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Buying Eggs for Home Use



Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics
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Buying Eggs for Home Use

J. W. Goble

"Where to buy eggs" is a problem that confronts many homemakers. Consumers may lack technical information about eggs but they all know a "good" egg from a "bad" one. Their problem is to find a place where they can purchase eggs of a quality that will satisfy their needs.

To secure fresh eggs, many consumers buy directly from producers. Even by this method the quality is not always as it should be since many producers do not candle fresh eggs. Consequently, many consumers report blood spots in eggs purchased directly from producers. These could be eliminated if the farmers who sell at retail would take time to candle all eggs regardless of the freshness.

The majority of consumers are not fortunate enough to be able to buy directly from flockowners, but must purchase from stores or produce dealers. Grocery stores are the principle retailers and therefore, are most directly responsible for the quality of eggs which the housewife receives.

To secure good eggs at a store, the consumer must rely primarily upon the integrity of the merchant. The storekeeper should keep eggs under refrigeration at all times since they are perishable and will deteriorate rapidly if precautions are not taken. Consumers should insist that the storekeeper display eggs in a refrigerator, not in the open. Eggs that are kept in a warm store for four days (70°-80°) will lose as much quality as those held for several weeks in a refrigerator. During hot weather, deterioration is more rapid.

The homemaker should never buy eggs that are displayed in bulk for advertising. Such eggs are of questionable quality since there is no way of knowing the length of time they have been displayed in the warm room.

Always demand eggs with clean shells. A dirty egg may have better interior quality than one with a clean shell but there is an element of chance involved. Too often dirt is an indication that the producer was disinterested in the quality of the eggs. It also indicates that the merchant is indifferent to supplying his customers with high quality food products or he would refuse to offer dirty shelled eggs for sale. It has been proven that bacteria on dirty shells can pass into the interior and cause decomposition.

When consumers buy eggs, they may find several grades offered for sale at different prices. This is confusing unless a person is familiar with the various names for qualities that are used to identify eggs. Such names as farm fresh, fancy, select, etc. have no uniform meaning. The homemaker must learn by trial what quality she can expect when buying eggs labelled with various descriptive terms. Again the quality and uniformity of products labelled in such a manner depends upon the integrity of the merchant. A term may have a different meaning when used by another merchant and the same quality may not be obtained when buying in different stores. Such a situation can be avoided if a store sells eggs graded according to the official United States Standard of AA, A, B, and C. Such terms have a definite meaning and are uniform in any area. However, the grade label is an assurance of quality on the date of grading and can be maintained only if kept under proper conditions which includes refrigeration at all times. If the merchant displays United States Grade A eggs on an open counter, there is no assurance that the eggs will be of that particular quality. Only those that are graded officially under the Federal or

Federal-State programs can carry the letters U. S. prefixed to the letter designating the grade. Some states have set up grading programs stipulating grades that can be used and the definition of each. Eggs of each grade are uniform throughout that particular state. Generally, the state grades are closely related to the United States Grading Standard.

The use of grading standards does not prevent the use of trade brands. Brand names may be as important as previously except that the use of uniform grading terminology will help the consumer to know what quality can be expected.

Determining Good Buys

In checking on "good buys" the consumer should consider the relationship of size and grade to price. These factors should all be considered to determine what grade is the most economical to purchase.

Within the same grade there may be a wide spread in the retail price between various sizes. For example, a dozen Grade A small eggs may be 10 cents cheaper than a dozen Grade A large. If an allowance is made for the differences of weight; the small eggs will have the same food value as the larger. Medium eggs weigh about $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ or $1/8$ less than large, and small eggs weigh approximately 25% , or $\frac{1}{4}$ less than large eggs.

Table I. Comparative Values in Grade A Eggs Based
On Weight¹

When Large Grade A Eggs, with a minimum weight of 24 oz. per dozen cost	Medium Sized Grade A Eggs, with a minimum weight of 21 oz. per dozen, are as good or better value at	And small Grade A Eggs, with a minimum weight of 18 oz. per dozen are as good or better value at
(Cents)	(Cents)	(Cents)
46-50	40-44	34-38
51-55	45-48	38-41
56-60	49-52	42-45
61-65	53-57	46-49
66-70	58-61	50-52
71-75	62-66	53-56
76-80	66-70	57-60
81-85	71-74	61-64
86-90	75-79	64-68
91-95	80-83	68-71

¹ U. S. Department of Agriculture, P.M.A.

Price comparisons similar to that shown for Grade A can be made for those of other grades.

The homemaker should also make price comparisons between eggs of the same size but different grades. Often Grade B large are more economical to use for cooking purposes and may be just as satisfactory as if Grade A large eggs were used.

When buying eggs, the cost per pound should be considered in making price comparisons with other foods.

A comparison is made in Table II, between the cost per dozen eggs of several sizes, and the corresponding cost per pound if the same values were used.

Table II. The Per Pound Prices of Eggs¹ (Retail)

Size	Weighing	Cost per oz.	Cost per lb.
Extra Large	26 oz. per	\$ 0.80	\$.4815
	doz. or 1 lb.	.85	.525
	10 oz. @	.90	.555
		.95	.586
Large	24 oz. per	.75	.500
	doz. or 1 lb.	.80	.533
	8 oz. @	.85	.567
		.90	.600
Medium	21 oz. per	.65	.496
	doz. or 1 lb.	.70	.534
	5 oz. @	.75	.572
		.80	.611
Pullet	18 oz. per	.50	.446
	doz. or 1 lb.	.55	.491
	2 oz. @	.60	.536
		.65	.580

¹ Dr. Fred P. Jeffrey, University of Massachusetts

Checking Interior Quality

The interior quality of eggs may be determined by breaking them in a flat plate. Those of Grade A quality will have a large proportion of firm white which stands up high around the yolk. The yolk will be high and relatively small in diameter. Eggs of B and C grade will have a smaller proportion or no thick white. When eggs of these grades are broken out, the white will spread out and the yolk will generally be flattened and break easily.

The differences in quality may be readily seen if eggs of various grades are hard cooked in the shell. The yolks in Grade A and Grade AA are usually well centered. In eggs of C quality, the yolk is often irregular in outline and off center. The yolk is normally lighter in weight than the albumen and will rise near the top when the albumen becomes thin due to age or heat. When the yolk rises as in Grade C, it usually floats to one side near the shell where it may eventually stick causing the egg to become inedible.

In general, there is little or no difference in food value between eggs of different grades, however, there is a difference in flavor and palatability. Because of these differences, eggs of the various grades are generally used for different cooking purposes.

Quality of Brown Shelled Eggs

Shell color may affect the price of eggs but does not affect the food value, flavor or the interior quality of an egg. In some areas, white shelled eggs bring more than those with brown shells whereas in other areas, a reverse situation may exist. The price differential is due only to personal preferences of consumers. If eggs of the same quality but different shell color are broken out, it is impossible to distinguish between them.

A few consumers have the opinion that brown shelled eggs are less satisfactory for baking purposes than those with white shells. Tests have shown the idea false.

Eggs with brown shells differ from white only in the strength of the shell. Those with brown shells can withstand more shock before breaking than eggs with white shells.

Caring for Eggs in the Home

If the homemaker buys eggs of high quality, she also has a responsibility for maintaining the quality until the eggs are consumed. Deterioration will begin if she leaves them in a hot car while shopping, or lets them stand in a warm kitchen. If careless, she will lose the quality that others have made a diligent effort to preserve.

The best method of maintaining the quality of eggs is to put them in a cool place immediately after purchasing. They should preferably be placed in a covered container within the refrigerator to prevent them from losing moisture, absorbing flavors, and deteriorating.