



October 2018

Waste Not: Josephine Liang Gives Day-Old Food New Value--And Helps Fund Nutritious Meals for London's School Children

Emily Westbrook

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine>



Part of the [Food Security Commons](#), and the [Food Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Westbrook, Emily (2018) "Waste Not: Josephine Liang Gives Day-Old Food New Value--And Helps Fund Nutritious Meals for London's School Children," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 106 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol106/iss3/8>

This Features is brought to you for free and open access by the Colby College Archives at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

GOOD WORKS

Colby alumni impact the world in many ways every day.

In our “Good Works” section, we introduce you to alumni who are using their Colby education to make a difference in their communities.



WASTE NOT

JOSEPHINE LIANG GIVES DAY-OLD FOOD NEW VALUE—AND HELPS FUND NUTRITIOUS MEALS FOR LONDON’S SCHOOL CHILDREN.

BY EMILY WESTBROOKS '06

On Josephine Liang’s first day at UWC Mahindra College in India, she opened the school handbook to find a statistic on the first page that would stick with her for more than a decade. The cost of one semester at UWC, the handbook explained, could fund the education of 40 school children in the local area.

In other words, Liang knew that her education at UWC, and later as a Davis Scholar at Colby, came with responsibility.

With that handbook statistic still in mind, Liang ’14 eventually started DayOld Eats, an organization that seeks to reduce food waste and food poverty— and in the process make education more attainable for low-income children in greater London. She is part of a growing trend of food redistribution across the UK and the British Isles, seeking to remedy the estimated 10 million tons of food and drink wasted in the UK each year.

She and her business partner, London local Michael Scott, lead a team of 360 volunteers that collects day-old but still delectable treats from large and small bakeries around London (which would otherwise have to pay to dispose of their excess goods). Within 24 hours, DayOld Eats repackages those baked goods and sells them to startups, or uses them to cater meetings for large offices.

The proceeds go directly to Magic Breakfast, an organization that fights food poverty by distributing a nutritious breakfast to kids who are receiving free lunch in area schools—with more than half of children qualifying in the city’s more impoverished boroughs. “It’s a little like Robin Hood,” Liang said.



She works out of coworker spaces in Tottenham and East London. As bankers and business people ducked in and out of black taxis on Christopher Street, Liang traced—over tea and, yes, day-old pastries—the events that followed the epiphany prompted by the UWC handbook.

A Colby course in health psychology started her thinking about the deeper impacts of food poverty. The course showed the correlation between food behavior and self-control, showing a connection between a restricted diet and reckless behaviors unrelated to food, like failing to use a condom. “That was the beginning of my interest in people’s relationships with food. It opened my eyes,” she said.

Liang, who was raised in Hong Kong, was affected in a similar way on her semester abroad in Copenhagen by an unexpected custom: dumpster diving. Unlike the United States, where retrieving food from the trash would be viewed as an extreme consequence of poverty, those in Copenhagen had a different perspective. “It was the cool thing to do,” Liang said. “You’d go in, take the whole bag, and everyone had a party with the pastries we couldn’t afford otherwise.”

Even then, she envisioned a nonprofit that would create a less wasteful food chain.

Liang majored in psychology at Colby, with a chemistry minor. She went on to earn a master’s degree in global health science at Oxford, followed by a fellowship with Year Here, a London-based platform for graduates to find solutions to some of the city’s toughest social problems.

DayOld Eats was born.

“

IT’S A LITTLE LIKE ROBIN HOOD.”

—Josephine Liang '14
on her business selling day-old baked goods to fund free lunches for disadvantaged school children.

The organization is now working on another program based on the popular—but typically expensive—recipe-box trend in the United States. Liang works directly with the Camden Council in London to develop recipe boxes filled with surplus or imperfect produce and ingredients from local farmers. DayOld Eats is collaborating with local cooking groups to find delicious family recipes, like curries and pasta dishes—the ingredients for which will fill each recipe box. The recipes are then tweaked by a nutritionist to be as healthy and adaptable as possible, and

the boxes themselves will be designed by 200 children in a pilot program.

“I won’t say it’s not hard work,” Liang said of her role as one of two employees at DayOld Eats. “Colby gave me a great education, so I’m not worried about finding a job. But this is a choice. It’s about doing what you think is meaningful.”