

# Hard-Cooked Eggs

The eggs were hard-cooked, dyed, hidden, and found. You may be now asking yourself, "What do I do with all of these eggs?" Let's look for some answers.

Remember that although your colored eggs were attractive as the centerpiece for Sunday's family dinner, they are a perishable food and should have been treated that way. If the eggs were left at room temperature for more than two hours, you should not eat them. Cracked or dirty eggs should also be discarded.

A wise tip to remember: use plastic eggs for decorating and hunting so you can keep the real eggs safe to eat. You might be able to find plastic eggs on clearance in stores now, so stock up for next year.

How long can hard-cooked eggs in the shell be safely stored in the refrigerator? The eggs should be used within one week. Refrigerated fresh eggs can be kept for four to five weeks. Hard cooked eggs don't last as long because the cooking process removes the protective coating.

Why are some hard-cooked eggs easier to peel than others? Eggs that are only a few days old are more difficult to peel because of the CO<sub>2</sub> in fresh eggs. As it ages an egg takes in air, which helps separate the membranes from the shell, making it easier to peel. Check the sell-by date on the carton of eggs. If more than 23 days remain before the sell-by date, the eggs may not peel well.

To peel a hard-cooked egg, gently tap the egg on the countertop until the shell is finely crackled all over. Start at the large end (where an air bubble often is) and lightly pull the shell off. Once peeled, eggs should be eaten that day.

Eggs are an easy and relatively inexpensive way to provide high quality protein in family diets. A dozen large eggs weigh about 1-1/2 pounds, so the price per pound is two-thirds the price per dozen. For example, if large eggs cost \$1.20 per dozen, they cost \$.80 per pound. Since protein foods are often the most expensive items on the grocery list, eggs help stretch the food dollar. One egg equals one ounce of lean meat, poultry or fish. This means you can use two eggs as a main dish at a meal, or use eggs to help a more expensive protein food go farther. For instance, you might add one chopped hard-cooked egg per serving and reduce the amount expensive seafood in a casserole.

Many of us look at the leftover hard-cooked eggs and see egg salad or deviled eggs. Add some interest to these standard recipes with some diced bacon or ham, chopped green or red bell pepper, or chopped pickles. For those who might have health concerns about consuming eggs, look for ways to decrease the use of the yolks. Make an egg salad using three whites to each yolk and add plenty of diced celery or green pepper. Use low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise or salad dressings, too.

Chop hard-cooked eggs more easily using a pastry blender in a deep bowl. To make filling deviled eggs mess-free, scoop the filling mixture into a plastic bag, squeeze it toward the bottom and snip off a corner with scissors. You can squeeze just the right amount back into each egg white.

Be sure to use up your hard-cooked eggs before the week is out!

## Egg and Spinach Side Dish

2 pkg. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry  
1-1/2 cups mayonnaise  
5 hard-cooked eggs  
1/4 cup shredded parmesan cheese  
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes  
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt

In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients. Spoon into a greased 1-1/2 qt. baking dish. Bake at 350°F for about 30 minutes, until heated through. Yield 4-6 servings. (*Reduced fat or fat-free mayonnaise is not recommended for this recipe.*)

### **Firecracker Deviled Eggs**

6 hard-cooked eggs  
1/3 cup salsa  
3 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream  
3 tablespoons minced green onions  
1 tablespoon chopped black olives  
1 teaspoons lemon juice  
Parsley springs optional

Cut eggs in half lengthwise. Remove yolks and set whites aside. In small bowl, mash yolks with fork. Stir in remaining ingredients, except parsley, until well blended. Refill whites, using one heaping tablespoon yolk mixture for each egg half. Chill to blend flavors. Garnish with parsley, if desired.

### **Egg, Tomato, and Avocado Salad**

4 hard-cooked eggs, chopped  
2 avocados, chopped  
2 tomatoes, chopped  
3 green onions, sliced  
1/4 cup fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped  
Fresh leaf lettuce or spinach leaves  
Dressing:  
2 tablespoons mayonnaise  
2 tablespoons sour cream  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon dill weed  
1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Mix dressing ingredient in a small bowl and set aside. Combine eggs, avocados, tomatoes, onion and parsley in a large bowl; toss gently to mix. Add dressing and stir gently to evenly coat ingredients. Refrigerate at least one hour. To serve, spoon egg mixture onto lettuce leaves.

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