

Frequently Asked Egg Questions

Inspired by Students and Teachers from the Farm-to-Table Virtual Field Trip

Q: What's the difference between brown eggs and white eggs?

A: The breed of hen determines the color of the shell. Hens with white feathers and ear lobes lay white-shelled eggs; hens with red feathers and ear lobes lay brown eggs. There is no nutritional difference between a brown egg and a white egg.

Q: Why don't the eggs we eat hatch and become chickens?

A: In order for an egg to hatch, it has to be fertilized. The eggs in the grocery store are laid by hens, which have not mated with a rooster, so they are not fertilized.

Q: How are eggs graded?

A: Farmers grade their eggs by the interior and exterior quality at the time it is packed. Grades include AA, A or B and are based on the size of the egg along with the size and thickness of the white and yolk. You can find out more on the specifics of grading [here](#). There is no difference in the nutritional value between different grades.

Q: About how many shell eggs does the U.S. population consume in a year?

A: The average American eats 250 shell eggs per year, which means on average, the U.S. eats more than 76.5 billion eggs. Luckily, egg farmers produce approximately 79 billion eggs each year!

Q: How many eggs does a hen lay per year?

A: The average hen lays one egg approximately every 26 hours, which is about 265 eggs per year.

Q: How long does it take eggs to get from the farm to the grocery store?

A: Most eggs in the U.S. reach grocery stores and other retail outlets just one-to-two days after being laid and nearly all of them reach the store within 72 hours or three days.

Q: How many egg farms are there in the United States?

A: To date, there are approximately 180 egg-producing companies with flocks of 75,000 hens or more. These companies represent about 95% of all the layers in the United States. In 1987, there were around 2,500 operations. (Number of operations in 1987 includes some contract farms and divisions.) (Source: *United Egg Producers*)

Q: What do hens eat?

A: Hens are fed a high-quality, nutritionally balanced diet of feed made up mostly of corn, soybean meal, vitamins and minerals to produce quality eggs. Hormones are never given to chicks or egg-laying hens.

Q: Do all eggs have the same nutritional value?

A: While the nutrient content of eggs can vary slightly based on the breed of the chicken and what it's being fed, the overall nutrient content of eggs is the same, with each egg providing lots of essential vitamins and minerals and high-quality protein.

Q: Do eggs need to be refrigerated?

A: Refrigeration is the best way to ensure egg quality. Fresh eggs can be stored in their cartons in the refrigerator for four to five weeks beyond the carton's pack date, or Julian date, which is usually located on the side of the carton. It's best to keep eggs in the carton they came in, on an inside shelf of the fridge rather than the door to help keep the eggs from picking up odors or flavors from other foods.