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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, February 19, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "EGGS FOR THE THRIFTY." Information from the Market Basket, by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Homemakers, I bring you good news! Eggs are one of the best food buys just now. Although it's several weeks ahead of the usual heavy laying season, hens have responded generously to this winter's mild weather in the eastern half of the country.

Egg prices are the lowest they have been in several months. Of course, this isn't so good for the egg-producers, but there is no reason why the consumer should not take advantage of the low cost to use eggs freely.

The market specialists say that if severe weather should hit the egg-producing section in February or March, it might temporarily check the present rate of production, or interfere with country collection and transportation. Then there would probably be a temporary rise in price.

Also, one reason for the large number of fresh eggs on the market this winter is the high cost of feed, due to the drought last summer. Many poultry farmers cancelled advance orders for baby chicks, and so a number of eggs which otherwise would have been used by hatcheries came to market to add to the large early supply.

It's interesting, I think, to see how different conditions affect our foods and the quantities available. Soon there will be no more of these extra eggs on hand, and other surplus eggs will be put into cold storage or sent to "egg-breaking" establishments to be frozen for use by bakeries and other large consumers of eggs.

Perhaps you've heard of eggs being bought up for relief. I'll explain about that. If egg farmers make material reductions in their poultry flocks because of the high cost of feed, eggs will become scarcer a few months from now, and prices will be higher. In the long-range interest of both the consumer and the producer, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration recently made an effort to stabilize the market and forestall further flock reductions. So it has bought up about seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of the eggs that were creating an undue surplus. These eggs are going to flood sufferers and others on relief.

For the rest of us there are plenty of excellent eggs coming to market every day. Your dealer may carry government graded eggs. Some of the characteristics of "U.S. Extras" or "Grade A" eggs are clean sound normal shells, air cells no more than two-eighths of an inch in depth, yolks fairly well centered and moderately defined, no visible germ development or other blemishes, and firm, clear whites.



You would probably choose Grade A eggs for boiling and poaching, because the whites stand up well, but Grade B eggs are entirely satisfactory for table use. They are only slightly less perfect in quality and appearance.

The grades depend on interior quality and appearance, not on the size of the eggs. Large, medium and small eggs may be found in any grade. If the label on the egg container says "large" eggs, a dozen must weigh 24 ounces. A dozen medium eggs must weigh 20-1/2 ounces, and a dozen small eggs, 17 ounces.

In buying one or another size, always compare the price per ounce for small eggs with the price per ounce for large ones. For example, suppose a dozen large eggs, weighing 24 ounces, cost 36 cents. The price per ounce is 1-1/2 cents. A dozen small eggs of the same grade weigh 17 ounces, and sell for 30 cents. This is 1-13/17 cents per ounce, or actually dearer than the large eggs! If both are the same price, you get 7 ounces more food value for your money when you buy a dozen large eggs.

And speaking of food value, every additional egg in the menu means added food value. Both the whites and the yolks furnish body-building protein, and vitamin G. The yolks furnish vitamin A if the hen has had the right food, and also vitamin D if she has been fed with foods rich in this vitamin, or kept in the sunlight. There is sometimes a statement on the egg box on this point. The yolks contain some vitamin B and are a rich source of iron and a good source of phosphorus and calcium.

So I suggest that you serve eggs every way you can in the next few weeks. For dinner or supper, have shirred eggs in pepper rings, omelet with Spanish sauce, fried eggs on ham slices, goldenrod eggs, or a cheese or fish soufflé (soo-flay).

When eggs are abundant it's also time to have all the egg-rich dainties that are luxuries in other seasons. Custards, meringues, angel food, Hollandaise sauce, cream puffs, and fruit whips, are some I can think of.

Now just a word about cooking eggs. High temperature hardens protein. Because eggs are a protein food, the secret of success in keeping them tender is to control the heat.

To poach a breakfast egg, drop it gently into boiling salted water in a shallow pan, cover, and immediately remove from the fire. Do not let the water boil again. Let the egg stand in the covered pan until firm -- about five minutes.

No one who knows egg cookery mentions "boiled eggs" nowadays. We "soft-cook" or "coddle" them so the whites will be tender. Start with the eggs in the shell in cold water to cover. Heat the water gradually to simmering, but do not let it boil. When it begins to simmer, cover the pan, remove from the fire, and let stand for a few minutes. The length of time depends on the degree of softness to which you want the eggs cooked, and on the number of eggs and the size of the pan. So it must be found somewhat by experience. Hard-cooked eggs may be cooked the same way, but kept below boiling over a low fire for 30 minutes after the water simmers.

The same rules apply to soufflés, meringues, custards, omelets, and other kinds of cooked dishes. Use low heat throughout the cooking. Even a fried egg should be cooked in a pan with just a little fat, moderately hot. Cover it, if you like the top coated. Low heat keeps the egg white tender.

