

A Dozen Reasons to Celebrate World Egg Day

The International Egg Commission has proclaimed the second Friday in October as World Egg Day. Countries throughout the world will be joining in the celebration of the egg.

To what does the egg owe this honor? There are at least a dozen good reasons:

1. Eggs are one of the most versatile foods on the market. What other ingredient can cause a souffle to rise and a custard to thicken? What else can be scrambled, fried, poached, and baked – with equally delicious results? Eggs are just as handy when separated. Egg whites make delicate meringues and elegant angel food cakes, while egg yolks enrich sauces, cakes, and pie fillings.
2. Eggs have a high nutrient density because, in proportion to their calorie count, they provide 12% of the Daily Value for protein and a wide variety of other nutrients such as vitamin A, B6, B12, folate, iron, phosphorus, and zinc. And, for as little as 75 calories – lots of nutrition for relatively few calories!
3. Speaking of protein, egg protein quality is so high that scientists often use eggs as the standard by which the protein quality of other foods is measured. All the important amino acids, the building blocks of body protein, are found in an egg in the right proportions for your body's needs.
4. Did you say “lean”? As for the fat found in eggs, two-thirds of it is the healthy unsaturated kind. And, now that we are hearing more about health risks from trans-fatty acids, it's reassuring to know that there are no trans-fats in eggs. The fat that the egg does supply helps nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E, and K to be used by the body.
5. Eggs have always been a bargain, nutritionally and economically. Studies have found that eggs are one of the best protein buys.
6. Any time of the day is right for eggs. You could start your morning with scrambled eggs stuffed into a pita pocket for a grab-and-run breakfast. A hard-cooked egg, sprinkled with your favorite herb or spice, makes a nutritious mid-morning snack. Lunch at home can be omelets – ready in minutes and easy to personalize. If you're brown-bagging it, don't forget egg salad. The addition of cooked pasta or rice makes it especially satisfying. It's easy to have dinner with eggs. Quiches, make-ahead stratas and top-of-the-range frittatas can all turn last night's leftovers into a gourmet delight.

7. Egg yolk is an excellent source of choline, a nutrient now considered essential for human health. Research has shown choline to be required for normal formation of brain tissue and memory and to play a role in preventing heart disease.
8. Lutein and zeaxanthin are two newly-recognized nutrients that have put eggs in the “functional foods” category. A functional food is one that provides health benefits beyond its basic nutrient content. Recent studies have shown that consuming lutein and zeaxanthin can significantly lower risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a leading cause of blindness affecting people over the age of 65. In addition, there is a less likelihood of cataracts, the clouding of the eye covering which often accompanies aging.
9. On weekends, when time is not an issue, eggs can be elegant. A puffy omelet (in which beaten egg whites are folded into the yolks) makes a luxurious brunch or dessert. Hot or cold, sweet or savory, souffles are the ultimate pampering fare. And don't forget crepes. They can be stored in the freezer then thawed and filled for a quick, tasty treat. Cheesecake is a classic egg-enriched dessert with as many variations as there are cooks. Or include an informal Sunday supper with fresh fruit layered in a parfait glass and topped with a stirred custard sauce.
10. For those interested in weight loss, research indicates that increased protein and reduced carbohydrate intake stabilize blood sugar between meals, which can lead to reduced between-meal snacking.
11. Children like eggs, too. Growing bodies need nutrients, and eggs make a wise food choice. Egg protein is a great source of nutrition for growing children to build muscle. Deviled eggs are fun and easy for children to make...and eat. Or, scramble an egg in the microwave and place it in a hot dog bun – you've got an egg dog ready to be topped with “whatever.” For an egg burger, top a hamburger patty with a fried egg and serve on a bun.
12. Convinced yet? Why not set aside the month of October to try out new egg ideas with your family? Crack open your imagination! You may be pleasantly surprised.