

Views from VanDeWalle

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Egg Production

With the Easter season among us eggs become a very popular item. Whether it is dyeing eggs with children, making deviled eggs or just the symbolism eggs have for Easter and “new beginnings”. How much do you know about eggs and the process it takes to get eggs from the farm to your table? According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA), about 280 million laying hens produce approximately 60 billion dozen eggs per year in the United States. That's roughly one hen for every man, woman, and child in the country.

Here are some other interesting facts about chickens, also from the NDA.

- A hen requires 24 to 26 hours to produce an egg. Thirty minutes later, she starts all over again.
- An average hen lays about 270 eggs a year. A hen starts laying eggs at 19 weeks of age.
- Young female chickens, called pullets, become hens at about 20 weeks of age. A pullet's career as a laying hen lasts about two years.
- Hens with white feathers and ear lobes produce white shelled eggs. Hens with red feathers and red ear lobes produce brown shelled eggs.
- Eggs contain the highest quality food protein known. It is second only to mother's milk for human nutrition.
- Egg yolk is the major source of the egg's vitamins and minerals. Egg white, also known as albumen, contains more than half the egg's total protein, various nutrients, and zero fat.
- Yolk color depends on the diet of the hen. Natural yellow-orange substances such as marigold petals may be added to light-colored feeds to enhance colors. Artificial color additives are not permitted.
- As a hen ages she produces larger eggs.
- It is believed that Christopher Columbus' ships carried to this country in 1493, the first of the chickens related to those now in egg production.
- To tell if an egg is raw or hard-cooked, spin it! If the egg spins easily, it is hard-cooked but if it wobbles, it is raw.

Nebraska Egg Facts & Statistics

Nebraska's laying hen population of approximately 9 million birds produce over 2 billion eggs annually. Currently, Nebraska ranks 10th in the nation in commercial egg production. Commercial egg production in the state comes from three major sources: Michael Foods Egg Products Company in Wakefield, Nebraska; Henningsen Foods, Inc. in Omaha, Nebraska; and Nebraska Eggs, Ltd in Carroll, Nebraska.

Nebraska is a leading state nationally in the production of further processed egg products, due to the success of further processed egg companies, Michael Foods Egg Products Company and Henningsen Foods, Inc. The majority of these products are used commercially in food service operations around the world.



Easter Egg Safety Tips

- Eggs should be refrigerated at 40 degrees F or cooler before and after coloring.
- If eggs are set out for decorations or used for egg hunts, they may no longer be safe to eat, especially if handled by many little hands and not kept cool. Standard guidelines are no more than 2 hrs. unrefrigerated.
- Make sure all handlers wash their hands before coloring and decorating eggs
- Older boiled eggs peel most easily.
- Quick boiling egg tips: Place eggs in a saucepan, add water to cover eggs by 1 inch and a teaspoon of vinegar for better coloring after cooked. Cover pan and bring to boil for 2 minutes, turn off heat and let eggs stand off burner for 10 minutes. Then rinse with cool water and place in refrigerator.
- Eggs can be stored safely in refrigerator for 1 week. Do not peel the eggs and then refrigerate as they are more prone to bacteria contamination from other stored foods in the refrigerator.
- Consider 2 sets of eggs, one for decorating and eating and another for the Easter Egg hunt fun.

Source: <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2011/04/a-dozen-egg-safety-tips-for-easter/>