

SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

Eggs

Eggs are quick and easy to prepare. Whether you fry, scramble or poach eggs or make them into an omelet or frittata, most egg dishes can be whipped up in mere minutes. Eggs make delicious, nutritious, affordable, ... and fast food.

Eggs are convenient. Mother Nature created eggs in a handy package that is well suited to households of all sizes. With naturally portioned eggs, it's just as easy to feed one person as a crowd. Unlike other meat-group items which often require thawing, trimming, skinning and deboning – eggs can go straight from the refrigerator to the cooking pan.

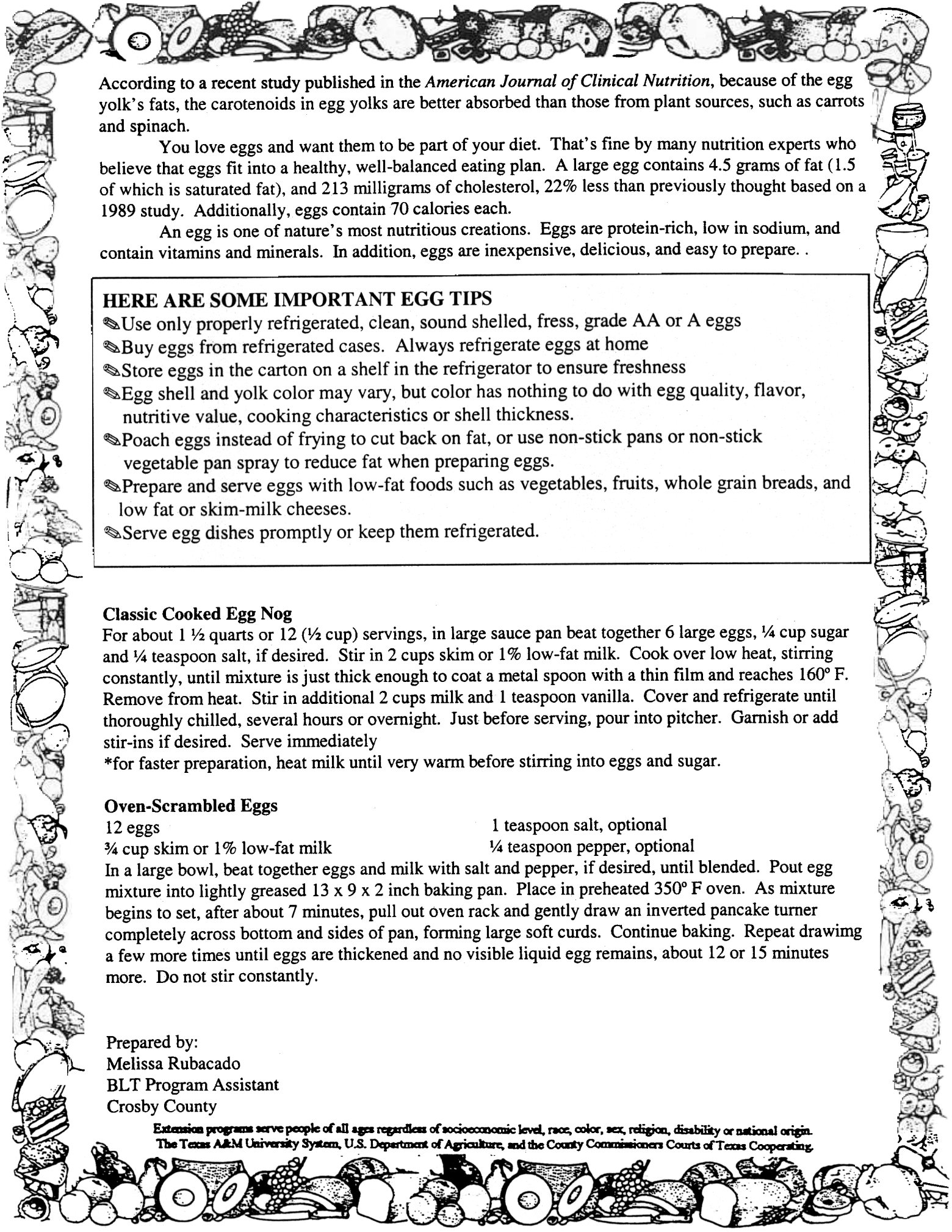
Eggs are soft to chew and easy to digest. Easily-digested eggs are soft, so they're a good protein-food choice for anyone with chewing problems or ill-fitting dentures. Some egg dishes, such as creamy custards, are particularly well suited to those who need especially easy-to-swallow foods.

Eggs are affordable. Compared to other protein foods, eggs are bargain because highly efficient production and management techniques have kept egg prices from skyrocketing as other food prices have done. The price of eggs at retail has hardly changed since 1979. Then, a dozen large eggs retailed for \$8.45 on average across the country. In 1998, the average retail price for large eggs was \$1.037 per dozen – a mere 19.2 cents-per-dozen increase over 19 years. A USDA study listed eggs and turkey breast as the top two choices for inexpensive protein. Another economy plus is that eggs have only the eggshell, but no gristle or bone, to go to waste. With eggs, you can nourish your body without breaking your wallet.

Eggs are nutritious. They're nutrient dense which means that eggs contain a good proportion of needed nutrients compared to their calorie count. Eating nutrient-dense foods is particularly important as we grow older because our energy needs decrease but our nutrient needs either remain unchanged or increase. As we age, it's harder to get enough of all the nutrients we need for good health without eating too many calories. The nutrient density of eggs is why they are included in both the USDA Food Guide Pyramid and the Tufts University pyramid for those 70 or older. A large whole egg, white and yolk supply these percentages of Daily Values for a 2,000-calorie diet.

Egg protein quality is tops. Protein is responsible for building and maintaining our body's muscle mass and is an important part of the diet. Egg protein comes so close to matching what the human body needs that scientists use it as the standard to measure other protein foods. Only mother's milk rates higher. One large egg contains 6.25 grams of protein, 10% (for a 2,500-calorie diet) to 12.5% (for a 2,000-calorie diet) of our daily need, and "costs" us 75 calories.

Eggs are good for your eyes and other parts of you, too. Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids (pigments in plant and animal foods) that have been shown to protect against macular degeneration, a serious age-related eye disease. Both lutein and zeaxanthin are found in egg yolks.



According to a recent study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, because of the egg yolk's fats, the carotenoids in egg yolks are better absorbed than those from plant sources, such as carrots and spinach.

You love eggs and want them to be part of your diet. That's fine by many nutrition experts who believe that eggs fit into a healthy, well-balanced eating plan. A large egg contains 4.5 grams of fat (1.5 of which is saturated fat), and 213 milligrams of cholesterol, 22% less than previously thought based on a 1989 study. Additionally, eggs contain 70 calories each.

An egg is one of nature's most nutritious creations. Eggs are protein-rich, low in sodium, and contain vitamins and minerals. In addition, eggs are inexpensive, delicious, and easy to prepare.

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT EGG TIPS

- ☞ Use only properly refrigerated, clean, sound shelled, fresh, grade AA or A eggs
- ☞ Buy eggs from refrigerated cases. Always refrigerate eggs at home
- ☞ Store eggs in the carton on a shelf in the refrigerator to ensure freshness
- ☞ Egg shell and yolk color may vary, but color has nothing to do with egg quality, flavor, nutritive value, cooking characteristics or shell thickness.
- ☞ Poach eggs instead of frying to cut back on fat, or use non-stick pans or non-stick vegetable pan spray to reduce fat when preparing eggs.
- ☞ Prepare and serve eggs with low-fat foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grain breads, and low fat or skim-milk cheeses.
- ☞ Serve egg dishes promptly or keep them refrigerated.

Classic Cooked Egg Nog

For about 1 ½ quarts or 12 (½ cup) servings, in large sauce pan beat together 6 large eggs, ¼ cup sugar and ¼ teaspoon salt, if desired. Stir in 2 cups skim or 1% low-fat milk. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is just thick enough to coat a metal spoon with a thin film and reaches 160° F. Remove from heat. Stir in additional 2 cups milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, several hours or overnight. Just before serving, pour into pitcher. Garnish or add stir-ins if desired. Serve immediately

*for faster preparation, heat milk until very warm before stirring into eggs and sugar.

Oven-Scrambled Eggs

12 eggs

1 teaspoon salt, optional

¾ cup skim or 1% low-fat milk

¼ teaspoon pepper, optional

In a large bowl, beat together eggs and milk with salt and pepper, if desired, until blended. Pour egg mixture into lightly greased 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking pan. Place in preheated 350° F oven. As mixture begins to set, after about 7 minutes, pull out oven rack and gently draw an inverted pancake turner completely across bottom and sides of pan, forming large soft curds. Continue baking. Repeat drawing a few more times until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains, about 12 or 15 minutes more. Do not stir constantly.

Prepared by:
Melissa Rubacado
BLT Program Assistant
Crosby County

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.