

Why soft-boiled eggs are better 05/29/2004 14:15

Hen's eggs are known to have been popular with the Romans who usually started breakfast putting away "wholesome hen's fruit".



However, sentiments about eggs have continued changing ever since. They were accused of much cholesterol, or regarded as heavy food, or blamed for containing a host of micro-organisms, like salmonellas, or for being the cause of diathesis. All this is true.

But the truth is also that by not eating eggs humans lose a lot. The most important component of the yolk is lecithin, which is effective against sclerosis as it reduces cholesterol levels. However, the overeating of eggs would do harm, because cholesterol will start accumulating rapidly and lead to damaging plaque deposit.

According to internationally accepted guidelines, a healthy person can eat 4 to 5 eggs per week including eggs added in baked goods or salads. People with cardio-vascular disorders or who are diathesis-prone should eat them twice as few.

Eggs are a valuable source of amino acids and two eggs are equivalent to two glasses of milk or a medium-sized serving of meat. In terms of nutritional value and protein content, eggs exceed even fresh meat or new milk. With a high content in vitamins, amino acids and minerals needed for the proper metabolism and concentrated in the yolk, eggs are recognised as dietary products. As the yolk is rich in phosphor, eggs are particularly beneficial for mental workers.

Fresh eggs are most wholesome and we prefer them in contrast to the Chinese who favour baked eggs, or the Africans who are fond of fertile eggs.

The "age" of an egg is easy to tell. Fresh eggs are translucent against light, have no dark spots and have less than a one-centimetre wide air space at the dull end. There is a simpler and, none the less, efficient way to determine the egg's freshness by placing it in a vessel filled with water. A fresh egg will remain on the bottom; a 3 to 5-day-old one will slightly go up with its dull end upward; and a stale egg will bob up.

An unpleasant and penetrating odour of the egg otherwise looking fresh more often than not is caused by low quality chickenfeed. Such an egg cannot cause food poisoning, but its disagreeable smell may persist even after it has been heat-treated or in the served dish.

Raw egg is a hazard to health even if a hen known to you laid it. First, it takes a very long time for the stomach to digest raw egg white. Secondly, it is not known what feed the hen walking by itself ate, but it is well known that micro-organisms can easily penetrate through the shell to the egg white and may cause a disease. Raw yolk is not that dangerous.

Hard-boiled eggs show the reverse picture with boiled albumen digested easily, while the yolk tends to lose some of its qualities and it takes about three hours to be digested. So soft-boiled eggs are the golden mean.

Eggs are most wholesome when they are coddled, i.e. when its white turns harder, but not too much, and the yolk maintains its liquidness. That may be achieved by boiling them slightly. The water should be salted to keep the shell intact. The egg may be put in the boiling water off the stove for 10 minutes, then the water is replaced by a new portion of boiling water, in which the egg is kept for a couple of minutes more. In this way, the yolk stays liquid, and the white thickens to a tender mass.