



*Open rain or shine
to October 30th*

**Thursday afternoons
1:00 to 5:30 pm**

BELMONT CENTER

Conveniently located behind the Leonard St. stores – in the municipal parking lot off Cross Street and Channing Road – where it's easy to run . . . walk . . . bike . . . and "SHOP LOCAL" for food and all your other needs!

In this issue . . .

**Eggs: So Many Choices!
Deciphering Egg Terminology
Food for Thought: Raising Chickens in Belmont
Recipe for Easy Egg Frittata**

The Belmont Farmers' Market is a member of the Belmont Center Business Association.

The Egg Hunt

By Elissa Ely

In our house, the relationship with the egg—the very idea of the egg— has followed the egg's standing in the outside world. We embraced eggs when they were a symbol of good breakfast care, shunned them when they were unhealthy, and recently opened our arms again when they came under re-prieve. Science is no help, because it can't seem to decide: high in cholesterol (bad egg!) but also high in omega oils (good egg!); full of salmonella when raw (bad, bad, doubly bad raw cookie dough!) but also full of protein when flipped in a pan (excellent omelette!).

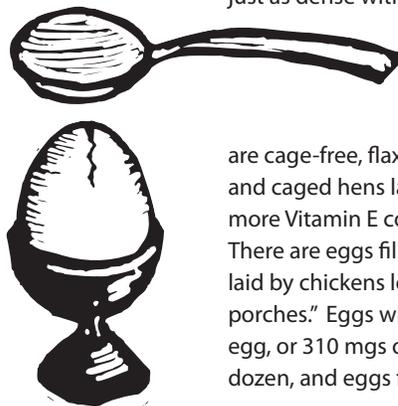
Once upon a time, those of us in the suburbs went to the local store to buy eggs. Sometimes, we passed a farm stand and found them still warm. Their pedigree was unknown and unnecessary. We only wanted to scramble a few.

But now we are a society filled with excess, teetering on the fall of our empire. Take an egg—take a dozen eggs—but which ones? A recent late night research expedition to Shaw's illuminated the problem. Between the wall of cheeses and the wall of yogurts is a wall of eggs: name brand and generic, brown and white, medium, large and extra-large. Then comes the fine print. This box is from cage-free hens, fed vegetarian diets without hormones or antibiotics—\$4.99 a dozen. These others come from vegetarian hens, fed

"whole grains" but caged (a confession in the tiniest letters), —only \$3.49 a dozen, since presumably freedom comes at a higher cost. There are eggs from cage-free hens, both vegetarian, with 25% less saturated fat. There are Grade AA eggs from "happy chickens that lay better eggs," for \$3.99. Different but, we hoped, equally happy chickens lay eggs with 200 mgs of omega-3 per egg. And because enough is not enough, arranged above the boxes are the Egg-Beaters ("great nutrition with real eggs"): southwestern style, garden vegetable, three cheese or plain.

Hoping for clarity, we drove to Whole Foods the next day. The egg wall there is smaller, but just as dense with choice. There are eggs from organically fed hens in "no cages" and eggs from "free-running" hens NOT given organic feed. There are cage-free, flax-seed fed vegetarian hens, and caged hens laying eggs with "six times more Vitamin E compared to ordinary eggs." There are eggs filled with selenium and lutein, laid by chickens lounging in "sunlit barns and porches." Eggs with 225 mgs omega-3 per egg, or 310 mgs omega-3. Eggs for \$4.69 a dozen, and eggs for \$3.19 a dozen.

As a concept, choice is desirable. In practice, it has become all mixed up. We have stunningly little of it on the one hand: no choice in decisions about going to war, about surveillance of private citizens, about gas prices laid out by companies making their largest profits in history. But, on the other hand, we can buy whatever subspecialty of egg we want.



(continued on page 4)

The Incredible Egg

A local expert deciphers common egg terminology

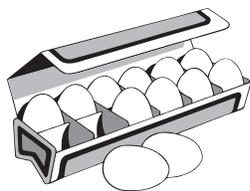
"Nothing stimulates the practiced cook's imagination or the nutritionist's enthusiasm like a good fresh egg, for eggs contain all the balanced nutrients from which a complete organism develops." So say Irma S. Rombauer and Marion R. Becker in their classic, *Joy of Cooking*.

Have you ever wondered why the egg is so universally loved and admired? Even though small in size, eggs are nutritious and low in fat and calories. One could say that eggs are a nutrient-dense food, i.e., a high ratio of nutrients to calories. The major nutrients in eggs are proteins called albumens. The egg consists of a yolk, which is surrounded by the egg albumen, commonly known as egg white. The protein in egg white is of such high quality that it could sustain life.

In today's marketplace, eggs come with several different labels: Range-free, organic and/or omega-3/DHA/Vitamin E. Here is what these egg labels mean.

Range-free means that, although the hens are raised in cages, they are certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to have had access to the outdoors. Although the birds can exercise outside of their cages, they may not have access to silage and a sustainable food supply other than that provided in their cages. Exercising outside of the cage may improve the meat but may not alter the nutrient content of the eggs.

Organic means that the chickens are given no antibiotics or growth hormones during their lifespan. For organic foods to be labeled "organic" means a government-approved certifier must inspect the farm where the food is grown to make sure all the rules necessary to comply with USDA organic standards are met.



Omega-3/DHA/Vitamin E means that chickens are raised on feed fortified with a source of omega-3 fatty acid, DHA (a type of omega-3 fatty acid), or vitamin E. Eggs need fat in their yolks in order to sustain growth and development of chicken embryos. Chickens fed regular feed have a greater amount of cholesterol, a kind of fat, in their yolks than those fed omega-3 fats. Conversely, chickens fed feed fortified with omega-3 fats have slightly lower levels of cholesterol and greater omega-3 fat in their yolks. Eggs containing docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, have similar levels of fat as other eggs. Limited evidence suggests an association between DHA and EPA and reduced mortality from cardiovascular disease for the general population.

Nutrients in Eggs: Eggs are an excellent source of essential nutrients, including protein, fat, as well as a host of vitamins and minerals. Vitamins in eggs in the highest quantities include vitamins A, D, B-12, riboflavin, and choline. The egg white from a large egg contains about 17 calories and no cholesterol, while a large egg yolk has about 59 calories, for a total of about 76 calories. Eggs also contain saturated fatty acids and about 213 mg of cholesterol.

For some time this cholesterol feature of eggs has curtailed selecting eggs as a menu component. Saturated fat, trans fat as well as cholesterol are contributors to blood cholesterol levels. The 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consuming less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat and less than 300 mg/day of cholesterol and keeping trans fatty acid consumption as low as possible. Eggs are part of the meat and protein group in the MyPyramid.gov daily eating guide. This means eggs, because of their rich protein source, are for many people a good substitute for meat.

Belmont resident Shirley Blakely, PhD, is a Registered Dietitian.



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

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2008 Vendors

- **Angelato** artisan gelato and sorbetto made in Belmont
- **B & R Artisan Bread** handcrafted loaves made with natural ingredients
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Crystal Brook Farm** fresh goat cheeses
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** produce
- **The Farm School** organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, soap, grass-fed meat
- **Fiore di Nonno Cheese** handcrafted fresh mozzarella
- **Glutenus Minimus** gourmet gluten-free cookies
- **Hmong Farms at Flats Mentor Farm** fresh produce featuring Asian vegetables
- **Herb Lyceum** specialty herbal plants, herbal products, and foods
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit, and apples
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, pies, honey
- **Merrimack Valley Apiary** special honey
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants and fresh organic eggs
- **Sassy River Sauces** savory sauces without the fat
- **Shootflying Hill Sauce Co.** dessert sauces
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat and freshly-cut flowers
- **Stuffie's Pastries** cupcakes and a signature almond bar
- **Thoreau Foods** organic cereals, toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Trooper's Treats** all natural dog treats
- **Underwood Greenhouse** potted plants grown in Belmont
- **Waverley Place** flowers, herbs, and perennials grown in Waltham



Food for Thought

Residents share their passion for fresh food, farmers' markets, and good living

The Girls. That is what we call them. The hens, that is, who live in the hen pen that is next to and under the deck of our Belmont home.

Chickens in Belmont! Is that allowed? What do they do in the winter? Do they make noise? Do they smell? Do you eat the eggs? Do you eat the chickens?

We are always ready for astonishment that we keep chickens in Belmont. Our response is almost always the same. They're no trouble. A lot less trouble, in fact, than our dogs. We do have a permit, although when our wonderful animal control officer, John Maguranis, handed me the permit with muted ceremony, he added, "Just don't ask me for a goat."

I'd love to have a goat, but I won't push my luck. The girls live outside all year, even in the winter. They don't mind cold, but do mind being wet and in the wind, so we're sure to give them a dry, sheltered place to go, especially in the winter.

No, they don't make noise, except for a few proud clucks when someone has laid an egg. John won't let us have a rooster because they do make noise. And we don't need a rooster to make eggs, unless we also want chicks.

The girls don't smell, because I put down fresh hay when I catch even a whiff of barnyard. If, as another old chicken hand in Belmont told me, you keep the nitrogen and the carbon in balance, your coop will never smell. (Manure is the nitrogen, of course, and hay the carbon.)

Twice a year I get my pitchfork and, enduring the amusement of my sons, muck out the hen pen completely, putting all that decomposed hay and chicken poop into the compost pile to become fantastic fertilizer. The rest of the year I stop by the Agway in Waltham once every six weeks or so and pick up a fresh bale

of sweet-smelling straw hay to spread over across the pen. The girls seem to love it when I do, and flounce their feathers and prance around as if I had bought them a new dress.

Yes, we eat the eggs. Oh my, do we ever! I collect three to four eggs a day: three brown and one blue-green. The color on the outside says nothing about the taste on the inside, which is wonderful. Our hens eat layer mash and cracked corn, but also lots of food we meant to eat but didn't: wilted lettuce, moldy cheese, stale bread, bits of bacon, even egg shells. They also eat the bolted lettuce from the garden and the weeds that I pull from the perennial bed. All that variety in their

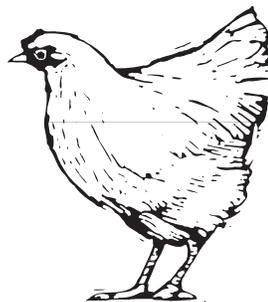
diet means that their eggs are incredibly good. The yolks are bright orange, rather than pale yellow, and stand up like orbs rather than flat pools. These eggs have lots of nutrients in them that other eggs just don't.

Usually eaten within hours or days of being laid, my hens' eggs are fresh. Fresh eggs are

different from supermarket eggs. They taste better. They bake better. They poach better, whip better and make a cook's life better. Really. There is no comparison.

So we eat our hens' eggs, but no, we don't eat our hens. They are, after all, pets, with names no less: Eleanor, Julia, Hillary and Oprah. (All opinionated females.) And that is what we enjoy most of all about keeping chickens. They are the best companions, always interested in what we're doing (and if we're going to throw them a weed), happy to be given a pat, proud of the eggs we're collecting, and eager to share their excitement over the worm they just found. We just love having the girls around—they make Belmont an even better place to live.

—Gale Pryor, Belmont resident, writer and former editor of Roots & Sprouts.



(continued from page 1)

This is a good thing. There is a catch, though. Thanks to the choices others have made, many of us are less able to buy the eggs we might wish to buy these days. The healthy contents of food and the humanity of production have come at higher costs, which have grown harder to afford in these times.

We have heard there is a woman in Belmont, a neighbor actually, who raises chickens and enjoys the fruits of her own family. We mean to visit her soon. She must have an opinion on this.

Elissa Ely, MD, is a practicing psychiatrist, Belmont resident, and frequent contributor to The Boston Globe. Elissa's neighbor is Gail Pryor who expounds on life at home with chickens in her article about "The Girls" on the preceding page.



What's Fresh in ... October

apples
beans
beets
broccoli
Brussels sprouts
cabbage
carrots
cauliflower
celeriac
celery
garlic
herbs
kale
leeks
lettuce
melons
onions
parsley
parsnips
pears
potatoes
pumpkins
raspberries
rutabagas
spinach
swiss chard
turnips
winter squash

The Market thanks YOU!

As our third season closes, we want to thank you, our readers and customers, who've helped to make the Belmont Farmers' Market a shopping success and a delightful community meeting place. We also want to hear from you! Please go to our web site and complete the brief survey.

We thank our local businesses and vendors . . .

Angelato, A Chocolate Dream, Belmont Pet Store, Belmont Toys, Charlesbank Bookshop, Frankie's Catch of the Day, Kitchen on Common, Patou Thai Restaurant, Pho and Thai, Stone Hearth Pizza, and Savinos Grill. Also vendors Quebrada Bakery and Kimball Fruit Farm.

Thank you for displaying our red tomato Farmers' Market signs . . .

All Saints Episcopal Church; Beth El Temple Center; and First Church in Belmont UU; as well as Cushing Square Auto Service; Fabyan's Hair Salon; Get in Shape; Pleasant Street Getty and Pleasant Street Shell.

And thank you for making music . . .

Meyer Family Brass Trio; Julia L.; Karen Allendoerfer and daughter Helena; Powers Music School Classical Guitar Trio directed by Jay Rosenberg; Julia M. and Mirella B; the Lockett Family Trio; Leslie and Gabriella; and Xylia F.

We hope to be back next year. Meanwhile, we urge you to shop local in Belmont all year long. Keep Belmont Center vibrant, save gas, and enjoy the chance to meet friends whenever you are in town!

Easy Egg Frittata

Fresh eggs taste so good they need little to dress them up. We love a simple meal of a frittata, fresh bread, and a salad, using whatever fresh vegetables we have on hand. You can finish the frittata under the broiler or, by flipping it over using a large plate, and cooking the other side in the frying pan. Use the freshest eggs you can get, such as those from the Belmont Farmers' Market, Codman Farm or other farm stands, or by offering to do chicken duty when your neighbors who keep hens go away for the weekend!

3 tbsp olive oil
3-4 potatoes, 1/2 inch diced or thinly sliced
Salt and pepper.
5-6 eggs

In an 8 to 10-inch non-stick frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the potatoes and cook until just soft. Season with salt and pepper. Beat the eggs and pour over the potatoes. Turn the heat to low and cook until the eggs are set, 10 minutes or so. Finish by putting the frying pan under the broiler or by flipping the eggs onto a large plate and then cooking the other side in the frying pan. Serve hot, warm or cold.

Modify this recipe to suit your mood, what you have on hand, or what else you are serving. It's delicious with asparagus in springtime, broccoli or cauliflower in summer, or winter squash in the fall. Vary the seasonings or add onions, scallions, or leeks as they appear at the Market. Cheese can be incorporated as well by mixing it in with the eggs; sprinkling Parmesan, cheddar or goat cheese on top are all good.

*—Suzanne Johannet
gathers eggs from her own backyard "girls"
and helps manage farmers' market Thursdays in Belmont Center.*