

Hackney is one of the most diverse places in the UK. In this regular feature, we profile the borough's great & good or just plain interesting

## hackneypeople

# Healthy people, healthy planet

**F**ROM reggae and grime journalist, to university lecturer and activist, Sarah Bentley has had her finger in many pies. Now, as project coordinator of the Made in Hackney local food kitchen, she is at the forefront of a food revolution.

Sarah moved to Hackney 12 years ago, initially drawn by its burgeoning music scene, but became increasingly interested in the eco-friendly, hyper-local, food-growing projects that were springing up all over the borough.

She joined the Stoke Newington-based social enterprise Growing Communities as an apprentice farmer in 2011. A year later, she graduated to working as a 'patchwork farmer', growing her own food to sell. Sarah went on to co-found Made in Hackney with Joshana Lovage, after securing money from the Big Lottery Fund, in October 2012.

The charity provides a range of classes and courses on how to prepare nutritional, healthy food from local, organic sources.

The kitchen itself is a product of sustainability, with units made from melted vending machine

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cups, charity shop-sourced crockery, plus an on-site wormery to produce fertiliser.

Community classes take place in the Made in Hackney kitchen, which is under Food for All on Cazenove Road, N16, every other Sunday, with a suggested donation of £5, although no one is turned away due to lack of funds.

People most in need – such as low-income families, teen carers and people with diet-related health issues – can also take advantage of free, six-week courses which develop practical skills in everything from urban foraging to healthy eating on a budget and growing your own organic food.

Sarah says: “The free courses are led by professional cookery teachers who want to share their skills with the community. There is always a great atmosphere.”

Every Saturday there are also masterclasses in topics including raw food detox, healthy baking, and homemade cosmetics, which

help to fund the free courses.

The kitchen doesn't use any meat, and Sarah explains how people are under a misconception that they need to eat meat in every meal.

She says: “People don't realise how much they are over-consuming meat. For health and environmental benefits we should aim to eat meat zero to twice a week, maximum.”

Made in Hackney is founded on four core beliefs: food should be local, ideally organic, seasonal and plant-based. What Sarah advocates most is the marriage between eating well and living sustainably. Organic food doesn't have to cost the earth, she says, and the kitchen teaches people how to obtain pesticide-free food for less.

“We're lucky in Hackney to have a wide range of fresh, healthy food available. For instance, Growing Communities has a veg box scheme, which has a discount for pensioners,” she adds.

Lottery funding ends in the spring and Made in Hackney is set to start a campaign next month to raise the £12,000 needed to continue to run the free courses.



Made In Hackney community cookery class

### MORE INFO

For more info on MiH, visit: [madeinhackney.org](http://madeinhackney.org); to donate, visit: [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/made-in-hackney](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/made-in-hackney)



Photo: Kate Beatty  
[www.kate-beatty.co.uk](http://www.kate-beatty.co.uk)

Sarah Bentley is the project coordinator of the Made in Hackney local community food kitchen

### Curriculum Vitae: Sarah Bentley

- 1981 Born in Nottingham
- 1999 Studies fashion promotion and journalism at London College of Fashion
- 2001 Moves to Hackney
- 2009 Deputy Editor of Arise magazine
- 2011 Apprentice with Growing Communities
- 2011 Freelance journalist for the Ecologist
- 2012 Patchwork farmer at Growing Communities
- 2012 Opens the Made in Hackney local food kitchen