

“Properly, with love, from scratch”: Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution

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Abstract

What to eat is of great concern to the US public; it is the subject of social organizing at many scales and the focus of significant academic discussion. This paper analyzes Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution (*JOFR*), a much discussed reality show that aired earlier this year in the US. English celebrity chef Oliver, well known in the UK for directing government and public attention to school lunch, brings his campaign to promote fresh cooked food to Huntington, West Virginia. Focusing critically in the paper on what Jamie over and under-emphasized, we also recognize the capacity of *JOFR* to encourage people to act on behalf of their own health and those they care about as well as to become engaged politically to change the food system. Specifically, we are concerned about *JOFR*’s similarity to past food reform efforts, the shaming of the overweight and unhealthy, the focus on a particular form of whiteness that masks the work of race and food, the show’s arbitrary designation of authentic food and *JOFR*’s promotion of heroic, antagonistic politics. A food revolution, we argue, needs to engage with structural aspects of the food system through collective action.

ⁱ Authors are members of the University of Minnesota Agri-food Reading Group. All had equal input and are listed in reverse alphabetical order.