

Egg Them On

Unscrambling the facts on a food favourite

by **MADELEINE GREY**

Toronto mother Claire Shewfelt serves scrambled eggs for dinner to her daughters (aged one, five and nine) about twice a week “out of necessity because they’re picky eaters.” Shewfelt doesn’t worry about cholesterol: “In my mind, eggs are supposed to be eaten by children.” Turns out science backs up her beliefs.

Egg marketing boards are still trying to shake off the Big Bad Cholesterol Connection. It started with the nutritional misperception (circa 1980s) that foods containing dietary cholesterol (such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs and dairy products) increase blood cholesterol levels. But now we know who the real troublemakers are — saturated and trans fats. So the coast is clear: Eggs are great for kids but, like all foods, are part of that overall healthy-diet mix. Still, for such an incredibly simple food, the good old egg has become rather complicated.

AISLE CONFUSION

If Humpty Dumpty were around today’s supermarkets, it’s unlikely he’d recognize his brethren. There are white and brown eggs in every size ranging from jumbo to peewee — even some sold with double yolks. You can buy a “two-four,” a dozen, even six to a package. Then there are eggs with added nutrition, such as omega-3 eggs loaded with good-for-you fats (from flaxseed-fed chickens), or topped up with more vitamins, such as Gray Ridge Healthy Natural Choice. Or forgo those fragile shells and pour your eggs. Liquid products abound: from whites only to low-fat liquid eggs to products like Naturegg Omega Pro,

which contains egg whites, some yolk, vitamin E and omega-3 fish oils.

GO ORGANIC?

According to the Ontario Farm Animal Council, well over 90 percent of eggs produced in Canada use the conventional “laying cage system” and no growth hormones are used. The remainder is organic and free-run, which aren’t necessarily the same. Certified organic eggs are produced by hens raised outside of cages and fed a certified organic diet with no preservatives, additives, medications, hormones or antibiotics. The term *free-range* is technically defined as hens that have access to the outdoors all of the time — a near impossibility in Canada. In a *free-run* barn, meanwhile, hens have access to ample floor, nesting and perch space and may even get outdoor time if weather permits. But some free-run hens are not raised organically (they just get a lot of legroom). Savvy shoppers check egg cartons for “certified organic” to know what they’re getting, for these eggs will cost more than conventional.

OMEGA-FIED EGGS

According to the Canadian Egg

Nutrient City

In one small, tidy package, eggs offer a powerhouse of nutrition:

- One large egg has only 70 calories, but has vitamins A, D, E and B₁₂, plus thiamin, riboflavin, folate, niacin, iron and zinc.
- There are 5 g fat in a large, regular egg, with only 1.5 g of that being saturated.
- There is no nutritional difference between a conventional and organic egg, but some people notice a taste difference.
- When it comes to protein, eggs rule! In fact, eggs score higher in protein quality (the efficiency rate at which the body uses protein for growth) than any other food. *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating* considers one to two eggs as one serving from the meat and alternatives group.

Is Brown Better?

Brown eggs are not more nutritious than white. Shell colour depends on breed of hen. White eggs are laid by White Leghorn hens while brown are produced by the slightly bigger Rhode Island Red hens. The Reds need more food and are in smaller supply, which means we pay a prettier penny for browns.

Marketing Agency, omega-3 eggs are the second most popular egg among consumers after the regular white variety. The word is out that omega-3 fatty acids are good for us, and consumers are willing to pay a higher price for increased nutrition. For kids, one particular omega-3 fatty acid called docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) plays an important role in brain, eye and nerve development from infancy on up. Winnipeg dietitian Gina Sunderland points to a large body of research “showing that children who have adequate omega-3 intake have a better ability to learn, focus and concentrate in school, resulting in better intelligence scores.”

Stuffed French Toast with Blueberry Sauce

Kid-tested by the pickiest, these cream-cheese-filled breakfast sandwiches cover all the food groups in one delicious plateful.

- 1½ cups (375 mL) frozen blueberries**
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) sugar**
- zest (finely grated peel, no white pith) of half a lemon**
- 8 slices whole wheat bread**
- ½ cup (125 mL) cream cheese**
- 4 omega-3 eggs**
- ½ cup (125 mL) milk**
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) sugar**
- ½ tsp (2 mL) cinnamon**
- pinch of salt**
- cooking spray or dab of butter**

Heat frozen blueberries, sugar and zest in a small pot at medium, stirring constantly for 4 minutes or until it comes to a boil. Set aside.

Spread about 2 tbsp cream cheese on a slice of bread and top with another slice. Repeat 3 times for 4 sandwiches.

In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, sugar, cinnamon and salt.

Heat a large, non-stick frying pan at medium high and coat with cooking spray or a little butter. As the pan heats, dunk each sandwich in the egg mixture briefly, turning it over so that both sides are completely moist, but not waterlogged. Hold the sandwich over the bowl to catch any drips and transfer to hot pan.

Cook each sandwich until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Serve with a dollop of sauce.

Makes 4 servings.

Our recipe tester, Adell Shneer, tests our Nutrition column using both imperial and metric measurements. However, proportions in the metric version may differ slightly from the original, causing small variations in the result.



The Dish on Portions	
calories	398
protein	14.8 g
fat	18.9 g
folate	12%*
niacin	24%*
iron	22%*
vitamin A	21%*
vitamin B ₁₂	33%*

*of recommended daily amount

COMING TO ROOST

The egg aisle promises to grow even bigger with new products in the making. Lutein-enhanced eggs produced by hens dining on marigold flower extract are now available in stores. (Egg yolks are naturally high in lutein, a carotenoid that helps prevent

macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness.) Also look for new liquid egg whites fortified with DHA and peeled, hard-cooked eggs sold in vacuum-packed containers. With so much readily available nutrition, it's the best time ever to get eggs out of their shells. ♥

Raw Deal

Every time I bake with my kids, I wonder if I should let them lick the spoon covered in batter containing raw eggs. While none of the experts say it's absolutely safe, they all agree "chances are minuscule" that raw egg consumption will result in food-borne illness. *But* this hinges on proper food safety. Here's what to do:

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Always store eggs in the refrigerator. Serve cooked eggs immediately. Hard-boiled eggs, egg salad sandwiches and fresh Caesar dressings should always be kept cold in lunch bags and picnic baskets.
- Always use fresh Canada grade A eggs. The majority of eggs sold in stores are grade A, but check when purchasing from farms, markets or roadside stands. Use eggs before the best-before date on the carton.
- Use only clean, uncracked eggs. If you find a cracked one in a carton, throw it out. If you accidentally crack an egg before you want to use it, put egg contents into a clean, sealed container, refrigerate and use within four days.
- To avoid cross-contamination, wash hands, spoons, bowls, counter surfaces and cutting boards with hot water and soap after contact with raw eggs.



Ask Madeleine Greey your food and nutrition questions in her special forum November 1: Todaysparent.com/forums.

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