

homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, December 15, 1944

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In 3 Hh
top 5*

Subject: The A-B-C's of Egg Buying. Information from Office of Distribution officials, War Food Administration, and home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

I expect you've heard the "crack" about a good egg deserving a break. Well, that goes for both grade A and B eggs. Even if a B egg doesn't quite come up to A quality, it definitely rates a break...into waffles or cookies or puddings.

Right now grade A eggs are scarce, as you may have discovered the last few times you tried to buy them at the grocery store. Grade B's, though, are plentiful and comparatively inexpensive. These middle-grade eggs aren't as attractive looking and don't have as good a flavor as grade A's--but, they're just as nutritious, and you'll find they're very satisfactory for baking and for most cooked dishes.

There're several reasons for the scarcity of grade A eggs and the abundance of grade B's this month. For one thing, this is the short season for egg production. And then, with higher incomes now, many housewives have been cutting out medium cost eggs from their shopping lists. At the same time, prospective Army and lend-lease requirements for dried eggs are considerably less than they were last year at this time. So, it all adds up to the fact that there're more grade B's than usual on the market now, and not as many A's.

Grade B eggs are almost always a good deal cheaper than the grade A's. Some areas have reported a price difference recently of as much as 19 cents a dozen between grade A and B eggs. It's important to look for those price differences, because, by using grade B's wherever possible, you can reduce your food bills without sacrificing food value.

It's all a matter of suiting the grade to the use. Even when grade A eggs are more plentiful than they seem to be now, home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say it's a good idea to make a practice of buying two grades of eggs.



Unless you use quite a bit of seasoning, you'll probably prefer grade A's when you want to eat eggs as such--that is, for poaching or frying or soft-cooking in the shell. But for baking and most cooked dishes, use grade B's.

Now what about this grading business? If we had X-ray eyes, egg grading might not be necessary. But since most of us don't have any idea what's inside an egg shell, when we meet a dozen eggs at the grocer's counter, we need some substitute for those X-ray eyes. Well, egg grading is the closest anyone has come so far to giving the buyer an inside picture on eggs.

Through the Department of Agriculture, the Federal Government has in the past 25 years been developing standards for grading eggs, based mainly on quality revealed in the candling process. In this procedure a trained inspector holds the unbroken egg up against a powerful electric candle, which lights up the inside of the egg. Then he can see for example, how firm and clear the white is...the firmer the white, the fresher the egg.

When you break out an egg, you can tell quite a bit about its quality by the way it looks. A grade A spreads out over only a small area. The yolk is round, almost like a ball, and is well centered in the white. There's a good deal of thick, clear white that holds firmly around the yolk.

In a grade B egg, the white's thinner, and the yolk rather flat. When you break a B-grade egg into a pan it tends to spread out quite a bit; and the yolk has a tendency to break if the egg isn't carefully handled. Consequently, it isn't so attractive for poaching or frying, but you can make good breakfast eggs with grade B's if you scramble them with bacon or combine them in omelet with cheese or tomatoes. You might not want to use them in custards or sponge cakes, where you ordinarily want to bring out a delicate egg flavor, unless you planned to combine them with another flavor, like chocolate or spice.

There're two other egg grades--double-A and C. You'll very seldom see either on the market, though. The special double-A's are extremely scarce, and the C's, while edible, may have an "off" flavor.

If you'd be interested in some good recipes for using eggs in different ways, get your pencil ready, and I'll tell you at the end of the program where you can write for a free folder of egg recipes.

Age makes a great difference in eggs. And because it has so much to do with the egg quality, labels under the federal system bear not only the grade and the U.S. initials, but also the date when the grading was done. You'll find the grade and date on the sticker on the carton. This date's important to you, because unless eggs are carefully refrigerated, they drop in quality as time goes on. Most, but not all, eggs are grade A when they're laid, and they gradually lose freshness with age as well as unfavorable storage and handling conditions. When properly stored, however, eggs may still retain their A quality.

While the volume of federally graded eggs has been increasing each year, State graded eggs also come to market in certain parts of the country, and in some States there's very little supervised egg grading. At present 40 States have some form of egg grading and labeling legislation, and officials and marketing agencies are working toward uniform grades throughout the country.

Next time you buy eggs, do a little sleuthing first. You'll want to buy graded eggs whenever you can. And if you buy U.S. grade double A, U.S. grade A, U.S. grade B or U.S. grade C, you'll be most certain of getting the quality you desire in accordance with the grade claimed for the eggs. You'll want to check to see that the store keeps the eggs in the ice box, because they may spoil if they're kept out in a warm place. Remember, grade A eggs for poaching or frying or soft-cooking in the shell...grade B for general cooking and baking. Oh yes, and for the free leaflet I mentioned, write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C., and ask for "Egg Dishes for Any Meal."

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