



Food Safety Facts about Eggs for Food Establishments

Eggs provide essential nutrients that are part of a healthy diet. However, the nutrients that make eggs a high-quality food for humans also make eggs a favourable place for bacteria to grow. Like all foods, it is important to handle and prepare eggs with care.

Eggs can occasionally be contaminated with Salmonella or other microorganisms that can cause illness. It is also possible to contaminate eggs with bacteria from other foods. The most effective way to prevent illness is to know how to buy, store, handle, and cook eggs properly.

Purchasing eggs

- Purchase Grade A or B eggs with clean, uncracked shells.
 - It is illegal to process, serve or sell ungraded or grade C eggs at a food premise. A Public Health Inspector may require proof that your eggs are Grade A quality.
 - Under provincial regulations, eggs sold directly from a farmer (i.e. "farmgate" eggs) are only to be sold to individuals for their personal use. These eggs cannot be used or served in a food premise.
 - Eggs that have been graded at an approved facility will have the egg grade and facility information clearly marked on the container.
- Do not buy eggs that are unrefrigerated. Eggs in the grocery store should always be refrigerated in a cooler at 4°C (40°F).
- Eggs used in a food premises must be purchased from an egg grading station, food supply company or grocery store, not at the farmer's gate.
- Buy only as many eggs as you will need for 1 - 2 weeks.
- Check best before dates on the cartons.

Storing eggs

- Refrigerate eggs at 4°C (40°F) or colder. Refrigeration not only slows the growth of bacteria, if any are present, but it also helps maintain the quality of the eggs.
- Keep eggs in the coldest section of the refrigerator, usually near the back. Keeping them in the egg compartment in the door will not provide a consistent and cool enough temperature.
- Store eggs in their original container. This will prevent the shells, which may contain bacteria, from coming into contact with other foods. This also protects them from odours that eggs could absorb (like apples, onions or fish).

- Don't crack the shell of an egg until you want to use it. If a shell cracks by accident, remove the egg from the shell, store it in a covered container in the fridge and use within four days.
- Hard-boiled eggs can be stored in the fridge in a covered container for up to one week.
- Store eggs below ready to eat and cooked foods.
- Rotate your stock. Follow the "First in, First out" Rule.

Handling eggs during preparation

- Avoid keeping eggs out of the refrigerator for longer than two hours (for preparation and service).
- Cracked eggs must not be used.
- Wash your hands after handling raw eggs.
- Wash and sanitize utensils, equipment and work surfaces that have touched raw eggs.

Cooking eggs

- Cook eggs thoroughly until the egg yolks and egg whites are firm. Scrambled eggs are done when there is no liquid egg left.
- Use pasteurized egg product whenever possible.
 - The Health Unit recommends using pasteurized eggs for such foods as Caesar salad dressing, hollandaise or béarnaise sauces, mayonnaise (prepared from scratch), eggnog and other foods which may not reach 60°C (140°F) during cooking.
 - Use pasteurized eggs if you are serving high risk groups (the very young, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems).
- Do not break large numbers of eggs and hold before cooking.

Serving Eggs Safely

- Serve cooked eggs and egg-containing foods immediately after cooking.
- Eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches or soufflés, may be refrigerated for serving later but must be reheated to 74°C (165°F) before serving.
- For buffet-style serving, hot eggs should be kept at 60°C (140°F) or hotter, and cold egg dishes kept at 4°C (40°F) or colder.
- Newly cooked eggs should not be added to leftover eggs.

Which Grade of Eggs Can I Use?

Food premises must purchase, prepare and serve only Grade A or B eggs for use in their establishment. Grade C eggs or 'rejects' are not permitted under Ontario Food Premises Regulation 562.

Why are eggs graded?

Eggs are graded to assess their safety and quality. In grading eggs, the interior quality, weight, cleanliness and shell construction are all examined.

Food premises may only use and serve eggs that have been graded in a facility registered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Minimum facility standards and routine inspections of these registered grading stations ensure the eggs are handled and packed in a sanitary manner. Currently there are two registered egg grading stations in the Haldimand and Norfolk area, but many other registered stations are in operation across the province and country.

How are eggs graded?

In a grading station, eggs are received, washed, candled, weighed and packed into containers with the applicable federal grade name.

Receiving:

Eggs are received and held in a sanitary, refrigerated holding area which is separate from the area where the eggs are graded.

Washing:

Eggs are washed and sanitized in water of regulated temperature and acidic balance. Washing removes dirt and any bacteria adhering to the shell.

Candling:

Eggs pass over a bright candling light by means of a conveyor that transports and, at the same time, rolls the eggs. The light makes the internal contents of the egg visible allowing a determination of internal defects to be made (i.e. blood spots, meat spots, rot, poor quality yolk, air cell size, etc.). By rolling the eggs as they pass over the candling light, the entire outer surface of the egg can be seen by the grader.

The light makes cracks in the shell visible (some cracks are very difficult to see until candled) and also allows dirt, stains, or excessively rough shelled eggs to be seen.

By this candling process, the grade of the egg is determined.

Weighing:

Eggs are weighed and sorted according to size category for Canada A grade eggs (Jumbo Size, Extra Large Size, Large Size, Medium Size, Small Size and Peewee Size). Each of the sizes has a weight requirement that must be met.

Packing:

Eggs are packed in containers according to their grade and size (if Canada A grade).

Storage:

Eggs are stored at an appropriate temperature in the Graded Cooler until they are loaded into a vehicle for transport to the retail location.

To inquire about registered egg grading facilities in your area, or to report someone selling ungraded eggs to food establishments in your area, contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Grade A eggs are primarily sold at grocery stores in Canada. Only Canada A grade eggs proceed to the scales to be weighed. Grade A eggs must meet the following Canadian Food Inspection Agency standards:

- Reasonably firm albumen
- Round, well centered yolk
- Small air cell (less than 5 mm deep)
- Clean, uncracked shell with normal shape

Grade B eggs have an uncracked shell that might have a rough texture. The yolk is slightly flattened with a watery white. They are sold for commercial baking or for further processing into foods such as mayonnaise, noodles, or baked goods.

Grade C eggs may have a cracked shell, loose yolk, and/or thin and watery white. Grade C are not sold to consumers, but instead to commercial processors for further processing.

Any egg that does not meet the minimums for a 'C' grade are rejected and not used for human consumption.

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