

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, April 11, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Buying Eggs by Quality Grade." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. D. A.

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When a housewife in Boston goes to market, she selects brown eggs. When a housewife in New York goes to market, she chooses white eggs. Each one believes the color indicates freshness and good quality. Some people prefer light-colored yolks; others prefer yolks of a rich yellow. No wonder we homemakers are at sea when we go to buy eggs for quality. We find some eggs for sale labeled "Special" and others labeled "Extra." Which to buy? And size. There's still another problem. Why do eggs vary so much in size? Is size an indication of quality? All in all, the big question is, how to tell the best and freshest eggs?

The best answer comes from the specialists at the Bureau of Agricultural Economics who have been working on egg grading for years. Wherever Government graded eggs are sold, you can be sure about the eggs you buy. Many dealers who sell eggs under brand names or under names of henneries, have their eggs graded by an official Government grader and seal each carton with a certificate of quality as it is packed. This certificate is dated so the buyer can tell just when the eggs were graded.

The age of an egg affects its quality. So does the way it is handled during the time between laying and arrival in your kitchen. Of course, experienced cooks can tell the quality of an egg after it is out of the shell. Break two or three eggs into a flat plate. Notice whether the white is thick enough to stay near the yolk and stand up around it like a layer of clear firm jelly. That means freshness. If the white runs over the plate and appears very watery, the egg is poor in quality and somewhat stale. The quality of an egg shows up in cooking, also. An egg must have a good, firm white to poach well. High-quality eggs make lighter sponge cakes and omelets. For custards and scrambled eggs, eggs with slightly watery yolks will do well enough. One thing to remember is that any "off" odor generally means "off" flavor as well.

So much for ways to tell quality after the egg is broken. The official grader determines quality without breaking the egg. He examines the condition of the shell, the yolk and the white as well as the development of the germ and the size of the air cell. He does this by a process called candling. Then he labels the eggs accordingly.

The highest quality egg he labels "U. S. Special." These fine eggs are suitable for every use. The most fastidious persons can eat them poached or soft-cooked. They are the eggs for use raw or semi-raw, as in egg nogs or whips for invalids. They make the lightest angel food and sponge cakes and the fluffiest omelets. Eggs of this grade must be uniform in size. The lot must contain at least 80 per cent of eggs with a clean sound shell and an air cell only 1/8 inch or less in depth and dimly visible. They must also have a regularly shaped yolk, well centered in the middle of the albumen or white--not near the shell. The white must be firm and clear. The egg must have no visible germ development.



When broken, these eggs will show that well-rounded firm yolk we mentioned and that thick firm white like a clear jelly. Only very fresh eggs carefully candled conform to this high standard.

Now about size. Government graded eggs are sorted by the packer into three sizes--large, medium and small. The sizes correspond to definite weights per dozen. The certificates of quality on each carton gives the size or weight. The quality requirements for each grade remain the same, whatever the size. For example, "U. S. Specials, Medium" are of exactly the same quality as "U. S. Specials, Large," but are of smaller size. Of course, if these are the same price as the large eggs, they will not give as much actual food value for your money. But if the price is proportionately lower, they will. In other words, the housewife who wishes to serve eggs of the highest quality, but feels that she can't afford "U.S. Specials, Large," may give her family just as good eggs, though somewhat smaller, for what she can afford to spend.

The next grade is called "U. S. Extra". It represents the best grade of table quality eggs that you can get in many retail stores. Most people find these quite satisfactory even for poaching and soft boiling.

"U. S. Standards" are the eggs of the third grade. These are fair for table use and the great bulk of eggs on sale are of this grade. These will do for frying, for scrambling with bacon, and for ordinary cooking. But they do not have the fine flavor needed for poached or soft-boiled eggs. And they do not whip up stiffly enough to make the finest sponge cakes, souffles and omelets.

The fourth grade is called "U. S. Trades." These eggs are suited chiefly for general cooking and baking. Eggs of this grade may vary greatly in size. They are edible but not desirable for table use.

If your grocer doesn't carry Government graded eggs, he may be interested in doing so if you and friends inquire about the matter. Buying by grade is the surest way of knowing what kind of eggs you are paying for. The color of the shell is no test for quality, either in Boston or New York. White eggs and brown eggs may both be strictly fresh. As for the color of the yolk, that depends on the feed of the hens and is not often an index of quality.

Tomorrow: "Cooking Lobster and Shrimp."

