

## **Benefits of Pastured Hen Eggs**

**August 19, 2005 - Telluride Daily Planet**

By Lynn Mayer, MA, CNC

Telluride is a nutritionally savvy town and we are blessed with opportunities for eggs that are from local pastured hens. For those still in the dark, or those who enjoy continued learning and reminders, let's talk about the health benefits of eggs, especially those from chickens handled with consciousness and care.

Hens that are pastured enjoy fresh air and sunlight, room to exercise and natural forage on which to feed. The result is an egg of higher nutritional quality than those eggs from commercial hen-houses. Studies that demonstrate this have been in existence since at least 1974.

The Aug/Sept issue of Mother Earth News has the results from their own in-house study which matches these earlier findings. In their study, the eggs from pastured hens were found to have two to six times more of the omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, folic acid and vitamin A as well as half the cholesterol content of commercial eggs.

It is the green materials of fresh forage that provides B vitamins, carotenes (which are made into vitamin A) and the Omega-3 fatty acids. The exposure to sunlight ensures that the fat will also contain vitamin D. All of these nutrients make their way into the yolk. The darker the orange color of the yolk, the more nutrient dense it is. To compare for yourself, take a look at the color of a commercial egg yolk as compared to that of a pastured hen egg. As you taste it, you will also find the pasture-fed hen egg superb.

The natural forage of hens also includes worms and bugs. We don't like to hear that, but the fatty acid profile of eggs from chickens allowed to eat their natural diet is far superior to chickens fed a grain based diet. The omega-3 to omega-6 ratio in pastured eggs is in a one-to-one ratio. In chickens fed only grains, the omega-6 content can be as much as 19 times higher. Consumption of fatty acids in that ratio is way out of proper proportion for our health.

We have been taught to be scared of saturated fatty acids, but they are necessary for brain development. These important fatty constituents are found in properly produced, pastured eggs. They are almost wholly absent in commercial eggs. Raw egg yolk from organic, pasture-fed hen eggs contains potent ingredients for brain development. For that reason alone it is highly recommended as an important inclusion in the diet of infants and children. For adults, the valuable fatty acids present in pasture-fed eggs help in mental acuity. Who can't use some of that?

Eggs provide the most complete protein on the planet; in fact the amino acid content of an egg is the benchmark on which all other proteins are based upon.

The proteins are denatured, however by thorough cooking, ie scrambled eggs. It is recommended that you frequently have your egg yolks runny, ie poached, soft-boiled or over easy to receive maximum benefit from the egg yolk.

I hear your salmonella panic as you consider raw egg yolk. The salmonella problem has arisen from crowded hen-houses where antibiotics are routinely added to the feed. Eggs from pasture-fed hens pose no problem if properly refrigerated.

Pasture-fed hens are heartier and more resistant to infection due to their being handled with the wisdom of nature. They also get to keep their beaks. The life of a commercial chicken includes de-beaking, crowded quarters, medications, vaccinations, hormones, anti-biotics and no natural sunlight. The result of this upbringing compromises their health and the health of their eggs.

Just say no to this practice. Vote with your pocketbook. Eggs from pasture-fed chickens become more available with consumer demand. Take advantage of our local pastured eggs and send the food industry a message that you will not settle for less.

Next week...the good news about eggs and cholesterol.