

back to basics

eggs (part 1)



Eggs can be cooked in minutes and are the perfect base to create endless healthy and economical dishes. **Sarah Swain** takes us through boiling, scrambling and omelettes.

Healthy egg cooking techniques

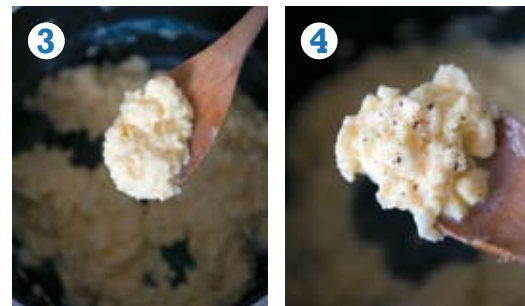
Scrambled eggs

- For best results, the eggs should be well beaten with a fork before cooking so the yolks and whites are well mixed.
- Use a non-stick pan and a wooden spoon.
- Use a low-fat spread suitable for cooking. I use Logicol.
- Beat 3 eggs together with 2 tablespoons trim milk. Use 1½ teaspoons low-fat spread for cooking.



For perfect scrambled eggs, melt the low-fat spread in a non-stick pan and run it around to coat the base of the pan.

Pour in the beaten eggs and cook them gently, stirring every 20 seconds, ideally with a wooden spoon.



The eggs will start to scramble. Continue stirring every 20 seconds until you have the eggs at your desired consistency.

Take the eggs off the heat when they are still a little wet if you like your scrambled eggs very moist, as they will finish cooking in their own heat while on the way to the table. Season with black pepper.

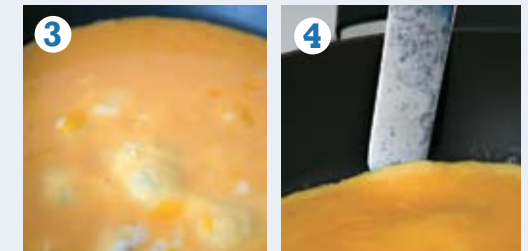
Omelettes

For 3 eggs (to serve 2 people) use 1½ teaspoons low fat spread. Beat the eggs thoroughly so that the yolk and whites are well mixed.



Melt the low-fat spread in a non-stick frying pan over a moderate heat. Make sure the hob is heating the entire pan base.

When the spread begins to foam, add the eggs. Shake the pan to distribute the eggs evenly.



After 40-45 seconds the eggs will begin to set on the base in the centre first. Continue to cook over a moderate heat while the entire base becomes set.

To test to see if the base is cooked all over, use a palette knife to lift at the edges.



At this stage you can add any sliced vegetables you like to create a vegetable omelette. Scatter over evenly.

Cook for a further 30 seconds, then use the knife to fold one side of the omelette into the middle. Fold in the other side and serve.

The basics

Storage

- Eggs are best stored in the fridge as their freshness deteriorates at warmer temperatures. Eggs are best stored in the carton.
- Store them pointed end downwards to prevent breakage and minimise dehydration.
- Eggs are porous and will absorb strong flavours and smells, so store them well away from strong-smelling foods.
- Egg yolks placed in a container and covered with water to prevent them from drying out will keep in the fridge for up to two days.
- Egg whites can be put in a covered container and will keep for up to two days when stored in the fridge.
- Hard-boiled eggs can be stored in the fridge and used within two days.

Testing for freshness

- To test for freshness, put an egg in a bowl or glass of water.
- If it sinks and lies on its side, it is fresh.
- If it floats with its rounded end on the surface of the water, it is stale.
- If an egg floats in the middle of the water with its rounded end up, it is not stale but it is probably two or three weeks old.



Boiling an egg



- Remove the eggs from the fridge about 30 minutes before using.
- Cover the egg with cold water in a small pan. Cover the pan. Bring the water to the boil. Uncover the pan. Reduce to a simmer.
- Soft-boiled eggs need to be simmered for 2-3 minutes.
- Hard-boiled eggs need to be simmered for 8-10 minutes
- To shell hard-boiled eggs, as soon as you remove them from the boiling water, crack the shells all over with a spoon and immediately plunge the eggs into a bowl of cold water for a couple of minutes. This helps stop the dark circle forming around the yolk and makes eggs easier to shell.

back to basics eggs (part 2)

Sarah Swain has more tips on making the most of the versatile egg. This month: poaching and baking.

Whisking egg whites

- For perfect results with egg whites, make sure the bowl and beaters are completely grease-free.
- Place egg whites in a large bowl. Allow them to come to room temperature.



1 Begin whisking on a slow beating speed, until the egg whites begin to froth.

2 Increase the speed to 2 or 3.

3 After 30-40 seconds, increase to a higher speed. Continuing whisking until you have reached the desired thickness.

4 Soft peaks are ideal for an egg white omelette. Stiff egg whites are ideal for meringues.



How to poach eggs

A poached egg on toast makes a perfect quick, healthy light meal or breakfast choice. Here's how to get a perfect poached egg:

- Fill a frying pan with 10cm of water and add a teaspoon of vinegar (this helps the egg keep its shape).
- Bring the water to a boil. Break the egg into a shallow cup or dish with a lip for easy sliding.

- Slide the egg into the pan. As soon as the water returns to a boil, cover the pan. Turn off the heat and stand for about 2 minutes, or until a light film of white has set over the yolk. Do not lift the lid until after 2 minutes as the steam helps cook the egg (a glass lid will make this easier).
- Lift the eggs out with a slotted spoon.



Recipes

BAKED OMELETTE

Vary the vegetables you add to this dish and they make a great choice for an economical meal.

SERVES 4

Time to make: 20 minutes

Cost per serve: \$1.60

3 medium potatoes

6 eggs

4 tablespoons trim milk

cooking oil spray

1 cup mushrooms, sliced

1 onion, sliced

1 cup frozen peas or **sweetcorn**

lemon pepper seasoning to taste

½ cup grated edam cheese

Step 1 Slice the potatoes and cook until tender. Drain and cool slightly.

Step 2 Beat the eggs together with the milk.

Step 3 Cook the mushrooms and onion in a little spray oil.

Step 4 Add to the eggs with the potatoes and peas or corn. Add lemon pepper seasoning and cheese, toss to coat the vegetables evenly.

Step 5 Spoon into a lightly greased ovenproof dish. Bake at 190°C for 25-30 minutes, until the eggs are set. Cut into wedges and serve with a salad.



PER SERVE (4 serves)			
Energy	1340kJ	Sugars	4.1g
	(320 cals)	Fibre	4.2g
Protein	22.3g	Sodium	326mg
Total fat	17.3g	Calcium	317mg
Sat fat	8.1g	Iron	3.4mg
Carbs	19.1g		

*See page 94 for details

SPICY BAKED EGGS

The tomato and lentil mix can be made up in advance and then the egg broken into each dish as required.

SERVES 4 as a light meal

Time to make: 35 minutes

Cost per serve: \$2.01

½ cup red lentils

1 tablespoon oil

1 red or white onion, finely chopped

1 red capsicum, deseeded and diced

2 tablespoons sun-dried tomato pesto

chilli powder for sprinkling
400g can diced tomatoes with herbs

4 x size 7 eggs

Step 1 Cook the lentils in plenty of boiling water for 10 minutes. Preheat the oven to 190°C.

Step 2 Heat the oil in a pan and cook the onion until softened.

Add the capsicum and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the pesto and chilli powder and cook for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes and lentils and heat through.

Step 3 Divide the mixture between four ovenproof dishes. Make a slight hollow in the base of each dish and break the egg into the middle. Use a fork to fluff up the edges and enclose the egg a little. Bake for 15-20 minutes.

HFG



PER SERVE (4 serves)			
Energy	850kJ	Sugars	7.5g
	(204 cals)	Fibre	2.8g
Protein	10.3g	Sodium	330mg
Total fat	12.7g	Calcium	95mg
Sat fat	2.9g	Iron	3.6mg
Carbs	11.5g		

*See page 94 for details



Sarah Swain is a food writer and stylist. She has worked extensively in the UK on magazines like *Family Circle* and *Slimming*.

Photography: Joanna Wickham Styling: Sarah Swain



FRUITY EGG CUSTARD

A great way to encourage the family to eat fruit.

SERVES 4 TO 6

Time to make: 45 minutes

Total cost: \$4.93 / per serve \$1.23

- peaches in natural juice** 400g can
- eggs** 3, size 7
- custard powder** 2 teaspoons mixed with 1 tablespoon cold milk
- vanilla essence** 1 teaspoon
- sugar** 4 tablespoons
- trim milk** 2 cups, hot
- ground nutmeg** a sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 160°C.

Drain the peaches and pat dry with kitchen paper. Spoon into an ovenproof dish. Blend the custard powder with the cold milk until smooth.

Whisk the eggs together with the vanilla extract and sugar. Gradually whisk in the hot milk. Strain this egg mixture through a sieve. Stir in the blended custard mix. Pour the mixture over the fruit.

Bake for 35-40 minutes until the

custard is set. Serve warm or cold sprinkled with nutmeg.

Variation: Prepare the custard as above without adding the peaches. Serve topped with fruit like kiwifruit, grapes, oranges or berries.

HFG

LOW
kJ

PER SERVE (4 serves)

Energy	830kJ (198 cal)	Sugars	26.9g
		Fibre	0.6g
Protein	10.8g	Sodium	140mg
Total fat	4.9g	Calcium	215mg
Sat fat	1.7g	Iron	1.3mg
Carbs	28.1g		

*See page 94 for details

tip: Once cooled, these egg custards can be kept chilled in the fridge for a day.

See next month's HFG for part 2 of our guide to perfect eggs.



Sarah Swain is a food writer and stylist. She has worked extensively in the UK on magazines like *Family Circle* and *Slimming*.

Photography: Joanna Wickham Styling: Sarah Swain