

News from Around the Table



Keeping Up with Inflation

If you've listened to the news at all, you know that prices of everything are rising: food, fuel and housing. These are basic needs for everyone, and challenging to afford, but especially for those already struggling financially as outlined in these recent articles and podcasts:

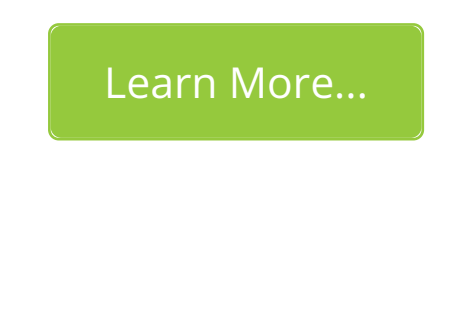
- [Boston Globe - 3/27/22](#)
- [NPR - 4/12/22](#)
- [New York Times - 4/13/22](#)

Open Table is keenly aware of this growing issue as the number of individuals and families who find their way to us increases weekly. And we are committed to welcoming all who come, offering healthy choices and culturally appropriate food as well as giving people access even when they can't get to us.

How are we doing this? By partnering with schools like the [Robinson School](#) in Lowell, to provide food to their students. This program will ultimately include a freezer and pantry on site where frozen prepared meals and kids' bags and snacks can be stored. Last week we distributed 40 meals; this week it was 102! It's already gaining praise from the kids and families who appreciate the meals and additional food that make feeding a family easier.

We're also expanding our mobile pantry to bring food to communities where there are people with transportation and mobility issues. And when the [Greater Boston Food Bank](#) experiences food shortages and local farmers haven't yet started harvesting the great produce we rely on, we contract with local concerns like [Holden Produce](#) for fruits and vegetables and [Market Basket](#) for milk, paid for with funding by supporters including [The Crawford Idema Family Foundation](#).

As the need grows, so do our programs. We can only do this with your support, so thank you for continuing to help us feed people in the community.



[Learn More...](#)

Prepare to be Chopped!

Our oh-so-fun chef competition is back! This dynamic event features three local chefs battling it out onstage in a fast-paced cooking challenge, and YOU help the judges decide who wins. The festivities will include food, drinks and a fun atmosphere as we raise money to continue fighting food insecurity in our communities.

Plan to join us June 24 at Sanctuary, a Maynard event space located at 82 Main Street. Tickets will be on sale as of May 1st.

Or be a part of the program now! Place an advertisement or message in our program book or become a sponsor! Great ways to show your support of our mission. Full details can be found [HERE](#).

Kitchen Manager Jonathan Hackney Joins Open Table

As we continue to build our capabilities in providing healthy and culturally appropriate meals to our clients, Open Table welcomed **Jonathan Hackney** to the team as our new Kitchen Manager in April. Jed, as he is known to family and friends, has a broad background in the culinary arts in both big and small hotels, restaurants, and food service. With our continued focus on being a solution to rising food insecurity and meeting the needs of our community, we're very pleased to have Jed on board. We had a chance to interview Jed via email this week where he shared a little bit about himself. While his focus will be on planning and providing nutritious meals for our clients, we're particularly interested in learning more about his Executive Pastry experience! Highlights from the interview are below and were edited slightly for space and clarity:



Where are you from originally?

I am originally from Vermont. I have lived in Massachusetts since 2007 and currently live in Chelmsford.

What interested you in joining Open Table?

I worked with the Boston unhoused population for a number of years and prefer to use my skills to help those in need whenever possible.

How did you become a chef?

I was an assistant innkeeper on Killington mountain and picked up a part time job at a small bakery. I was hooked right away and knew that cooking was going to be my career of choice.

Where have you worked?

*New England Culinary Institute- Adjunct Instructor
Ritz Carlton Hotels - Executive Pastry Chef
Harvest Restaurant - Executive Pastry Chef
Langham Hotel - Executive Pastry Chef
Boston Homeless Services - Executive Chef
Basil Tree Catering - Culinary Manager*

What's your favorite food or dish to make?

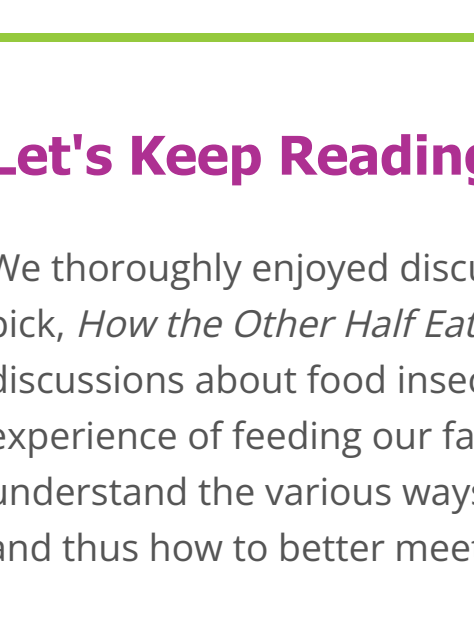
I am currently going through a BBQ and smoked meat phase.

We know you only just started, but what do you like best about Open Table so far?

I love that I'm able to come in every day and work with staff and volunteers who are committed to the vision of Open Table.

Anything else you'd like to tell us about you?

I'm happy to talk with anyone who has questions about what we do in the kitchen.



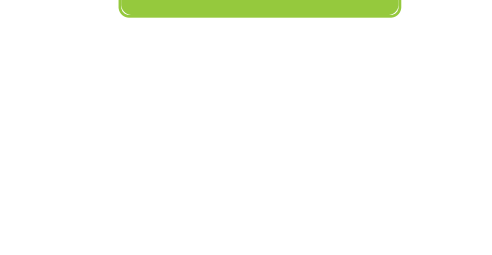
[Book List](#)

Learning About Food Insecurity

Looking to open your kids' eyes and hearts to what it means to help others? Look no further than the [Concord Free Public Library](#)! The library has a number of books on hand that talk about food insecurity; see the list [HERE](#). These age-relevant stories not only give children a better understanding of what their classmates and neighbors might be experiencing, but allow those children actually experiencing food insecurity to feel seen and understood.

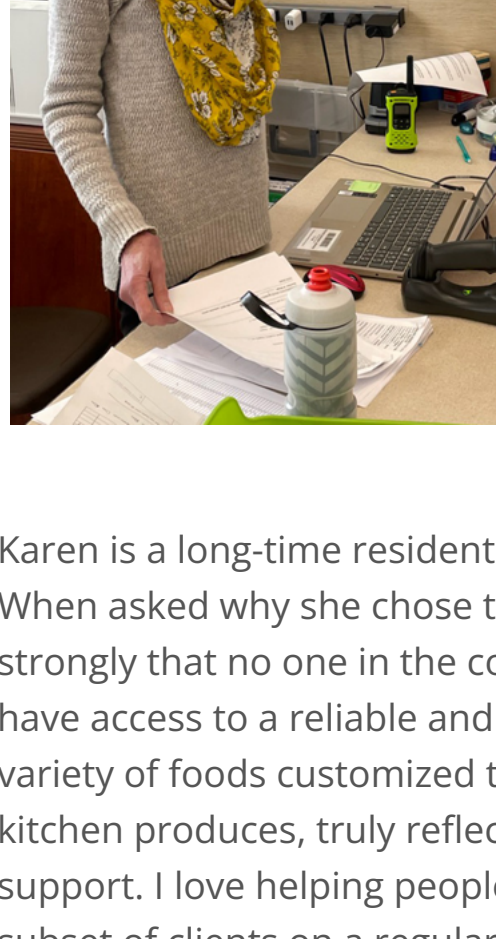
Let's Keep Reading and Talking!

We thoroughly enjoyed discussing our latest Book Club pick, *How the Other Half Eats*, with many of you. Having discussions about food insecurity and the shared experience of feeding our families helps us better understand the various ways the many "other halves" eat and thus how to better meet the needs of our clients.



[Email Us](#)

We'd love to hear your thoughts: on the book, on possible solutions, or on what books we should read next. Email us at events@opentable.org with your ideas.



Volunteer Spotlight

Chances are that you have already met Karen who volunteers for shifts at Open Table in nearly every area of the pantry. She works around 20 hours per week on shifts and even more behind the scenes. Karen works on the phone team making calls to clients to help them with their online orders, shops those orders on pick and pack teams, works both distribution and the client administration desk during the drive-by pantry and cooks in the kitchen specializing in vegetarian meals. She also serves as the kitchen coordinator working to schedule volunteers for the cooking and dishwashing shifts to assure the kitchen runs smoothly.

Karen is a long-time resident of West Concord, having lived in the area for over 30 years. When asked why she chose to donate her time to Open Table, she responded: "I feel strongly that no one in the community should experience food insecurity, and all should have access to a reliable and healthy food resource. Open Table's approach to offering a variety of foods customized to the clients, combined with the wonderful meals the kitchen produces, truly reflects the mission of Open Table which I wholeheartedly support. I love helping people and giving time is the perfect way to do so. I speak with a subset of clients on a regular basis and hear the gratitude in their voices for what we provide-- it is truly amazing. Volunteering has also given me opportunities to make new connections and meet a whole group of terrific, caring people whom I never would have met had I not volunteered here."

Favorite vegetable?

Hands down, roasted cauliflower! And kale runs a very close second--raw in salads.

Restaurant or local business to recommend?

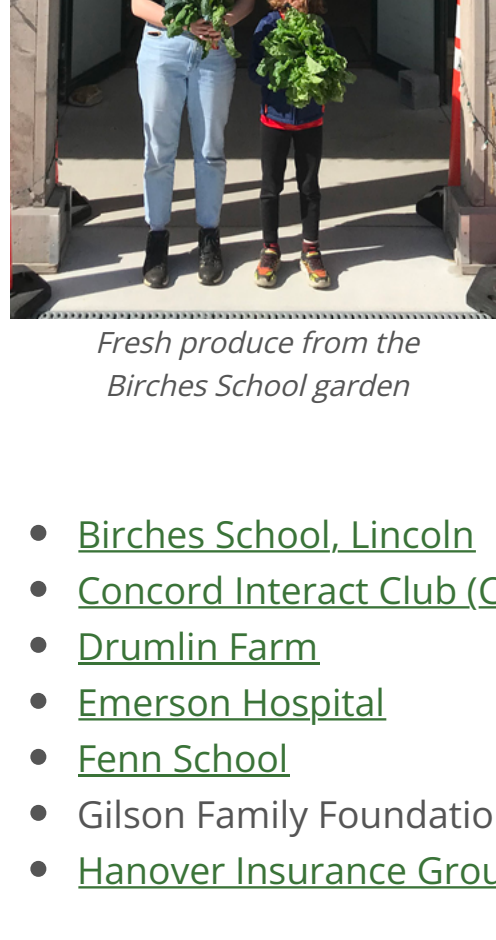
[Nashoba Bakery](#) has the best bread and sandwiches; [Marshall Farm](#) for fresh veggies and [West Side Creamery](#) in Acton for homemade ice cream!

Afghan Refugee Resettlement

We recently made our final delivery of groceries to resettling Afghan refugee families. With your help and that of our partner organizations, including the [International Institute of New England](#) and [Kataluma](#), 340 individuals received almost 35,000 pounds of food to prepare their own meals to help transition to their new homes. This was a great learning experience for Open Table, teaching us more about cultural nutrition and food needs. Of course, we will continue to support these new neighbors and any others who come to Open Table.



Afghan men cooking in their new home



Fresh produce from the Birches School garden

Rescued, Grown, and Collected

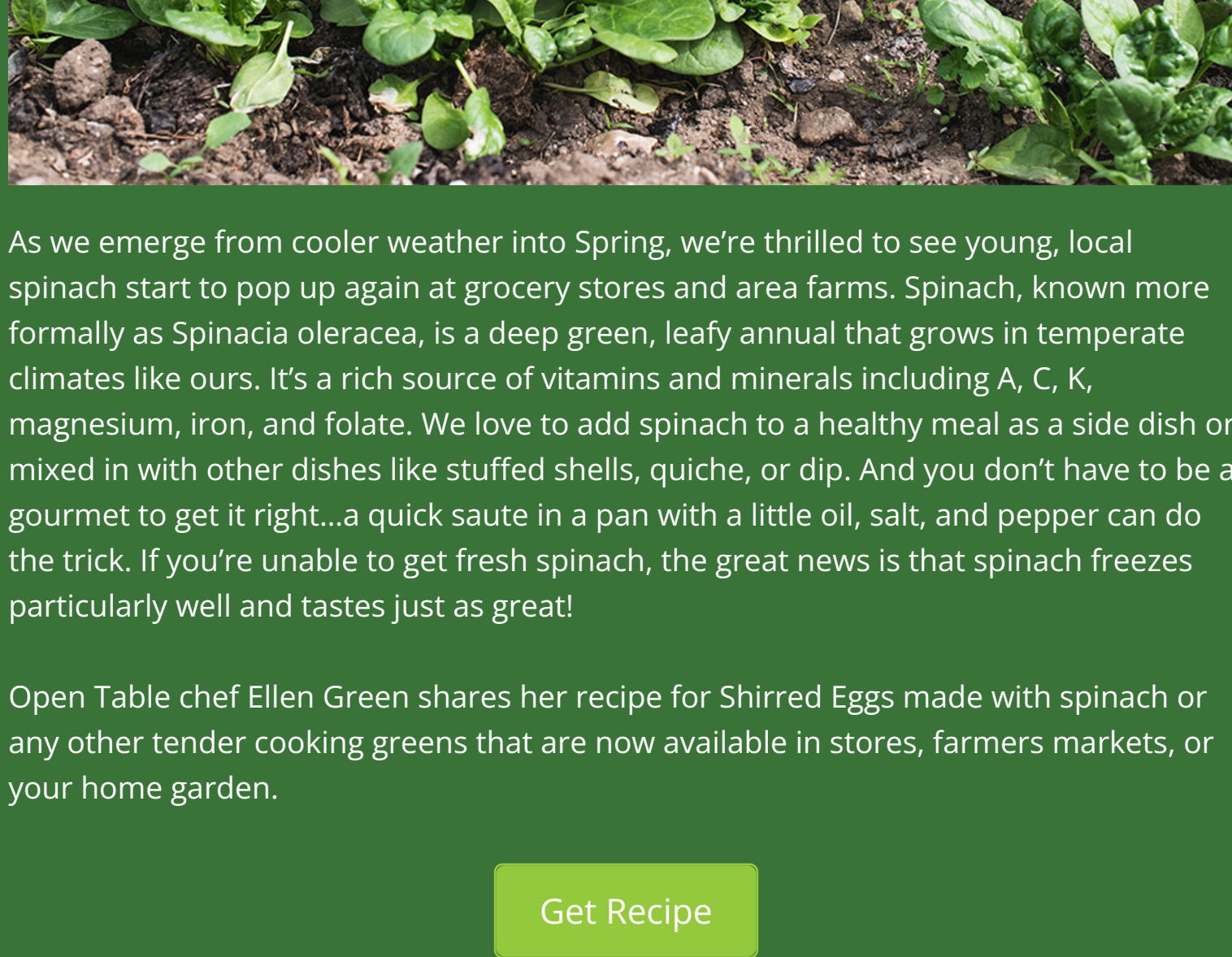
We are so grateful to have partnerships with many wonderful organizations that are rescuing, growing, and collecting food donations and supporting our mission financially. We're proud to partner with [Lovin' Spoonfuls](#) and appreciate the contribution 26,365 lbs of rescued food in 2021 for our clients. [Fenn School's](#) annual food drive collected over 5,000 pounds of food this year. And the 2-3 grade class at [Birches School](#) recently made their first delivery of lovely fresh kale, spinach, and chard from their new cultivation project garden. Thank you to these and many others who help us spread more love, less hunger each week.

- [Birches School, Lincoln](#)
- [Concord Interact Club \(CMS\)](#)
- [Drumlin Farm](#)
- [Emerson Hospital](#)
- [Fenn School](#)
- [Gilson Family Foundation](#)
- [Hanover Insurance Group](#)

- [Hanscom AFB Commissary](#)
- [Lincoln Sudbury Lacrosse](#)
- [St Matthew's United Methodist Church](#)
- [Irene's Parish, Carlisle](#)
- [CROP Walk/Trinitarian Congregational Church](#)
- [Willard School, Concord](#)

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Fun Food Facts: Spinach



As we emerge from cooler weather into Spring, we're thrilled to see young, local spinach start to pop up again at grocery stores and area farms. Spinach, known more formally as *Spinacia oleracea*, is a deep green, leafy annual that grows in temperate climates like ours. It's a rich source of vitamins and minerals including A, C, K, magnesium, iron, and folate. We love to add spinach to a healthy meal as a side dish or mixed in with other dishes like stuffed shells, quiche, or dip. And you don't have to be a gourmet to get it right...a quick saute in a pan with a little oil, salt, and pepper can do the trick. If you're unable to get fresh spinach, the great news is that spinach freezes particularly well and tastes just as great!

Open Table chef Ellen Green shares her recipe for Shirred Eggs made with spinach or any other tender cooking greens that are now available in stores, farmers markets, or your home garden.

[Get Recipe](#)



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