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Deborah Rhoades, M.A., R.D.

Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences

GET CRACKING WITH INCREDIBLE EDIBLE EGGS

According to a recent survey, 87 percent of American families have rethought their eating habits and the food they buy in order to reduce costs in the wake of today's economy. However, it is important to remember that cutting back doesn't have to mean sacrificing nutritious foods. Families looking to save on food costs can still prepare easy and healthful meals with the right staple ingredients, like eggs which cost on average 14 cents apiece.

May is National Egg Month and, as more families eat at home, it is a great time to try new egg recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. One egg provides 6 grams of protein, the same as an ounce of meat, fish, or chicken. Additionally egg protein is the highest quality protein you can buy with all the essential amino acids for growth and repair of tissue. Major nutrients found in eggs include Vitamins A, D, riboflavin, and B₁₂; and minerals phosphorous, iron, and zinc. Eggs are an excellent source of choline, essential for normal cell activity, with 23% of the daily value per egg. Also they are high in the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, which play a role in the prevention of macular degeneration.

Groceries now offer specialty eggs. One example is *Eggland's Best* brand. In comparison to an ordinary egg they have 25% less saturated fat and 18% less cholesterol. Omega 3 fatty acids are 63% higher, lutein is 32% higher, and Vitamin E content is 10 times higher. The patented all natural feed given to the hens account for the nutritional differences. *Davison's Safest Choice*® pasteurized shell eggs are available in select groceries which can be used for raw egg recipes like ice cream or salad dressings. Regular raw eggs may contain salmonella and other dangerous bacteria and must be cooked before eaten.

Eggs possess physical and chemical properties that make them indispensable to the cook and do not contain hormones or antibiotics. They thicken sauces, puddings, and custards. Eggs stabilize salad dressings and mayonnaise and act as binders in mixed foods like meatloaf. They serve as a leavening agent in cakes and soufflés, and prevent crystallization in boiled candies and frostings. Egg whites are often used for glazing baked breads or cookies to achieve a golden brown appearance.

One concern about cooking with eggs is they can be a source of *Salmonella* bacteria, the cause of a potentially dangerous food borne illness. With proper handling, however, the risk of illness from ingesting eggs can be greatly reduced by following these recommendations from the Food and Drug Administration:

- ◆ Purchase eggs only from refrigerated cases. Open the carton and inspect the eggs for cleanliness and intact shells. Reject any cartons containing cracked egg shells.
- ◆ Store eggs in their original carton, refrigerate them quickly after purchase, and use them in 4-5 weeks. Do not store eggs in the door of the refrigerator as their temperature rises each time the door is opened.
- ◆ Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work areas with hot, soapy water before and after they come in contact with eggs and egg-containing foods.
- ◆ Cook eggs until both the yolk and white are firm. Scrambled and fried eggs should not be runny, while casseroles should be cooked to 160°F. Use a food thermometer for accuracy.
- ◆ Recipes calling for raw or undercooked eggs--such as Caesar salad dressing or homemade ice cream--should be made with a pasteurized egg product.
- ◆ Never allow raw or cooked eggs, including hard-boiled eggs, to remain at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Beyond this time frame, bacteria can multiply to sufficient numbers as to cause food borne illness if ingested. When in doubt, throw it out.
- ◆ Use hard-boiled eggs (in the shell or peeled) within 1 week after cooking. Use frozen eggs within one year.
- ◆ Do not freeze eggs in their shell, rather, beat egg white and yolk together before freezing. Egg whites, but not egg yolks, can be frozen by themselves.
- ◆ Cool leftover cooked egg dishes quickly by transferring them to shallow containers and refrigerating. Use leftovers within 3-4 days and reheat to 165°F before serving.
- ◆ Transport cooked eggs in an insulated cooler packed with ice or frozen gel packs.

If you're not sure how to cook eggs.....go to the American Egg Board website at www.incredibleegg.org and visit their "cooking school." There you will find step by step photos with instructions on how to hard cook, scramble, fry, poach, and bake eggs; make an omelet, quiche, frittata, French toast, and soufflé and how to bake a custard and whip up meringue. It's time to get cracking!

HOT DEVILED EGGS

2 tablespoons margarine
 1/2 green pepper, chopped
 1/3 cup celery, chopped
 1 small onion, finely chopped
 1 tablespoon flour
 1 1/3 cups cooked or canned tomatoes
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 2 drops Tabasco sauce
 2/3 cup cold milk
 6 hard cooked eggs, sliced
 Bread or cracker crumbs, mixed with melted margarine

Heat the margarine; add chopped vegetables and sauté until tender. Blend in flour. Add tomatoes and seasonings and cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Stir the hot tomato mixture into the milk and carefully add the eggs. Turn into a greased baking dish and top with crumbs. Dot with margarine and bake at 375° until crumbs are brown and mixture is hot, about 10 to 15 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

For variety: Instead of adding crumbs and baking the deviled egg mixture, serve it on toast or in patty shells.

EGG DROP -- 2 servings

2 cups chicken broth or beef stock
1 egg at room temperature
1/4 cup onion, diced small (optional)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (optional)

Heat broth in a quart pan until boiling vigorously. Reduce heat to simmer. Beat egg with fork until a watery stream runs off tines of fork. Pour a fine stream of beaten egg slowly into the simmering broth. With a fork in your other hand make wide circles in the broth to cut in the egg and draw it into long filmy threads. Simmer about 1 minute. Add fresh lemon juice and serve.

ORANGE FRENCH TOAST

6 eggs
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
1/2 cup orange juice
1/4 cup skim or low-fat milk
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
8 slices day-old raisin bread (may use plain bread instead of raisin)
Vegetable cooking spray
Confectioner's sugar, if desired

Preheat oven to 375°. In a medium bowl, beat together eggs, orange peel, orange juice, milk, sugar, vanilla extract, and nutmeg. Beat until well blended. Place bread in a single layer in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan. Pour egg mixture over bread. Let soak, turning once, until liquid is absorbed, about 5 minutes. Evenly coat 2 baking sheet with cooking spray. Place bread slices in single layer on sheets. Bake for 12-15 minutes; turn slices. Continue baking until browned, about 10-12 more minutes. Lightly sprinkle with confectioner's sugar, if desired. **Serves 4-8.**

EGG & CHEESE BREAKFAST BURRITO

1 flour (6-inch) tortilla
1 egg
1 tablespoon shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 tablespoon salsa

Line 2 cups microwave safe cereal bowl with microwave safe paper towel. Press tortilla into bowl. Break egg into center of tortilla. Beat egg gently with a fork until blended, being careful not to tear tortilla. Microwave on high 30 seconds; stir. Microwave until egg is almost set, 15 to 30 seconds. Remove tortilla with paper towel liner from bowl to flat surface. Top egg with cheese and salsa. Fold bottom of tortilla over egg, then fold in sides.

Reference: www.incredibleegg.org

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences. For more information about the Frederick County Extension Office check out our website <http://Frederick.umd.edu>

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