



# EGGS

## **An introduction to eggs...**

Both the white and yolk of an egg are rich in nutrients - proteins, vitamins and minerals with the yolk also containing cholesterol, fat soluble vitamins and essential fatty acids. Eggs are an important and versatile ingredient for cooking, as their particular chemical makeup is literally the glue of many important baking reactions.

Since the domestication of the chicken, people have been enjoying and nourishing themselves with eggs. As a long time symbol of fertility and rebirth, the egg has taken its place in religious as well as culinary history. In Christianity, the symbol of the decorated egg has become synonymous with Easter. There are lots of different types of egg available, the most commonly raised are chicken eggs while more gourmet choices include duck, goose and quail eggs.

## **Nutritional highlights**

Eggs are a very good source of inexpensive, high quality protein. More than half the protein of an egg is found in the egg white along with vitamin B2 and lower amounts of fat and cholesterol than the yolk. The whites are rich sources of selenium, vitamin D, B6, B12 and minerals such as zinc, iron and copper. Egg yolks contain more calories and fat. They are the source of cholesterol, fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K and lecithin - the compound that enables emulsification in recipes such as hollandaise or mayonnaise.

Some brands of egg now contain omega-3 fatty acids, depending on what the chickens have been fed (always check the box). Eggs are regarded a 'complete' source of protein as they contain all nine essential amino acids; the ones we cannot synthesise in our bodies and must obtain from our diet.

## **Did you know...**

A study published in Paediatrics magazine has suggested that giving young children just one egg a day for six months, alongside a diet with reduced sugar-sweetened foods, may help them achieve a healthy height and prevent stunting.

## **The cholesterol question**

For years eggs have been considered more of a health risk than a healthy food. This is because they were considered a high cholesterol food, so those with high cholesterol levels were advised to avoid them. We now know that the cholesterol found in food has much less of an effect on our blood cholesterol than the amount of saturated fat we eat. If you've been advised by your GP to change your diet in an attempt to reduce your blood cholesterol levels, the best thing to do is to keep to daily guideline intakes for saturated fat (20g for the average woman and 30g for the average man) opting instead for mono-unsaturated fats found in olive and rapeseed oils. It's also a good idea to increase your intake of fruit, vegetables and fiber whilst minimizing sugars and refined carbs.

## **Eggs for health**

Eggs are rich in several nutrients that promote heart health such as betaine and choline. During pregnancy and breast feeding, an adequate supply of choline is particularly important, since choline is essential for normal brain development. In traditional Chinese medicine, eggs are recommended to strengthen the blood and increase energy by enhancing digestive and kidney function. Eggs are a useful source of Vitamin D which helps to protect bones, preventing osteoporosis and rickets. Shop wisely because the method of production – free range, organic or indoor raised can make a difference to vitamin D content. Eggs should be included as part of a varied and balanced diet. They are filling and when enjoyed for breakfast may help with weight management, as they high protein content helps us to feel fuller for longer.