

The girls are busy laying brown eggs



Off The Burner
Albert Cipryk

I might as well come clean. You'd probably find out anyway. I have a new lady. Well, actually, she is my new egg lady. She started out as my fruit and vegetable lady but as we became a little more familiar, she let me in on her new project. She was going to add protein to her list of comestibles.

Don't get her started talking about this new project. She'll lose you in her inventory of girls she has billeted out behind the barn — 54 of them, all laying brown eggs. She's talkin' Plymouth Rock, Light Brahma, Golden Laced Cochin, Buff Orpington, Australorp and a couple of the boys, Foghorn Leghorn types, just to keep the girls in line and to make sure nothing untoward happens to them.

Cheryl Barnes, no doubt soon to become known as the egg lady, is selling the eggs from the back door of her house where you may have seen her fruit and vegetable stand, INN THE PINES, at the corner of Lakeshore Road and Seventh Street in Port Dalhousie. Don't visit too early because the girls aren't really finished their business until late morning. In fact, some don't finish grunting 'til early afternoon.

In order to keep the girls happy, Cheryl lets them free range after they have laid in the morning — stretching their bods out in the fields. Picking at scraps, insects and vegetation to supplement their official laying diet is what gives the eggs the extra colour and pizzazz in the flavour department.

To produce an egg, the hen requires about 24 to 25 hours work along with about 5.5 ounces (165 g) of food and 10 ounces (300 mL) of water.

Because birds preceded man in the evolutionary chain, both eggs and birds have been around longer than historians. Nobody really knows when the first fowl was domesticated although Indian history places the date as early as 3200 BC. Egyptian and Chinese records show that fowl were laying eggs for man in 1400 BC. The dependability of the rooster's early morning call and the regularity with which newly laid eggs appeared inspired the Chinese to describe fowl as "the domestic animal who knows time."

It is believed that Columbus' ships carried the first of the chickens related to those now in egg production to this country. These strains originated in Asia and are the ancestors of most laying hens in North America.

Eggs are among the most nutritious of foods. While no one food (other than mother's milk, perhaps) provides everything that humans need, the egg contains a wide array of necessary nutrients. It was, after all, made to supply everything for the creation and nourishment of a baby chick.

Egg protein is of such high quality that it is often used as the standard by which other protein is measured. Egg protein contains all the essential amino acids (building blocks of protein which the body needs but cannot make) in a pattern that matches very closely the pattern the body needs. This is why eggs are classified with meat in the food groups and why egg protein is called complete protein.

A moderate amount of fat, about 5 grams, is found in a large egg yolk. About 1.5 grams are saturated. An egg contains varying amounts of 13 vitamins (but no vitamin C) plus many minerals. An egg yolk is one of the few foods which contain vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin.

Too often eggs get a bad rap because of their fat and cholesterol content. One large egg contains about 213 mg of cholesterol. Anyone whose body has a propensity to absorb more cholesterol than is good for them should be aware of this.

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance found in every living cell in the body. It is made in necessary amounts by the body and is stored in the body. It is especially concentrated in the liver, kidney, adrenal glands and the brain. Cholesterol is required for the structure of cell walls, must be available for the body to produce vitamin D, is essential to the production of digestive juices, insulates nerve fibres and is the basic building block for many hormones. In other words, cholesterol is essential for life.

Your body produces all the cholesterol it needs. Most of the cholesterol found in the blood and tissues comes from this internal synthesis. However, dietary excesses, too many calories, too much fat and saturated fat and high intakes of cholesterol, may increase the level in the blood. Saturated fat has the greatest influence on raising blood cholesterol.

Dietary cholesterol, found in all foods from animals, does not automatically raise blood cholesterol levels. Generally the body compensates for dietary cholesterol by synthesizing smaller amounts in the liver, by excreting more or by absorbing less. It is pretty much an established fact, elevated blood cholesterol does increase the risk of heart disease. Eggs are good for you. Too many eggs may not be good for you.

Visit Cheryl. Let her tell you about the girls.

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