

Fighting hunger one T-shirt, one meal at a time



Food Editor Deborah Pankey sports her Hunger Action Month T-shirt for the Northern Illinois Food Bank's Go Orange hunger awareness initiative.

George LeClaire | Staff Photographer

By [Deborah Pankey](#)

Sure, I find things to complain about ... the deafening noise of cicadas, dog residue on the jogging path, my teenager's penmanship ... but when it comes to food, I certainly can't complain. My refrigerator and pantry are stocked, and my family eats three meals a day.

Yet, I know that other families within my community don't have it that good.

That's why tomorrow I'll be wearing a Hunger Action Month T-shirt. Even though orange is not in my color wheel, I'll "Go Orange" to help the Northern Illinois Food Bank in its effort to raise awareness that people are going hungry in suburbs and communities throughout the state and the nation.

Here are some staggering statistics:

- 425,000 people in Cook and its surrounding 12 counties face hunger.
- One in five children in northern Illinois faces hunger.

- A 2013 report from the Brookings Institute indicated that, since 2000, the number of poor in U.S. suburbs has increased 64 percent. Locally, the number of people living in poverty in the suburbs almost doubled between 2000 and 2011 to 724,233.

If you want to be part of the solution, there are plenty of opportunities.

Donate \$10 and receive one of these stylish shirts (the cost of shipping is on you). Wear the shirt throughout September's Hunger Action Month. Every \$1 donated gets stretched to provide \$8 worth of groceries.

[Volunteer](#) at Northern Illinois Food Bank centers in Geneva, Park City or Loves Park. Those centers serve 60,000 people each week through their programs and partner feeding programs. Help is needed at the warehouses doing tasks like sorting, evaluating, cleaning and repackaging donated and purchased food and nonfood products. Schedule yourself for a shift or take your family, your book group or your soccer team for a few hours of service.

Host a [food drive or fundraiser](#). Raise \$150, and you can provide 10 food-filled back packs. Each pack contains enough food to feed three children over a weekend. Raise \$300, and you can ensure 10 families of eight receive a traditional holiday meal.

Dine out. [Download the postcard at solvehungertoday.org/HAM and then head to a participating restaurant](#) between Thursday and Sept. 13, and 10 percent of your bill goes to the food bank. Restaurants from Aurora to Libertyville are on the list, as are many suburban Panera Bread Bakery Cafes and Oberweis Ice Cream and Dairy Stores.

Hungry for adventure: Alfie and Emelia think they're happy with the gooey, cheesy takeout pizza slices they stuff into their mouths. And they are, at least until their worldly aunt, Zia Donatella, comes to visit.

Determined to show the youngsters how a home-cooked meal is better than the best takeout pizza, Zia's homemade fare magically transports the brother and sister to the streets of Naples in Giada De Laurentiis's "Recipe for Adventure: Naples!"

This week [De Laurentiis, the same De Laurentiis of Food Network fame](#), launches the first two books in her new children's chapter book series (aimed at kids 7 to 11) that introduces readers to the world's great food cities. "Paris!" also comes out this week; a third adventure is promised in January 2014.

The breezy hardcover books run 130-plus pages and contain illustrations every few pages and two kid-friendly recipes on tear-out cards. Along the way readers discover the power — both real and intangible — of home cooking.

To celebrate her latest achievement, De Laurentiis will visit Naperville's Pfeiffer Hall, 310 E. Benton Ave. at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 9, for a presentation and Q-and-A session.

"When I was a kid my family did a lot of traveling, so I was constantly buried in a book," De Laurentiis recalls. "And even though we went to a lot of exciting places, some of my greatest adventures were through reading. ... Now I have my own exciting story that I am living, but I wanted to connect with those kids out there that maybe do feel different, too, or have a hard time fitting in for whatever reason."

The event is free, but tickets are required. Stop in at [Anderson's Bookshop](#), 123 W. Jefferson Ave. in downtown Naperville, or call the store at (630) 355-2665.

Preserving preferences: When it comes to preserving the harvest — be it cucumbers, peaches or tomatoes — men and women look at things differently.

Women are into canning and making jams, while men lean toward pickling and fermenting, according to a consumer survey conducted by kitchen retailer Sur La Table. The survey also showed that men are two to four times more interested than women in smoking and curing as preserving methods.

In all respects but pickling, I stand with my sisters. I've already made one batch of pickles from my garden cukes, and I will be making a few more before the season ends.

I generally make my own spice blend, but I was tempted to try the Backyard Farmer Pickling Kit when it came across my desk.

This kit, marketed by St. Charles-based Gourmet Specialty Foods, makes pickling foolproof. The kit contains four different brines: Polish dill, kosher dill, sweet, and bread and butter. Mix a packet with 2½ pounds of cucumbers (or your veggie of choice), vinegar and sugar to make four pints of pickles that can be enjoyed just 24 hours later.

The kit even includes reusable plastic pint jars, cute labels and a template for making fabric lid covers for giftable pickles.

I have kosher dills in jars right now. The brine was a brighter yellow (turmeric, I imagine) than I'm used to, but produced slightly salty and very pleasing pickles. I chopped some into my tuna salad just this morning. I plan to try the Polish brine packet on green beans later this month.

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