DESIGNER EGGS

The nutritional value of eggs has been known for centuries. In the 1930’s it was discovered that the contents of the chicken egg could be modified. It was not until the early 1970’s, however, that the importance of this finding made its way into commercial practice. A number of “designer eggs” are now available on the market. Today, the market for designer eggs makes up a small portion of overall egg sales (about 3%). It is important to remember that the desire to alter the egg’s composition is not due to an innate flaw, but rather to produce an egg with unique features.

Lower cholesterol eggs. The cholesterol in the egg is found only in the yolk. A large egg contains approximately 200-220 mg of cholesterol. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has stated that for a product to legally claim “less” or “reduced” amounts of a nutrient, it has to have 25% less than the normal product standard for that nutrient. One corporation markets eggs with a label stating that its eggs contain “lowered fat and lowered cholesterol”. By FDA’s definition, this means that the eggs contain 25% less fat and cholesterol than a standard egg of the same size.

Cholesterol in the diet is not a bad thing. In fact, cholesterol is required by our bodies. Cholesterol is produced by all animals, including humans, and is needed for many bodily functions and serves to insulate nerve fibers, maintain cell walls and produce vitamin D, various hormones and digestive juices. Cholesterol is produced by the liver. There is little doubt that elevated blood cholesterol levels (the cholesterol in your blood stream, called serum cholesterol) increase heart disease risk, but the effect of dietary cholesterol (the cholesterol you consume in foods) on blood cholesterol levels is the subject of debate among health professionals. Research does not show that food cholesterol significantly boosts blood cholesterol levels in everyone. Some researchers say that nearly two-thirds of Americans can handle cholesterol intake within the range that people normally consume without significantly raising their blood cholesterol levels. If someone is in the other one-third, however, they may want to consider eating cholesterol-reduced eggs.

Eggs higher in vitamin E. Through the feeding of kelp to laying hens, one corporation has been able to produce eggs that contain significantly more vitamin E than ordinary eggs. Given its benefits, including serving as an antioxidant, some consumers may be interested in foods containing healthful amounts of vitamin E.

Omega-3 eggs. The amount of dietary fatty acid in yolk can be changed by feeding hens diets with varying amounts and types of fat. When menhaden fish oil is fed to hens, omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids accumulate in yolks. Consumption of these fatty acids are associated with normal brain and retinal development. Omega-3 fatty acids may also improve immune response and reduce atherogenesis. Due to positive effects associated with consumption of foods containing omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, some corporations have “designed” eggs with a higher content of these compounds.
MAKING AN OMELET

1. Beat together 2 eggs and 2 tablespoons of water.

2. In a 10-inch omelet pan heat 1 tablespoon of margarine until just hot enough to sizzle a drop of water. Pour in egg mixture. The mixture should set immediately at edges.

3. With an inverted pancake turner, carefully push cooked portions at edges toward center of the pan so uncooked portions can reach the hot pan surface, tilting the pan and moving as necessary. Continue until egg is set and will not flow.

4. Fill the omelet with ½ cup of desired mixture. Put the filling on the left side if you’re right handed and on the right side if you’re left handed. With the pancake turner, fold the omelet in half.

5. Invert the omelet onto a plate and serve. It doesn’t matter if you tore the omelet while folding it. The omelet goes onto the plate with the bottom side up and that side looks good.

Possible fillings: The array of omelet filling possibilities boggles the mind. Diced ham, cheese, and onions are commonly used. Meats, vegetables, seafood, even fruit, can be used. The choice is yours.

Information taken from the American Egg Board pamphlet “Howard Helmer presents The incredible edible egg”

Jacquie Jacob, poultry extension coordinator; Ben Mather, poultry extension specialist; Andy Toelle, county extension agent.