

Taste

Egg-cellence by any standard



Eating in

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EGGs are one of my favourite foods and I always make sure I have some in the refrigerator.

They're a type of security food for me and I know I can quickly whip up an omelet or frittata, have some protein food on hand if my granddaughter comes for an unexpected meal or make a spur-of-the-moment "speccy" pudding with a meringue topping on some fruit.

Apart from producing an impromptu meal quickly, eggs are an essential ingredient in everyday cooking — I use them in baking cakes and cookies, pancakes and crepes, to bind ingredients together, such as fish cakes or meatballs, and to thicken custards, sauces and ice cream, as well as enrich some drinks.

Also, I love a soft poached egg served with asparagus, using the spears as "soldiers" to be coated with the gloriously golden tasty yolk.

Smooth and creamy scrambled eggs with chopped chives and smoked salmon stirred through is another of my easy dinner or lunchtime meals. Since I've been living alone I find I use eggs as a major source of protein, rather than cooking myself meat or fish daily.

They are a nutritional, natural powerhouse providing 18 different vitamins and minerals, a high level of protein and important antioxidants.

Contrary to bad publicity eggs had some years ago, research has shown they have little, if any, effect on blood cholesterol levels. From the relatively small amount of fat in an egg 70 per cent is unsaturated fat.

The colour of the shell has no bearing on the



nutritional value of an egg — it just relates to the breed of hen.

As well, eggs are tasty, convenient and good value for money, which makes them a great family food.

HOW TO COOK

It's best to use fresh eggs for boiling, poaching and frying and older ones for baking, quiches or frittatas.

Poaching an egg is simple, yet there are a few tips to consider if you wish to have an attractive finished product. I use a frypan for poached eggs so they are easy to remove.

Use fresh eggs and allow them to come up to room temperature.

Bring at least 5cm of water to the boil, then reduce it to a simmer. Add a dash of vinegar or lemon juice to the water (this will help the egg coagulate quickly).

Break the egg carefully into a cup or on to a saucer. Stir the water to create a whirlpool effect and then slip the egg into the water. This helps to keep the egg in an even, round shape. Cook for about 3-4 minutes, depending on how you like the consistency of the yolk.

Lift the egg out gently using a flat, slotted lifter.

Eggs galore

THERE are quite a few choices on supermarket shelves nowadays when it comes to buying eggs.

Public awareness of the conditions some battery hens were living under has changed the egg industry considerably, although 80 per cent of eggs produced in Australia are from the traditional battery-cage method.

FREE RANGE eggs allow for hens to move over open ground scratching and foraging but returning to sheds for roosting, laying and drinking and eating.

BARN LAID eggs are from hens housed on a barn floor, similar to free range hens, but confined to that barn, which protects them from predators and poor weather conditions.

OMEGA 3 eggs are produced by giving hens feed that contains a higher proportion of omega-3 and vitamin E than ordinary hen food.

ORGANIC EGGS must be produced in a free-range system with feed that is 95 per cent organically grown. The Australian Egg Corporation says there are seven organic bodies in Australia that certify the integrity of organic eggs.

VEGETARIAN eggs are produced when the hen's diet contains no ingredient sourced from either fish or meat.

■ To keep eggs fresh, it is important to refrigerate them. They will last seven times longer in the refrigerator than at room temperature.