

During a time when childhood obesity has become a national concern, exercise and healthy eating are at the forefront of parents' and educators' minds. Numerous initiatives have evolved, such as Michelle Obama's Let's Move! and Chefs Move to Schools!, as well as the replacement of the USDA food pyramid with MyPlate, in an effort to promote healthy diets among children. However, some of the unsung heroes within the healthy food initiative are school and professional chefs. Across the country, chefs are revolutionizing food service programs and enticing students to try healthier alternatives.

As the country is beginning to realize the important role school chefs play, a recent episode of the Food Network's "Chopped" featured three Connecticut cafeteria workers. These school chefs competed by created meals that incorporated specific ingredients with the winner receiving \$10,000. The winning chef, an advocate of teaching students how to eat healthy, continually finds ways to incorporate vegetables into the meals she prepares at her high school. This begins to show how school chefs nationwide are making a commitment to their students' health.



For some schools, creating an interest for healthy meals among students is more than what is served on the daily menu. Many elementary, middle schools, and high schools have created programs that develop student chefs, giving them the skills to cook healthful meals at home and for their peers. Some programs have incorporated a cooking competition such as the Iron Chef while other programs have students preparing meals for the rest of the school. These cooking programs also teach young chefs how to incorporate local food with some visiting farmers' markets and others growing

ingredients in the school's very own garden. When cooking the meals themselves, students are more likely to try different ingredient combinations and make their friends excited to try them too. Student cooking programs are just another way to create a healthy change in schools, combating childhood obesity.

Restaurant and celebrity chefs are also tapping into the appetites of our youth with specific initiatives and ways to prepare appealing healthy entrées. Jamie Oliver's [Food Revolution](#) went into effect to help combat childhood obesity. Some of the main points of the Food Revolution include:

- More cooking at home
- Freshly cooked meals at school
- Cooking in the community

Over 600,000 have signed the petition, committed to the Food Revolution and enforcing change within children nutrition.

In addition to this movement, many professional chefs are visiting local schools to help spike an interest in healthy eating among students and share tips and tricks to preparing meals for the masses from scratch. The Chefs Move to Schools! initiative has helped to spark these culinary professionals'



interests. Many of these chef participants are able to recommend herbs that add flavor without the extra salt and educate schools on how to incorporate more fresh fruit and vegetables in fun ways. Some chefs are even holding demonstrations for students to share how they can make healthy meals and snacks at home. For other chefs they are making a personal commitment to their alma mater and trying to create healthy change with tasty recipes. No matter the reason, chefs' commitment nationwide is helping to elevate entrées to be more appetizing with a positive nutritional factor.

Lakeside is dedicated to enhancing food service programs for our youth. For over 65 years, Lakeside has served schools nationwide to help improve food safety, preparation, and efficiency. With your food service program's goals in mind, we can help design equipment to coincide with your current initiatives.

With numerous programs, dedicated school chefs, educated culinary professionals and an involved student and parent population, schools can be the perfect place to spread awareness. Educating our youth and developing an interest provides a more positive outlook for the future. School lunch is essential to feeding our youth nutritional value and a healthier appetite.

How are your school's chefs making students excited to try healthy meals?