

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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**Egg Season**

If there's one thing I really, really want to salt before I eat, it's a hard boiled egg. As much as I try to keep the sodium intake low, I admit, I still sprinkled a little salt on the Easter egg. My blood pressure doesn't need the sodium, only my tongue does. Once a symbol of life and rebirth, eggs now are probably more associated with cholesterol and heart disease than high blood pressure.

That is not exactly an accurate connection. While it is true that there is cholesterol in egg yolks, most of the cholesterol in our bodies is made by our own livers. If you, or your doctor, are worried about your blood cholesterol levels, you need to pay more attention to the fat in your diet. Specifically you need to limit the amount of saturated fat. That's what your liver uses when it makes cholesterol.

There are a few of us genetically pre-wired to be very sensitive to the cholesterol in our diets. The rest of us could afford to eat an egg a day, maybe even more. But we have to keep the fat in our diets low. That means boiling, poaching or baking the eggs, not frying them in bacon grease. It means using skim milk and low fat cheese in our egg quiche. It's attention to the whole diet, not just to the eggs.

Just be sure you keep them safe. Once an egg is boiled it should only be out of the refrigerator for at most 2 hours. Any time longer than that increases the chances that it has spoiled. If it sat in a child's Easter basket over night, it's probably not a good idea to eat the egg now. If the Easter egg hunt your child participated in used real eggs on Sunday morning, do some checking before you eat them. Ask the organizers how

long the eggs were hidden before the hunt began. Eggs hidden immediately before the hunt should be okay to use. If they were hidden for several hours while everyone went to morning services, they should probably be discarded.

If you're sure they were safe on Monday, and today is Friday, you better use them tomorrow. Raw eggs will be safe for 8 - 10 weeks if refrigerated. But, once an egg is boiled it loses some of its natural defenses. A boiled egg that's still in the shell is considered safe for a week in the refrigerator. If it's been shelled, then 5 days is the limit. All that protein is good food for bacteria, and if they get the chance they will grow.

If you do enjoy hard cooked eggs but not grey-green ring around the yolk, be gentle when you cook them. The green ring occurs when eggs are boiled instead of simmered, or cooked for too long a time. When the yolk is overheated some of the protein breaks down. As it reacts with other proteins, the green color is formed. Overheating is also the cause of tough, rubbery egg whites.

So, for tender whites and yellow yolks, be gentle. Once the water reaches a boil, turn the temperature down. The water should just simmer, not bubble furiously. If you start with eggs at refrigerator temperature, simmer for about 15 to 17 minutes. Warm eggs take a little less time. Drain off the hot water, rinse in cold water, and stick in the refrigerator to cool.

Whether they peel easily or not doesn't depend on how fast you chill them. A fresh egg will not peel easily, a week-old egg will. So plan ahead if you want smooth, flawless deviled eggs. For zero clean-up, put the yolks and other ingredients in a plastic bag, seal and knead until smooth. Cut a corner off the bag and squeeze the filling back into the whites. Here are several variations on the basic deviled eggs, to help you use the last of the Easter eggs. There's a flavor for everyone in the house.

## Basic Deviled Eggs

6 hard-cooked eggs

1/4 C mayonnaise or French dressing

Cut eggs in half lengthwise. Remove yolks to bowl. Mash with mayonnaise until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste. Spoon mashed yolks back into the whites. Sprinkle with sweet paprika.

## Variations

Use any of the following additions to vary the flavor.

Standard - add 2 Tbsp sweet pickle relish, 1/2 tsp dry mustard

Fiesta - use taco sauce instead of mayonnaise, add 1/4 C shredded cheese with taco or jalapeño flavoring and 1/4 tsp chili powder

Herb and Garlic - add 1 1/2 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese, 1/2 tsp crushed oregano leaves and 1/8 tsp garlic powder

Curry - use 2 Tbsp plain fat-free yogurt in place of mayonnaise, add 2 Tbsp bottled chutney and 1/2 tsp curry powder, 1/4 tsp onion or garlic powder

Cheesy - use reduced-fat sour cream instead of mayonnaise, add 1/3 C shredded Cheddar cheese with taco flavoring and 3 Tbsp minced green onions with tops.

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