



Egg Storage Primer

The egg is definitely one of nature's marvels! But in order to safely enjoy eating this versatile, nutritious and delicious food, eggs must be stored properly.

Only buy refrigerated eggs with clean, unbroken shells. Do not wash store-bought eggs before storing or using them. Washing and sanitizing is a routine part of commercial egg production, so eggs do not need to be re-washed when you get them home. Store your eggs in the refrigerator. Most refrigerators have an egg storage compartment in the door, but unless you seldom open the refrigerator door it is best to store eggs on an inside shelf at 41 degrees F or colder. Frequently opening and closing the refrigerator door causes temperature fluctuations. Slamming the door may also cause shell breakage. Eggs should be stored in their original cartons which help keep them from absorbing unwanted odors and flavors from other foods in the refrigerator. The egg carton also helps to prevent moisture loss from the eggs which keeps them at their peak freshness. This is especially important in a frost-free refrigerator.

Fresh, uncooked eggs in their shells and in the carton can be kept refrigerated at least 4 to 5 weeks past the pack date stamped on the carton. Properly handled and stored eggs rarely spoil. If eggs are kept too long, they will simply dry up.

Hard-cooked eggs must be cooled and then stored in their shells in a carton in the refrigerator. These eggs must be used within one week of cooking. When storing hard-cooked eggs, you may notice an odor in your refrigerator. This odor is caused by hydrogen sulfide which forms when eggs are cooked. It is harmless and usually disappears within a few hours. For Easter eggs, refrigerate hard-cooked eggs in their cartons if you won't be coloring them right after cooking and cooling. Then refrigerate them again after you dye them. Don't display them for more than two hours. Eggs displayed longer than two hours at room temperature should only be used for decorative purposes or for hiding, *not* for eating.

For outdoor eating occasions, eggs must be kept refrigerator cold in a cooler. Unless you can keep eggs in a cooler with constant cold temperatures, it is best to use dried eggs for such outdoor activities as hiking, camping, boating and backpacking. Dried eggs can be purchased at most sporting goods stores and are quick and easy to use.

If your recipe calls only for egg yolks, refrigerate leftover whites in a covered container for up to four days. If you need only the egg whites for a recipe, store leftover yolks in water in a covered container in the refrigerator using within one to two days. If you can't use up the yolks quickly enough, hard cook them by carefully placing them in a single layer in a saucepan. Add enough water to be an inch over the yolks. Cover and quickly bring to just a boil. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered in the hot water for about 15 minutes. Remove yolks from the water with a slotted spoon and store in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days. Hard-cooked whole eggs become tough and watery when frozen.

If you have more eggs than you can possibly use within a few weeks, they can be frozen, just not in the shell. Freeze only clean, fresh eggs. For egg whites, break and separate the eggs, one at a time, making sure no yolk gets into the whites. Pour the whites into freezer containers and seal tightly. Label each container with the number of whites and the date. Freeze. For faster thawing and easier measuring, freeze each white in an ice cube tray and then transfer them into a freezer container.

Egg yolks require special treatment before freezing. If yolks are frozen as is, they will thicken or gel and will be almost impossible to use. To avoid jelling, beat in one-eighth teaspoon salt or one-and-a-half teaspoons of sugar or corn syrup per quarter cup yolks (four yolks). Label the container with the number of yolks, the date and whether you added salt or sweetener. Salted egg yolks work great for main dish recipes and sweetened yolks can be used in baked recipes or desserts. One tablespoon thawed egg yolk equals one large fresh yolk. If you want to freeze whole eggs, beat the whites and yolks together, pour into freezer containers, seal tightly, label as to number of eggs and date. Freeze promptly. Frozen eggs are best used within one year. Substitute 3 tablespoons thawed whole egg for 1 large fresh egg. Defrost frozen eggs, egg products and cooked egg dishes overnight in the refrigerator. Cook thawed eggs thoroughly and serve them promptly.

Combination dishes containing eggs may or may not freeze well, depending upon the recipe's ingredients, the wrapping in the freezer and other factors. Most egg-containing combination dishes should be frozen for no more than 1 to 3 months. Reheating a frozen egg dish can be done while it is still frozen, just make sure that the center internal temperature reaches 165 degrees on a reliable kitchen thermometer. Promptly refrigerate egg-containing

leftovers in shallow containers. Thoroughly reheat and eat the leftovers within two to three days. After three days, discard any egg-containing leftovers.

Some recipes call for eggs to be at *room temperature*. For these recipes, remove the eggs from the refrigerator 20 to 30 minutes prior to using, or put the eggs in a bowl of warm water while getting other ingredients ready to use. Unless a recipe specifically calls for *room temperature eggs*, use eggs straight from the refrigerator.

By following these simple storage tips, you can safely enjoy eating “incredible edible eggs”.

The Wyoming Food Safety Coalition (WFSC) is dedicated to preventing food borne illness. This collaborative program is sponsored by the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, Wyoming Beef Council, Department of Agriculture (WDA), Department of Health, Environmental Health Association, and Lodging and Restaurant Association. For information about food safety or the WFSC, please contact your local county Extension office; WDA Consumer Health Specialist; or City-County Health Department.

Sources:

Denise Smith, University of Wyoming Extension Educator – Nutrition and Food Safety
Egg Handling and Care Guide, 2nd Edition, American Egg Board
How to Buy Eggs- Home and Garden Bulletin Number 264, USDA
Eggcyclopedia, 3rd Edition, American Egg Board

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