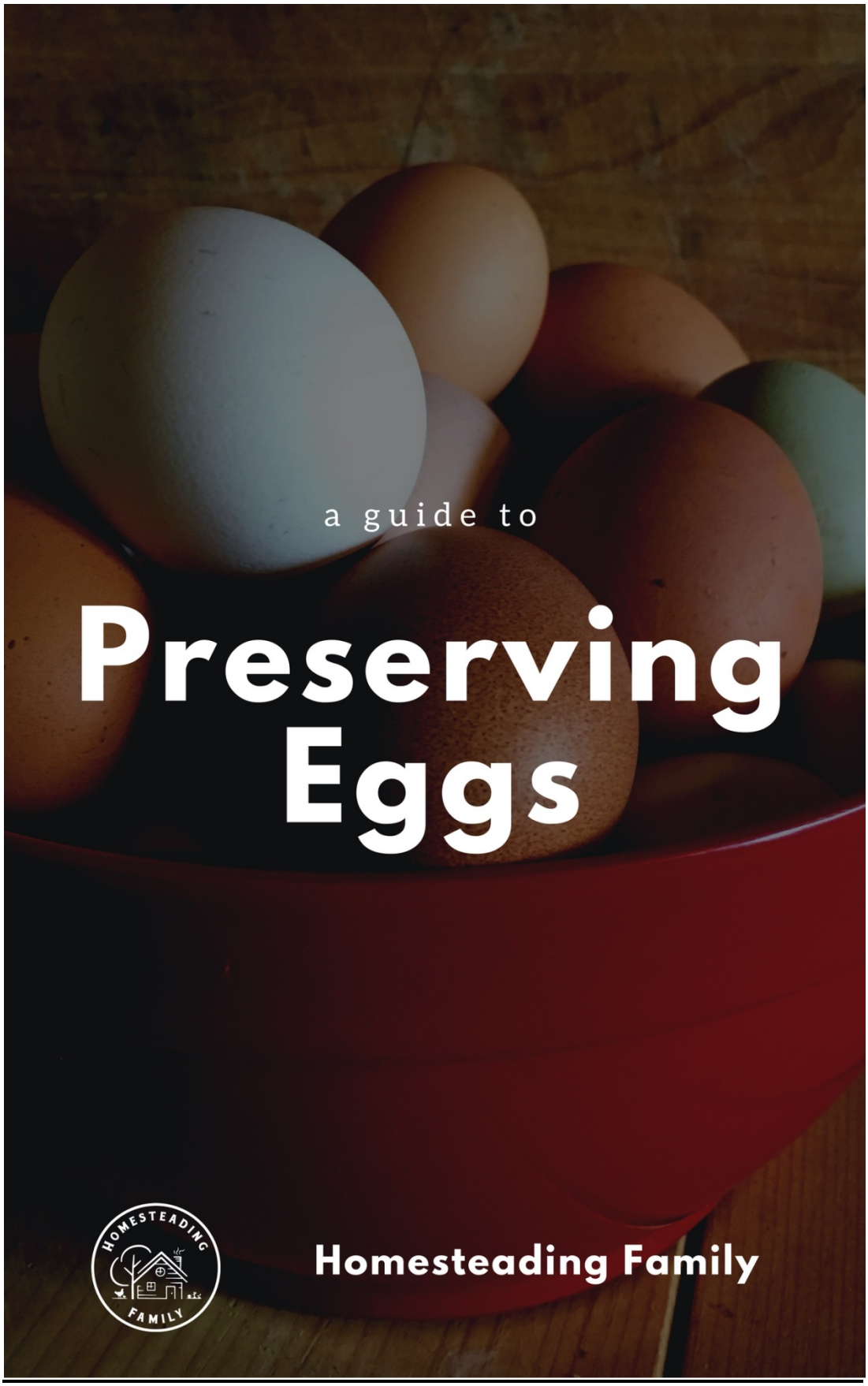
a guide to
Preserving Eggs
HOMESTEADING FAMILY
Homesteading Family

Homestead Eggs

Owning chickens can be a great experience. Their entertainment value alone is about worth keeping them. Then they can work, tilling your land, debugging the garden and fertilizing all at the same time. But it is the egg that makes chickens so special. Once you've had a fresh, golden-yoked egg from a chicken on pasture, it is hard to ever go back to store bought.

Producing eggs on your homestead creates a challenge that you don't have when you buy your eggs every week at the grocery store. It can be summed up in one word: SUPPLY.

When you have your own chickens, sometimes you have a lot of eggs...and I mean a whole lot of eggs. And then sometimes you have none. It is part of the reality of seasonality that has been forgotten because of that ever-full egg case at the supermarket.

Not to fear, you do not have to eat 5 eggs a day when the hens are laying and none when they aren't. You have options.

Types of Eggs for Preservation

Some egg preservation options are better for some types of eggs than others. For the purposes of this book, I have divided them up into 4 categories: 1) Fresh, clean, unwashed eggs 2) Fresh but dirty, unwashed eggs, 3)Fresh, washed eggs and 4)Store-bought eggs.

TYPE 1: FRESH, CLEAN UNWASHED EGGS

These are eggs that come in from the chicken house visibly clean. There are no smudges of barnyard muck or filth on them. These give you the greatest options in usability and storability, so it is worth any extra work it takes to be sure they leave the hen house clean. Put clean bedding in the nest boxes everyday if necessary, but make clean eggs a priority in your egg production program.

TYPE 2: FRESH, DIRTY UNWASHED EGGS

These are the eggs that come in from the hen house dirty. Whether the dirt is mud or muck it contains bacteria that you don't want to eat. Fresh eggs naturally have a waxy coating on them called a "bloom" which protects them from bacteria entering the egg. Washing or dry

buffing eggs removes or damages this bloom, allowing bacteria to enter the egg. Using the eggs in the next few days for breakfast is your best option. Wash them off in warm water immediately before use.

TYPE 3: FRESH, WASHED EGGS

It is best if you don't wash your eggs until you are ready to use them, for the reason listed above. Sometimes though, a well-meaning friend gives you a few dozen of her fresh but washed eggs. There are still some methods of preserving you can use with these eggs but you'll want to be sure to use them in applications where all parts of the eggs are well cooked in the final product.

TYPE 4 STORE-BOUGHT EGGS

Some people don't have their own chickens but they want to keep a backup supply of eggs in their home. That leaves them with store-bought eggs. By law these eggs are washed. They are also raised in conditions of crowding that really increase their chance of elevated pathogenic bacteria counts. Always cook these eggs thoroughly and never store these eggs long-term in their own shells.

Tips for best storability

- Keep your nest boxes clean so your eggs come into the house unsoiled.
- Do not wash eggs that are to be stored.
- If eggs are soiled wash them in warm water and use up quickly.
- When possible, store eggs with their small end down.
- Collect eggs daily... and even more often in hot weather.
- Develop a rotation system so you use up the oldest eggs first.

Checking If an Egg is Good

Sometimes you need to check if an egg is still good. Either you find a nest of eggs under the hen house or you want to see if your stored eggs are still safe to crack open in your house. If you've ever cracked a really bad egg open in your kitchen then you will understand that natural reluctance to chance it with a questionable egg... the experience scars you. Luckily for us, there is a very simple and reliable test for egg freshness.

Just set your egg in a bowl of room temperature water.

Fresh eggs will sink all the way to the bottom and lie completely flat on their sides. These are the eggs that you can use for recipes requiring the freshest eggs... sunny side up eggs, poached eggs, over easy eggs, etc.

Preserving Eggs

Slightly aged but still good eggs will sink to the bottom but one end will tip up. These eggs are the best type to use for boiled eggs. These are also good for scrambled eggs and great to bake with.

Even older eggs will float suspended in the water. These are usually just fine for baking with and scrambling but use them up soon.

Bad eggs will float to the top... carefully remove them from the house!

Common Storage

Use This Method With:

Fresh, clean unwashed eggs

Do Not Use This Method With:

Fresh, Washed Eggs

Fresh, Dirty Eggs

Store-bought Eggs

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

The same as any fresh eggs

Sometimes the simplest solution is the best. Did you know that clean, unwashed eggs can be stored for weeks just out on the counter? Here in the US we always buy our eggs out of a refrigerator case in the grocery store so we are under the impression that they must be refrigerated. But in most of the rest of the world, eggs are left unwashed and sold non-refrigerated.

You can expect an egg to remain good for at least 4 weeks just sitting out on the counter in a fairly cool kitchen; less in a warm kitchen. It is said that a day out on the counter is equal to a week in the refrigerator. What that means is that the cooler you keep those eggs the longer they last. If you have a cool cellar, basement, pantry or other spot that remain a stable cool temperature you can make those eggs last a lot longer.

Eggs kept in the refrigerator or in a similarly cool environment can be expected to keep for about 6 months. That's a long time! Just be sure to set up a rotation system so that you are using up the oldest eggs first. Space is usually the limiting factor for this type of storage. Think of creative ways to store the eggs to maximize space, i.e. putting eggs in a bucket or square shaped food storage bin rather than egg cartons... of course your chances of a mess with a broken egg go way up, so be careful.

Freezing eggs

Use This Method With:

All types of eggs

Do Not Use This Method With:

N/A

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

Baking

Scrambled

Egg-based meals (omelets, fried rice, etc.)

This is a great method for storing eggs if you have extra freezer space. It is also a great way to keep those store-bought eggs or dirty eggs that come into the house. These eggs are great for baking with or for making scrambled eggs.

Figure out how many eggs you want per container... we usually do 6 per quart sized freezer bag, but we are a large family. Maybe 2 is good for your family.

Break your desired number of eggs into a small mixing bowl. Beat eggs just until well mixed, but don't over incorporate air. Pour into a quart sized freezer bag. Push out all extra air. Freeze flat... many of these bags will store in a small space when stacked on top of each other in this manner. Be sure to label your bag and include the date and number of eggs.

To defrost your eggs... just remove from freezer, cut bag open while still frozen and place frozen eggs in a small glass pan. Defrost overnight in a refrigerator.

Larding Eggs

Use This Method With:

Fresh, clean unwashed eggs

Do Not Use This Method With:

Fresh, Washed Eggs

Fresh, Dirty Eggs

Store-bought Eggs

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

The same as any fresh eggs

An old-fashioned method of keeping eggs for a longer time is to keep them under fat/oil or coating the eggs in fat or oil. It does make a mess, either way you do it and oil/fat is fairly pricey for storing eggs in. Not my favorite method, but still a very viable egg preservation method.

Place dry, clean, unwashed eggs in a container and pour oil (olive, mineral, canola) or melted lard over eggs until all eggs are covered. Gently jiggle container to remove air bubbles without damaging eggs. Store eggs in the coolest location available that stays above freezing.

To Use: Simply remove from container, rinse and use. Discard oil/lard when container is empty.

Alternately, dip each dry, clean and unwashed egg in melted lard or oil that has cooled to warm. Set on a rack to dry. Store eggs in egg cartons or fill a bucket with a soft material... oats, salt, or sawdust is good, and nestle the coated eggs into the material, layering more packing material and eggs. Store eggs in the coolest location available that stays above freezing.

To Use: Simply remove from container, rinse and use.

Tip:

Eggs stored this way can take on an odd flavor after prolonged storage. This flavor is usually not noticeable in baked goods.

Preserving Eggs in Lime

Use This Method With:
Fresh, clean unwashed eggs

Do Not Use This Method With:
Fresh, Washed Eggs
Fresh, Dirty Eggs
Store-bought Eggs

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:
The same as any fresh eggs except boiling

Here's an old-fashioned egg preservation technique that we love here at Homesteading Family. This method has been around for hundreds of years at least. I love it for its simplicity. It is cheap to buy the supplies and really quick to preserve the eggs. You can also add more eggs to the solution whenever you get them and take them out as they are needed.

You'll need a large, preferably food grade container, such as a large crock or 5 gallon bucket and a bag of hydrated lime from the hardware store or a bag of pickling lime. Some older sources also call for salt... I've never used it personally but can see the reasoning for it to keep the eggs even better.

Make a solution of 1 quart of water, 1 weight oz. of hydrated lime and ½ oz. of salt (non-iodized). Scale this up according to your container. Be sure that your solution is well mixed, but beware; some of the lime will settle out... that is normal and ok. Usually you want to start with a container ½ filled with the solution and then add your eggs carefully. Use gloves to add the eggs as the lime solution is very alkaline and can dry your hands out quickly.

It is very important to be sure that the eggs remain covered in this solution at all times, so either cover your container with a tight-fitting lid or pour a layer of oil over the top to restrict evaporation. Store container in the coldest, non-freezing location possible, checking often to be sure that eggs remain under the liquid. If the liquid level drops add more solution mixed at the same strength as the original.

Preserving Eggs

To Use: Remove the necessary number of eggs and rinse thoroughly to remove all lime. Use as desired.

Eggs stored in this way will last a long time... but they will still be slowly aging, so expect the quality to drop the longer they are stored. They can take on a bit of a flavor after being stored for some months; this might make them unpalatable for eating as fried or scrambled eggs, but they are usually completely fine in baked goods.

There are reports of eggs being stored in this manner staying in great quality for up to 2 years, but we just store ours in the spring to get us through the low-egg season of winter.

Pickled eggs

Use This Method With:

All types of eggs

Do Not Use This Method With:

N/A

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

Snacking

Egg Salad

Deviled Eggs

Garnishes

Another great time tested method of preserving eggs is to pickle them... this will limit their final use, but give you a ready-made product, ready to snack on at any time. These pickled eggs can be kept in the refrigerator in a large jar for many months.

Start by hard-boiling eggs and peeling them... slightly aged eggs that tilt in a freshness test are the best for this. Adding some vinegar to the boiling water makes them peel much easier. Do not poke eggs.

In a pot on the stove mix 4 cups vinegar (white or apple cider vinegar), 1 cup water and ½ cup salt (non-iodized), until simmering and salt is completely dissolved. Double the brine as necessary for the amount of eggs you wish to use.

In each clean, warmed quart jar add ½ tsp turmeric, 1 clove of garlic and ½ tsp crushed red pepper (optional). Fill the jar with your peeled eggs and then top with brine. Leave 1 inch headspace.

For Refrigerator Storage: Just be sure that your eggs are submerged under the brine, cap your jar (any size) and keep in refrigerator.

©2018 Homesteading Family

Dehydrating

Use This Method With:

Fresh, clean unwashed eggs

Don Not Use This Method With:

Fresh, Washed Eggs

Fresh, Dirty Eggs

Store-bought Eggs

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

Baked Goods

This is a great way to keep eggs on hand for baking. These will last about 3 months in the refrigerator and take up WAY less space than the equivalent in egg cartons. If you make room for them in the freezer they will last for about a year.

Holding raw eggs at a warm temperature for several hours, as in the case for dehydrating them, invites the multiplication of bacteria (salmonella in this case). Be sure to only use fresh, clean eggs (NEVER STORE BOUGHT). Also, make sure their end product is fully cooked before consuming it... don't eat the cookie dough!

Beat very fresh eggs thoroughly. Pour eggs on a fruit leather sheet (maximum 1/4in thick). Dehydrate at 145°F for about 12 hours or until dry and brittle. Break it into small pieces and dry for 2 more hours.

Place into a blender or food processor to powder. Store in a jar or plastic bag in the coldest location available.

To use: Combine 1 ½ Tbsp. egg powder with 3 Tbsp. water for each large egg called for in a recipe.

©2018 Homesteading Family

Noodles

Use This Method With:

All types of eggs

Don Not Use This Method With:

N/A

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

Noodles

If you enjoy noodles all year, store your eggs by making noodles in egg season and drying them for the year. This not only preserves your eggs, but also gives you a quick convenience food throughout the year.

Once dry, keep these noodles in any container that you find to hold them... if you make enough of them a 5 gallon food grade bucket is a great option. Store them in the coolest place available.

Like many things, there are about as many noodle recipes as there are cooks... here is the very basic recipe I often use.

Take all of the eggs you want to preserve, up to 12 per batch, add salt at a rate of 1 pinch per 2 eggs. Now mix in all of the white flour that your eggs can absorb. Knead this until your dough is smooth and elastic. Either use a pasta roller to shape the noodles or roll out dough as thin as possible and slice thinly. Dry on cookie sheets, in a dehydrator or on a pasta drying rack until very crisp and brittle.

To use: Cook in rapidly boiling salted water until tender. Drain.

©2018 Homesteading Family

Eggnog

Use This Method With:

All types of eggs

Don Not Use This Method With:

N/A

Eggs Stored This Way Can Be Used:

Eggnog

Maybe a little surprising way to keep eggs and with limited usability in the end, but if you enjoy a little eggnog around the Christmas season, why not make the base for it now when eggs are plentiful. Storing about anything in alcohol makes it shelf stable... including milk and eggs (but keep it as cool as possible for quality). That's why you can buy cream liquors. After you store them you need to wait at least 3 weeks before consuming, giving the alcohol time to sterilize the eggs, but sterilize them it will! In addition to keeping the eggs safe to eat, aging eggnog mellows its flavor, making for a smoother final product. The amount of alcohol needed to keep these eggs is pretty strong for most of us modest alcohol consumers, so just make a base for the eggnog and add the remainder of the ingredients right before serving to decrease its final alcohol percentage.

In a glass jar, mix 12 eggs, 1 ½ cup bourbon, ½ cup cognac, and 1/3 cups of dark rum with 1 ½ cups sugar. Mix well, label and store in a cool location (cellar or fridge preferably). Age at least 3 weeks and up to 12 months.

To Serve: Shake jar well to mix. Add 6 cups whole milk and ½ cup cream and fresh nutmeg. Feel free to add more milk or cream to taste. Refrigerate overnight if desired to chill.

To use a favorite family recipe instead, just add 1 ½ oz. of 80 proof liquor per egg.

Closing:

Preserving eggs when they are plentiful so that you can use them during the lean times is a great way to spread your resources and become more self- sustaining.

It makes very little sense to give away eggs in the spring and then buy them in the winter, all while feeding the hens year-round. Don't get me wrong... we love giving things away, but it should be done because of a need or as a gift, not because you are desperate to get out from under all of the eggs.

Find which methods work for you and stock up your pantry!

Enjoy,

-Carolyn