

MORE THAN OVER-EASY

Eggs are a nutritional powerhouse, researchers say

Ottawa, ON – March 30, 2004 – Eggs, like spring, are a symbol of rebirth and renewal. One of nature's most nutritious foods, the egg is a long-standing staple in cuisine around the world, as well as a symbol of Easter. But eggs aren't just for decorating, filling baskets or scrambling for breakfast; they're also the focus of major scientific research.

An international symposium on egg nutrition is set to kick off in Banff, Alberta the week following Easter. Leading egg researchers from around the world, including Canada, the USA, Ukraine, Belgium, Korea, and Bangladesh will be sharing research findings on a variety of egg-related topics including nutrition and technological innovations in egg processing.

"Canadians are confused about the nutritional benefits of eggs," says Dr. Peter Jones, Professor, McGill University and Symposium Keynote Speaker. "Research shows that eggs play an important role in disease prevention and can be consumed on a daily basis as part of a healthy, balanced diet."

Researchers have made steady progress in the last decade, adopting new feeding and processing practices that have reduced egg cholesterol levels by two thirds. They have also increased the nutritional value of eggs by fortifying them with essential antioxidants such as lutein for eye health and vitamins such as folate for prevention of neural tube defects in babies.

"This year's symposium features a strong contingent of Canadian researchers," says Dr. Steve Leeson, Poultry Nutritionist, University of Guelph and Symposium Presenter. "Many of the sessions will focus on further enhancing the nutritional properties of eggs. I will present findings on the health benefits of lutein-enriched eggs, one of many sessions that will provide more evidence to support regular egg consumption."

Eggs are a highly nutritious food, containing essential vitamins and minerals including vitamins A, D, B₁₂, iron, folate and niacin. One large grade A egg contains 70 calories, only 5 grams of fat and no trans fats. Canada produces about 475 million dozen eggs a year, with egg consumption peaking at Easter time.

The symposium runs April 18 to 21, with this year's theme being "*Eggs, the perfect functional food for good health.*" For more information on the symposium, visit www.afns.ualberta.ca/Hosted/Egg_Symposium/index.html.

About the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency

The Canadian Egg Marketing Agency (CEMA), representing 1,100 egg producers from each province and the Northwest Territories, is the symposium's gold sponsor. An independent body, CEMA was created in 1972 under the Farm Products Agencies Act. CEMA is dedicated to providing fresh, nutritious and high-quality eggs at reasonable prices to all Canadians. CEMA also conducts national public education programs and marketing initiatives.

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For a delicious egg recipe and photo, visit: <http://www.canadaegg.ca/recipe>

Egg-citing Facts

- 0 Eggs contain the highest quality protein of all foods.**
 - Eggs contain all nine essential amino acids, making them a complete source of protein.
 - Scientists frequently use eggs as a standard for measuring the protein quality of other foods.
 - One large egg contains 6 grams of protein.
 - Biological value is the gold standard for determining the quality of protein. The higher the protein quality, the better it is for our bodies. The biological value of egg protein is 93.7 per cent, which is higher than any other protein source.
- 0 Eggs are nutrient-dense.**
 - One large egg contains only 70 calories, the approximate equivalent of a large apple. A large egg also contains 6 grams of protein, 5 grams of fat (of which only 1.5 grams is saturated fat), 0 *trans* fat and 0 grams of carbohydrate.
- 0 There are eggs for everyone at the grocery store.**
 - Specialty eggs can be found in the egg section at the grocery store. Organic, free run, vitamin enhanced, and omega-3 enhanced eggs are some of the choices available.
- 0 Eggs contain lutein.**
 - Lutein helps reduce the risk of macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in Canadians over 65 years of age.
 - Lutein is better absorbed from egg yolks than from green leafy vegetables.
- 0 Eggs contain choline.**
 - Health Canada has recently recognized choline, which is important for pregnant women, as an essential nutrient. Choline plays an important role in a baby's brain development.
 - Two eggs contain adult's daily requirement for choline.
- 0 Eggs are a part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Health Check™ program.**
 - The Health Check™ program identifies foods that are a healthy choice.
 - All shell eggs meet the nutrient criteria for this program.
- 0 Eggs are trans fat free.**
 - Research is showing that foods containing *trans* fats, most commonly found in commercial, processed products, can negatively impact health.
 - Eggs do not contain *trans* fats.
- 0 Eggs contain 2/3 less cholesterol than ten years ago.**
 - One large egg contains 190 mg cholesterol.
 - The reduction in cholesterol is attributed to improvements in feed and cholesterol testing methods, as well as changes in breeding practices.

- 0 ***The average hen in Canada lays about 25 dozen eggs each year.***
 - Eggs produced for consumption are not fertilized and therefore will not hatch into chicks.
- 0 ***Eggshell colour is not an indicator of the nutritional value of the egg.***
 - Eggshell colour depends on the breed of the hen. In Canada, white shell eggs are commonly laid by White Leghorn hens. Brown shell eggs are generally laid by Rhode Island Red hens .
 - There are no nutritional differences between white and brown eggs.
- 0 ***Eggs can be preserved in the freezer.***
 - To properly freeze, gently whisk the whole egg until blended, then store in a tightly sealed freezer container.
 - Raw eggs can be frozen for up to four months.
- 0 ***Eggs contain Vitamin D which aids in slowing the rate of bone loss when combined with calcium.***
 - Egg yolks are one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D, which is necessary for proper calcium absorption in the body.
- 0 ***Eggs should be kept refrigerated.***
 - Eggs should be stored in their carton in the refrigerator. The 'Best Before' date on the carton tells you the length of time eggs will maintain their grade A qualities, when eggs are at their freshest.

For more egg facts visit: www.eggs.ca or www.canadaegg.ca

For a delicious egg recipe and photo, visit: <http://www.canadaegg.ca/recipe>

Easter and the Egg ***Customs from past to present***

O The egg as a symbol of royalty

In France, lords and ladies painted the coat of arms on eggs they gave as gifts at Easter time.

O Eggs for everyone

In early times, the egg was given as a gift to celebrate the renewal of spring. The wealthy wrapped eggs in gold leaves, and peasants coloured eggs by boiling them with special flowers.

O Eggs for entertainment

An old custom in France was the egg-rolling contest, in which raw eggs, identified to their owner by a coloured mark, were rolled down a slope. The egg that survived the bumpy terrain was named the winner.

O The Easter bunny and its meaning

The bunny has always been a symbol of new life during the spring season, as it is one of the most fertile animals known. The bunny as an Easter symbol was first mentioned in German writings dating back to the 1500s.

O The edible Easter bunny

The first creation of an 'edible Easter bunny' appeared during the 1800s, in the form of a pastry made with eggs and sugar, which today has been transformed into the popular chocolate versions.

Customs practiced today...

O The gift of eggs

Today, hand-decorated eggs are still exchanged as springtime gifts in many cultures. Families often keep the egg collection and pass it along through the generations.

O A French Canadian treat

Eggs eaten in maple syrup are a part of Easter traditions in many Quebec regions.

O Symbolic token

No matter whether an egg is cooked or raw, full or hollow, chocolate or sugar, it represents a token of friendship and love.

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