

Background:

Egg nutrition:

- Eggs are high in protein, B-vitamins, selenium and phosphorous.
- They also contain Vitamin A, Vitamin D, and omega-3 fats.
- They have a significant amount of cholesterol and saturated fat, so for people who have high cholesterol or are at risk for heart disease, eggs might not be a healthy choice. For most people though, they're nutritious & delicious!
- At right is an egg nutrition facts label, from <http://www.incredibleegg.org>.

Egg production:

Some facts from the United Egg Producers (large-scale egg production industry):

- In April 2012, the egg industry in the U.S. produced over 6.54 billion eggs.
- 95% of the laying hens in the U.S. are part of flocks of more than 75,000 birds.
- As of March 2012 only 5.7% of US laying hens are cage-free and only 2.9% are organic.
- There are 283 million laying hens in the U.S. as of May 2012.

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 egg (50g)			
Serving per Container 12			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 70	Calories from Fat 45		
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat 5g	8%		
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%		
Polyunsaturated Fat 1g			
Monounsaturated Fat 2g			
Trans Fat 0g			
Cholesterol 185mg	60%		
Sodium 70mg	3%		
Potassium 70mg	2%		
Total Carbohydrate 0g	0%		
Protein 6g	13%		
Vitamin A 6% • Vitamin C 0%			
Vitamin D 10% • Calcium 2%			
Iron 4% • Thiamin 0%			
Riboflavin 10% • Vitamin B-6 4%			
Folate 6% • Vitamin B-12 8%			
Phosphorus 10% • Zinc 4%			
Not a significant source of Dietary fiber or Sugars			
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 Calorie diet. Your daily volumes may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Potassium		3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Protein		50g	65g
Calories per gram			
Fat 9 - Carbohydrate 4 - Protein 4			

These facts are impressive but also depressing because most of the millions of chickens laying eggs in the U.S. are kept in very close quarters without access to the outdoors. See photo of typical life for a laying hen at a big farm from stopfactoryfarms.org:



Chickens at factory farms don't get to move around, eat bugs and grass, and take dust baths like chickens at smaller farms do. Eggs from chickens that get to forage and spend time outside are often more nutritious, and you can feel good about how the hen that laid your eggs is living.

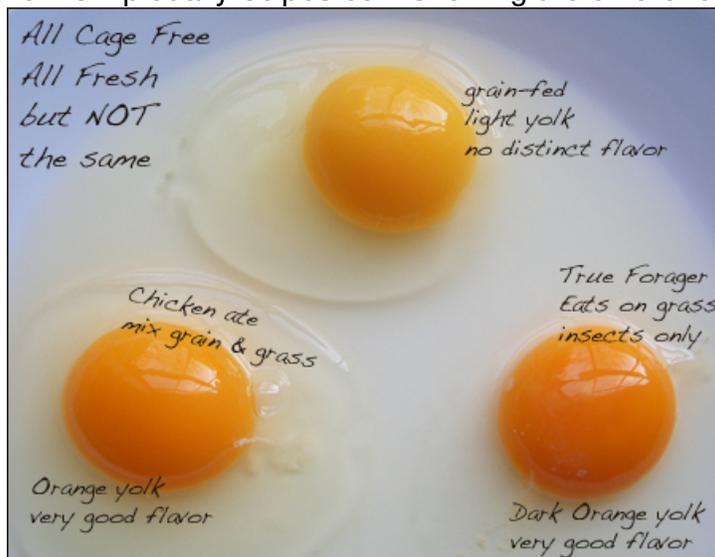
What egg labels mean:

- Cage-free: the chickens are not in cages. They might still be kept indoors in very close quarters
- Organic: the chicken eats only certified organic food – grain, vegetables, etc.
- Free-range: the chicken spends part of her time outside – she might not get to be outside every day, and might not be eating much grass or many bugs.

These labels are somewhat misleading – cage-free, organic, free-range eggs might be produced by chickens stuck in a huge barn packed full, these labels don't necessarily mean the hens are living idyllic lives on small farms. Buying eggs from a farmer you know is the best way to ensure that the chickens laying the eggs are treated well and are eating healthy foods.

Seasonality of eggs:

The amount of eggs a chicken lays depends on the amount of light and warmth and food available. In the winter, hens need to conserve body heat, and lay less in the cooler months. When spring arrives with more warmth and light hens can lay up to every day in the spring and summer, but slow down to very few in the winter. Before modern agriculture extended the egg season, eggs could be pickled or preserved in lime to extend the season. If they are pastured, hens have a diet of green leaves and bugs in the spring and summer, and their yolks will be visibly darker, and fuller of nutrients. (foodtimeline.org) See photo below from simplifiedailyrecipes.com showing the difference pasturing hens makes:



Traditions around the world:

Cultures all over the world have their favorite ways to prepare eggs, and cultural traditions around eggs. Eggs are a symbol of rebirth and new life, and have sacred standing in many cultures. The tradition of decorating eggs is associated for many with Easter, but it is in fact older than Easter and exists in many cultures, unrelated to Christianity. Some facts about egg traditions:

- In the Christian tradition, there is a story involving Mary Magdalene and eggs that turned red after the resurrection of Jesus.
- In Greece, people make a special sweet, braided bread called tsoureki with one or more red eggs in it for Easter. This is a tradition from the Greek Orthodox church. (About.com)
- In Egypt people celebrate the holiday Sham el-Nessim, which falls after Easter and is a celebration of Spring. It's traditional to eat colored, boiled eggs on this day. (Wikipedia)
- The ancient Zoroastrian religion of Persia, (modern Iran) has a tradition of painting eggs for [Now-ruz](#), their New Year celebration, which falls on the spring Equinox. This is a tradition that has existed for over 2500 years. (About.com, Wikipedia.org)

History of domestication of chickens:

"It is likely that female game birds were, at some time in the early history of man, perceived as a source both of meat and of eggs. Men discovered that by removing from the nest eggs that they did not wish to have hatch (or that they simply wished to eat), they could induce the female jungle fowl to lay additional eggs and, indeed, to continue to lay eggs through an extended laying season." --
-*The Chicken Book*, Page Smith and Charles Daniel [University of Georgia Press: Athens] 1975 (p. 11-12)

"Eggs have been known to, and enjoyed by, humans for many centuries. Jungle fowl were domesticated in India by 3200 B.C.E. Record from China and Egypt show that fowl were domesticated and laying eggs for human consumption around 1400 B.C.E., and there is archaeological evidence for egg consumption dating back to the Neolithic age. The Romans found egg-laying hens in England, Gaul, and among the Germans. The first domesticated fowl reached North America with the second voyage of Columbus in 1493."

---*Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Solomon H. Katz, editor, William Woys Weaver, associate editor [Charles Scribner's Sons: New York] 2003, Volume 1 (p. 558)

Deviled eggs – origin, name, etc.

Deviled eggs are popular across Europe and the United States. There are many variations, you can add different vegetables and spices to the filling. They're called deviled eggs because they are a bit spicy – the mustard and the paprika add zing. Other spicy foods are also referred to as deviled, such as ham. This term has been used to describe spicy food since the 1700s.