

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu**Good News on Keeping Eggs**

Don't you just hate to throw away what look like "perfectly good eggs" because they are a week or so past the date on the carton?! I guess the folks at the USDA hate to throw eggs away too. They just finished up a study to see how much longer eggs will keep. The news is good for all of us, and especially good for singles and people who can't get out to shop every week. Even eggs 10 weeks old were both safe and good!

When eggs are delivered to a grocery they are usually super-fresh. Often they just came out of the chicken the day before! Once the egg is laid it will be washed with warm water and bleach, to kill any bacteria that came from the chicken. Then they're checked for cracks and blood spots, and given a thin coat of oil. The oil replaces the natural coating that was removed when the egg was washed. The oil seals the pores in the egg shell, to keep air in and bacteria out. Then the eggs are packed into cartons for delivery to groceries.

The date on a carton of eggs is a sell-by date. The sell-by date is usually one month after the egg was packed. That's the date that grocery store wants it out of the store and into your home. They also want you to be happy with what you buy, so that you'll come back and buy more. So they want to be sure the eggs will still be good for awhile after you get them home. But, how long will they be good after you buy them? That's what USDA wanted to find out.

The USDA Food Safety researchers checked eggs every week for 10 weeks. They used regular eggs, and kept them in the refrigerator the whole time. Every week

they took a few more out to study. The eggs were checked for at least 5 different kinds of bacteria that often grow on eggs, including Salmonella.

For the first 5 weeks they didn't find any bacteria at all. After that a few bacteria started appearing on the shell, but not many. That means there would be very little chance of any getting into the food when the egg is cracked. Plus, when the eggs are cooked all of them would be easily killed.

The researchers also studied the quality of the eggs. For years we have all been taught that while old eggs are easier to peel, they don't make good meringue or make high angel food cakes. So, USDA made lots of angel food cakes. And they were surprised. Even at 10 weeks, that's 2 ½ months old, the egg whites still made great angel food cakes. They fluffed up nice and tall, just like fresh eggs. There was no loss of good quality.

So, do we have to throw the eggs away after the date on the carton? Not any more. As long as eggs are kept refrigerated, they should be safe for at least another 6 weeks after that date.

Do remember that the shells have pores, so other odors can get in. Since eggs don't have a strong flavor of their own you can notice an unusual flavor. So don't store them next to the onions! Storing your eggs in the cartons they came in is the best way to protect them from other foods in the refrigerator. Keeping them in the carton also helps them keep more of their moisture, which will improve their quality.

Once boiled, eggs should not be stored for more than 1 week if they're still in their shell, or only 3 days if they are peeled.

This week's recipe has eggs, of course, plus plenty of vegetables and brown rice for fiber, vitamins and minerals. If you're in a rush, stuff it into a pita pocket for a meal

on the go. And if you don't have fresh veggies, use a package of frozen vegetables.

### Fried Rice Scramble

1 tsp cooking oil	½ C thinly sliced zucchini or yellow squash
½ C broccoli florets	½ C thinly sliced carrots
2 Tbsp chopped green onions	2 cloves garlic, minced
1 C cooked brown rice	2 eggs, beaten lightly

In 10-inch omelet pan or skillet, stir together oil, vegetables and garlic. Cover. Cook over medium heat about 4-5 min, or until vegetables are crisp-tender. Stir in rice.

Cook, stirring constantly, about 3-5 minutes. Pour in eggs. Cook while stirring gently until eggs are thickened and there is no visible liquid left.

Optional: garnish with more chopped green onion, or bottled reduced-sodium soy, teriyaki or stir-fry sauce. Serves 2.

(Recipe courtesy of the Egg Board)

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