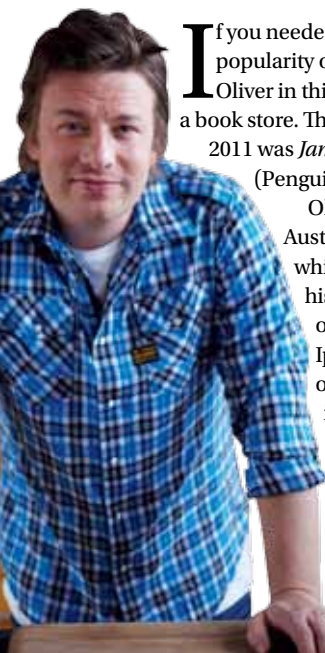


# Jamie's food revolution

Is the Ministry of Food a blueprint for healthier eating? Story by Alex Bernard



If you needed any evidence of the popularity of British chef Jamie Oliver in this country, just go to a book store. The best-selling title of 2011 was *Jamie's 30-Minute Meals* (Penguin). Lovely Jubbly! Oliver (left) is in Australia this week on a whirlwind tour to visit his Australian Ministry of Food centre in Ipswich (he will also open a new restaurant in Sydney) and do what he loves best, cook and educate people about the goodness and ease of making nutritious, low-cost meals. Oliver considers the Ministry of

Food to be the most important campaign he has ever worked on. It's all about keeping cooking skills alive and is based on a British initiative from World War II, when the government set up a national network of food advisors and cooking teachers to educate the public about food and nutrition so they would be able to feed themselves properly with the rations available. Taking inspiration from this, in 2008 Oliver decided he wanted to reintroduce this network of local food centres and cookery teachers. With support from the National Health Service and local councils, he started setting up Ministry of Food projects across the UK. Jamie's Ministry of Food has since gone global with centres in the United States and in Australia, including the inaugural site in Ipswich. Oliver is something of a rock star even in the increasingly crowded celebrity chef genre. In Ipswich last weekend he hosted an intimate cooking class with 20 participants; local identities, competition winners and lucky

audience members selected from the crowd on the day. Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale says the city worked very hard to secure the country's first Ministry of Food centre as part of their goal to become Australia's healthiest community. "We've not put our heads in the sand and pretended there is not an obesity problem. Every community is facing the same issues. The difference in Ipswich is that we recognise the problem and, with Jamie Oliver's help and support from the state government, we are offering everyone simple and healthy low-cost cooking classes," says Pisasale. Since the Ipswich Ministry of Food centre opened its doors in April 2011 it's been an overwhelming success with the people of Ipswich voting with their feet and tummies. More than 800 people have attended classes since it began. "Classes have been consistently well attended and run up to four times a day six days a week. They're also very affordable which makes it even

more appealing - \$10 per class, \$100 for the 10-week program and there are also concessions available. I'm sure Jamie's visit will give added momentum and boost attendances long-term," says Pisasale. Logan City is also reaping the benefits of Oliver's passion for spreading the word. They are the first of many communities across Queensland to benefit from Oliver's Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen. Classes kicked off in January with the purpose-built kitchen classroom on wheels delivering a five-week basic cooking course, comprised of one 90-minute class per week. With just eight people per class, students get specialised attention from two food trainers and a volunteer to assist during class. The waiting list has nearly 80 people on it. Michelle Griffin, Healthy Communities coordinator with Logan City Council, says 240 people have completed the five-week courses to date. Participants learn Jamie's hints and shortcuts to cooking simple, nutritious and tasty meals using fresh ingredients. The course also covers meal planning, budgeting and shopping tips as well as key nutritional information. Jamie's Ministry of Food truck is stationed at the Logan Art Gallery car park on the corner of Wembley Road and Jacaranda Avenue, Logan Central. People are invited to a Come and See afternoon on 31 March from 2pm to 5pm.

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