

EGG or OEUFs

Eggs are versatile, good value food and have a tremendous number of uses in all kinds of cooking. They are an essential ingredient of most cakes and of many other dishes, such as sauces and hot and cold puddings. Nutritionally, they are rich in protein (1 egg contains about the same amount of protein as 50gms. of meat) and fat also contain Vitamin A, Vitamins of the B complex and useful amounts of Iron and Calcium.

Although the eggs of many different types of bird can be eaten, the one most widely available is that of the hen or female chicken. Hens are domestic fowl, usually kept under various conditions, for the sole purpose of producing eggs. Over 90% of egg producers keep hens under 'battery' condition, that is they are crowded into small cages, row upon row in huge barns. The hens never leave their cages and are automatically watered and fed a precise diet. Although this sort of intensive farming produces a huge quantity of eggs, the cramped conditions can be unhealthy, both for the hens and for the people who eventually consume their eggs.

There are a number of alternative ways of keeping hens for egg production and many farmers are changing their methods in response to public demand for healthier eggs. Today, on supermarket shelves, it is common to see a variety of eggs bearing different labels.

Types of Eggs -

- 1) **Free Range** - This eggs are produced by birds that have continuous day time access to open air runs mainly covered with vegetation, and with a maximum number of 1000 hens per hectre (405 per acre.). Eggs from hens that are truly allowed to range freely, to pick and choose whatever they like to eat, are less easily found but can often be bought directly from the farm.
- 2) **Semi-intensive** - This egg production involves housing hens so that they have continuous daytime access to open air runs mainly covered with vegetation and with a maximum number of 4000 hens per hectre (1619 per acre.).
- 3) **Deep-litter** - This egg come from hens that are kept in hen houses with a maximum number of (seven) 7 hens per square meter of floor space.
- 4) **Perchery** - This eggs are also sometimes called by the somewhat misleading name of 'BRAN'eggs. Hens producing these eggs are also kept in hen houses, but under much more crowded conditions than under the deep-litter system - up to 25 hens per square meter of floor space.

Buying & Storing of Eggs -

Egg Sizes - Eggs are usually sold in boxes of 6 or 12. Under EC regulations, they are graded for sizes as follows :
Size 1 - Over 70gms.
Size 2 - 65 - 70gms.
Size 3 - 60 - 65gms.
Size 4 - 55 - 60gms.
Size 5 - 50 - 55gms.
Size 6 - 45 - 50gms.
Size 7 - below 45gms.

Unless a particular egg size is specified in a recipe, use size 3 or 4 eggs. It dose not matter if they are white or brown, there is no difference in taste or nutritional value; the simple explanation is that varying breeds of hen produces different coloured eggs. The colour of the yolk also varies depending on what the hen eats.

Storing Eggs - Eggs are best kept in a rack in a cool, dry place preferably under refrigeration. If you store them in a refrigerator, keep them well away from the ice compartment (there is often a special egg storage racks, perhaps in the door) and away from foods like cheese fish or onions whose smells may transfer to the eggs.
Store eggs pointed end down and use them at room temperature; eggs that are too cold will crack when put into boiling water and are also difficult to whisk.
If you buy free range eggs which alive dirty shells, do not attempt to wash them with the water, as this could transfer any organisms present to the raw egg inside.

Using of Eggs in Cooking -

1. **Emulsifying** - The yolk only is used as an emulsifying agent in mixtures like mayonnaise.
2. **Thickening & Binding** - Beaten eggs will thicken sauces and custard mixtures. They will also bind flaky ingredients like fish for fish cakes, and coat food which are likely to disintegrate during cooking.
3. **Raising** - Eggs are used as a raising agent for batters and for many cakes.
4. **Hors D'Oeuvre** - It can be served as an appetizer in the beginning of a meal.
5. **Potage** - For clarifying consomme egg is very much used.

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| 6. | Egg Dish | - | It can be used in various form as breakfast items. |
| 7. | Farinaceous Dishes | - | In the preparation of Pasta's egg is also used as a major ingredients in the preparation. |
| 8. | Poisson | - | In the preparation of frying, batter and for coating fish prior to crumbling, eggs are also used. |
| 9. | Sauce | - | In the production of Mayonnaise and Hollandaise sauce egg is used as major ingredients. |
| 10. | Salad | - | Hard boiled egg is used in various compound salads. |
| 11. | Bakery & Confectionery | - | It is used in many ways in production of various cakes, pastries, fermented goods etc. |
| 12. | Savoury | - | Egg is used for the preparation of salty and tangy tit-bits. |

Cooking Eggs :-

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| 1. | Boiled Eggs | - | Although called 'boiled eggs', egg cooked this way should in fact be simmered rather than boiled. Simmer for 3.5mins for a light set and upto 5 mins for a firm set. If the egg cracks in the pan, quickly add a little salt or vinegar to the water to prevent a stream of egg escaping from the shell. |
| 2. | Hard-boiled Egg | - | Put the eggs into boiling water, bring back to the boil and simmer gently for 10-12 mins. |
| 3. | Soft-boiled Eggs (Oeufs Mollets) | - | Soft-boiled eggs can be served hot or cold. Cold, they are ideal for eggs in aspic; hot they can be served in a savoury sauce. They can also be used as an alternative to poached eggs. |
| 4. | Coddled Eggs | - | Place the eggs in boiling water, cover, remove from the heat and keep in a warm place for 8 - 10 mins, they will then be lightly set. Alternatively, the eggs can be cooked in a china egg coddler. |
| 5. | Poached Egg | - | The eggs may be cooked in a poaching pan or in water or ina frying pan. |
| 6. | Fried Eggs | - | Melt a little butter or oil in a frying pan. Break each egg separately into a cup and slide them into the hot fat. When just set, remove from the pan with a slicer. |
| 7. | Baked Eggs | - | Place the required number of ramekin or other individual oven proof dishes on a baking sheet, with a knob of butter in each dish. Put them in the oven until the butter has melted. Break an egg into each dish, season, and cook it at 180°C (350°F) for 8 - 10 minutes. |
| 8. | Scrambled Eggs | - | Melt a knob of butter in a small saucepan. Whisk 2 eggs with 30ml milk or water and season. Pour into the saucepan and stir slowly over a gentle heat until the mixture begins to thicken. Remove from the heat and stir until creamy. Pile on to hot buttered toast and serve immediately for 1 person. |

Salmonella in Eggs:-

Egg shells are porous, so, although eggs may seem to be sealed, it is possible for bacteria to enter, specially if eggs are dirty or wet. If hens are kept in unhygienic conditions, whether battery or free range, they can become diseased and infected with bacteria, such as Salmonella, and this can be passed on to their eggs.

Bacteria in eggs are destroyed when the eggs are heated to a high enough temperature, so as long as eggs are thoroughly cooked they are quite safe to eat. Unfortunately, however, many of our favourite foods, such as mousses, cheesecakes, cold souffles, meringues, mayonnaise, lemon curd and royal icing, use either raw or very lightly cooked eggs.

Albumin (Albumen) It is a soluble protein which is found in blood, milk and egg white. When gently heated to 70°C (150°F), or when mixed with alcohol, it coagulates into a flocculent mass. Egg white is commonly known as albumen.

Other Bird's Egg:-

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| 1. | Duck Egg | - | This are larger and richer than hen's eggs. They must be thoroughly cooked to ensure that all bacteria are killed; al low at least 10mins for boiling. They should only be stored for up to 4 days. |
| 2. | Turkey & Goose Egg | - | These taste similar to hens' eggs but are much larger. Allow about 7mins for a soft boil. They can be stored for up to 4 days. |
| 3. | Quail's Egg | - | These are much smaller than hens' eggs, and require on 1 minute to get boiled. |