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Chef Jamie Oliver, True Believer In Coming UK Sugar Tax, Fights 'Patronizing Nonsense' Label

Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver has urged the British government to [be bold with a sugar tax, which Mr. Oliver says](#) would make a big difference in the health of British children. He makes the case in [Sugar Rush](#), calling for a three-year tax at 20% per liter. But a Conservative MP has called [Mr. Oliver's](#) campaign “patronising nonsense.” Maybe, but the [Mail on Sunday](#) reports that a Conservative-led health committee is expected to endorse it even though Prime Minister David Cameron [ruled it out](#) last month.

Mr. Oliver expressed confidence that the tax would cut soda sales. But if his tax doesn't work, it should be dropped. He is lobbying hard to give the tax a try. It fits his [Naked Chef persona, stripping down](#) recipes and presenting the bare essentials. He has tried before for a soda tax. Earlier this year, he added his own 'sugar tax' on sweet drinks in his restaurants when the U.K. government refused to introduce one.



Mr. Oliver's own version was an add-on charge of 10 pence (about 15 cents) for every drink containing added sugar. He's helping to underscore the dangers of sugar consumption and sending a message to U.K. government to get off its bum and take action against childhood obesity. Mr. Oliver has spoken passionately about his [10 pence 'sugar tax' on fizzy drinks](#):

6 I've seen first-hand the heartbreaking effects that poor diet and too much sugar is having on our children's health and futures. Young children are needing multiple teeth pulled out under general anaesthetic and one in three kids [is] now leaving primary school overweight or obese. Soft drinks are the biggest single source of sugar among school-age kids and teenagers and so we have to start here."

Mr. Oliver says that his four children drink mainly water or diluted fruit juice. He believes in healthy drinks, such as putting freshly cut lemons, oranges or strawberries into iced water. The U.K.'s David Cameron has refused to introduce a soda tax. But this time Mr. Oliver might be getting more traction. Meanwhile, Mexico's soda tax is under siege, with [Mexico's congress being accused of caving to the soda industry](#).

Mexico introduced a soda tax in January 2014, but the government is moving to halve the tax if the sugar content of a drink is less than five grams per 100 millilitres. The move is reigniting debate in Mexico and elsewhere. The first U.S. soda tax was in Berkeley, California. The beverage industry reportedly spent about \$2.3 million in Berkeley and failed to stop the measure. More money was thrown at larger and more influential San Francisco, where a soda tax was defeated.

Yet famously liberal Berkeley was still seen as a pivotal victory that could mean more soda taxes in more mainstream cities. Some figures suggest that if the soda tax goes national, there will be huge health gains, perhaps preventing 100,000 cases of heart disease, 8,000 strokes and 26,000 deaths. Soda and junk food taxes are [sin taxes](#) to control behavior, but they also raise revenue. With obesity, diabetes and other health problems on the rise, junk food taxes are hardly a novel concept.

But they have been hard fought and harder to pass. A tax exempt Native American Tribe, the Navajo Nation, is the first jurisdiction in America to impose a broad junk food tax. The Navajos passed a 2% sales tax on pastries, chips, soda, desserts, fried foods, sweetened beverages, and other products with "minimal-to-no-nutritional value." [The sales tax will generate an](#)

[estimated \\$1 million a year](#) in 110 tribal chapters for greenhouses, food processing and storage facilities, traditional foods cooking classes, community gardens, farmers' markets, etc.

According to the Indian Health Service, about 25,000 of the Navajo Nation's [300,000 members](#) have type-2 diabetes. Another 75,000 are pre-diabetic. There is rampant hypertension and cardiovascular disease. The legislation was vetoed three times by Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly [because of questions about how the tax would be regulated](#). There have been worries over the potential impact on small business owners and consumers. But eventually, the tax gained favor. Who will be next? Mr. Oliver hopes the U.K.

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