants.

"The more processed the food, the more pesticides, preservatives, sodium and other

things they have," she said.

With her business well under way, Barbour began volunteering at Hollis Elementary, co-founding a wellness committee at the school, and eventually spending time in the school cafeteria to see how lunches were being made.

After that visit, she began doing research about school cafeterias all over the state, and found a few common themes. What she discovered is that cafeteria workers had often been denied the basic cooking training, nutritional background, and access to fresh, whole foods needed to prepare healthy lunches. On top of that, lunch programs have been saddled with using government surplus foods and following strict FDA guidelines that don't necessarily produce the most nutritious results.

In addition to the rules and regulations, canned foods from the government, and lack of training, the budget for school lunches in many schools is both tied up in red tape and not high enough to cover the cost of pro-

viding them.

But despite the complicated system, Barbour has figured out a few remedies that can bring change to the menu at most schools.

One of the first keys is to improve efficiency in school kitchens, said Barbour. "We need to teach the people how to use the stuff they have," she said.

There are cafeteria workers who have been preparing meals for decades who have never been taught how to use a knife properly, or to make use of expensive equipment that has been taken out of the box and never used. "We have filled these kitchens with professional cooking equipment and the people working there have never been shown how to use it," she said.

The result is that kids are being fed ready-made, processed, packaged food, filled with sugar instead of whole, fresh foods.

Barbour recently teamed up with the Raymond School District to step into the kitchen and help change the menu being served. What she found there

was a new food services director with energy and initiative to try some very new ideas.

Danielle Collins, with the backing of Superintendent Jean Richards, has stepped away from the old school fare and has reached out to local companies to enhance the lunch menu. Working with a local pizza place, Collins is bringing in freshly made pizzas once a week, made with whole-wheat crust and topped with the low-fat mozzarella cheese sent to the school by the government. Collins has also joined a food co-op and has worked with local farmers to buy fresh produce in season.

Barbour supplemented Collins' efforts by offering a training program for the kitchen staff, teaching them how to prepare the fresh foods, sharing tips and recipes for creating healthy foods that kids will eat, regardless of whether their in kindergarten or their senior year.

For more information on Barbour's programs, visit [www.thecreativefeast.com](http://www.thecreativefeast.com). Information on Jamie Oliver's campaign can be found at [www.jamieoliver.com](http://www.jamieoliver.com).