

Why Eggs for Easter?

Eating chocolate Easter eggs is a relatively new tradition but the origin of the Easter egg goes back a very long way, as far back as 1290ad. Eggs are a symbol of rebirth and of new life. In medieval times eating eggs was not allowed during the Christian time of Lent. This meant that come Easter Sunday eating eggs became a real treat. This was especially true for poorer people who couldn't afford to buy meat. Also, in medieval times peasants often paid an 'egg rent' to their church and their landlord, this generally fell due at Easter. By the early eighteenth century, this egg rent practice led to the custom of exchanging dyed and decorated eggs among family and friends to celebrate Easter.

These decorated eggs could be from hens, ducks, or geese. Engraved ostrich eggs, which are 6,000 years old, have been found in Africa, according to Gerry Breen writing for Ireland's own 2021. Decorated ostrich eggs or gold or silver ostrich eggs were often placed in graves of the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians 5,000 years ago.

In medieval times there were many superstitions associated with eggs around Easter time.

- For example, it was thought that if eggs laid on Good Friday were kept for 100 years they would turn into diamonds!!
- If you got an egg with two yolks it was a sign that you would soon become rich.
- Some people even believed that eggs cooked on Good Friday and eaten on Easter Sunday would improve fertility and prevent sudden death.

Chocolate Easter Eggs

The first chocolate egg was sold by Fry's in 1873, and other manufacturers began making dark chocolate eggs in 1875. The early Easter eggs were mainly made using smooth, plain dark chocolate but in 1897 Milk Chocolate eggs were first introduced.

In Ireland the consumption of chocolate Easter eggs in the last few years averages at 3 and a half eggs per head of population. Last year population was estimated at 5.01 million so that is 17.535 million Easter eggs. This amounts to a lot of chocolate.

Chocolate Percentages

The percentage of cocoa you read on a label is the measurement of the chocolate's weight that comes from actual cocoa beans (including cocoa liquor and cocoa butter), together known as cocoa mass. So the higher the percentage of cocoa mass, the darker the chocolate. The balance of that percentage includes the other ingredients that make up the chocolate. When a chocolate has a higher cocoa percentage, that means it has more cocoa mass and less room for other ingredients like sugar.

Dark chocolate is usually between 55% and 85%.

Important Nutrients in Hen's Eggs

Eggs are an excellent and inexpensive source of high-quality protein. They are a good source of nutrients such as Vitamin B12, riboflavin, Vitamin D, folate, and choline. Eggs also have some iron. This may not be absorbed as readily by the body compared to other sources of iron. Eating eggs with foods high in Vitamin C like citrus fruits, peaches, sweet red peppers, berries, broccoli, and peas can help absorption of iron.

Bord Bia: 5 Health Benefits of Eggs

1. **High in Protein** - two eggs provide an average man with half of his daily protein requirement! It is the best form of protein important for muscle growth and maintenance. (Daily protein requirement is 1g per kg of body weight)
2. **Calorie Controlled** - on average egg contains about 70kcal and 6g protein making it an ideal choice for those watching their weight, or just wanting to eat a healthy diet.
3. **High in Vitamin D** - the sunshine vitamin - Most Irish people don't get enough of this important vitamin, but 2 eggs give you a third of what you need in a day. Sunny side up please!
4. **Rich in Vitamin B12** - Vitamin B12 is an essential nutrient for nerve function. Two eggs provide you with ALL you need in a day!
5. **Rich in Minerals!** - two eggs provide as much iron as 100g of spinach. They also contain over a third of your daily requirement of selenium and iodine needed for healthy thyroid function and immunity.