

Journey School Food Community CSA

Week 9: February 3, 2007

How do you like the new format? We have wanted to expand the newsletter to share more information about the food we eat, the world we share, and the incredible all around us. If you would rather receive the newsletter by email each week, send us your request (by email!) and we'll be glad to save the paper. One item we very much want to include regularly is a Member Spotlight. Tell us about your business, your family, your dreams, your ideas for a better mousetrap or a healthier world – we are serious about building community. The twenty-two families in our Food Community are compatible and complementary in so many ways. We certainly plan to bring us all together throughout the year – let's get the ball rolling in type.

So.....to pick up where we left off.....Do you know how difficult it is to have your cholesterol checked on Vashon Island? One office told me I would have to wait until mid-March to see the Doctor. The next wanted to know if I had insurance and a family history of cholesterol related disease. The next was very happy to schedule a Doctor's visit for each person in my family to determine if a cholesterol test were necessary. I actually hung up on one receptionist who wanted to know my name, address, and date of birth in order to leave a phone message for a nurse to call me back to discuss cholesterol tests. Jeff found that cholesterol could be tested at home with an over-the-counter test similar to glucose testing strips. Off we trekked to the Vashon Pharmacy where we were told that they had four tests on the shelf for two years and when they expired, they simply weren't replaced.

We've identified a test to purchase online – then found this awesome article about egg nutrition on www.motherearthnews.com Enjoy and send us a story to share! The Mathias Family

THE GOOD EGG

Mother Earth News tests show free-range eggs are more nutritious and have half the cholesterol of supermarket eggs.

By Cheryl Long and Umut Newbury

We have just completed testing eggs from four flocks raised on pasture — the results revealed that compared to supermarket eggs from hens raised in cages, our free-range eggs contained only about half as much cholesterol, were up to twice as rich in vitamin E, and were two to six times richer in beta carotene (a form of vitamin A). For essential omega-3 fatty acids (vital for optimal heart and brain function), the free-range eggs averaged four times more than factory eggs.

Our results are summarized below, compared to the official factory-egg nutrient data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). (See full details of the test results at www.MotherEarthNews.com/eggs/chart.)

We're not the first to report data showing that raising hens in cages produces substandard eggs. In 1988, Artemis Simopoulos, co-author of The Omega Diet, found that eggs from pastured hens in Greece contained 13 times more omega-3s than eggs from U.S. supermarkets. In 1974, a British study found that eggs from pastured hens had 50 percent more folic acid and 70 percent more vitamin B12 than eggs from factory-farmed hens. In 1997, a study in Animal Feed Science and Technology found eggs from free-range chickens had higher levels of both omega-3s and vitamin E than those from hens maintained in cages and fed commercial diets. Most recently, in 2003, Pennsylvania State University researchers reported that birds kept on pasture produced three times more omega-3s in their eggs than birds raised in cages on a commercial diet. They also found twice as much vitamin E

(see rest of article on back page)

Hedging your bets in uncertain times How long could your farm survive without inputs?

Angela Eckhardt
Printed in Capitol Press on
Friday, November 17, 2006

Imagine a crisis so devastating, widespread and lasting that major suppliers were shut down and imports were out of the question. How would you fare if all you could rely on was what you had, the things you knew and the relationships you had built?

It's not a question many people want to dwell on, but the subject comes up often with farmers who strive for self-sufficiency in an uncertain world.

Naturally, this anxiety level tends to increase going into winter and it gets worse if you start to think about various historical events, like the famous "year without a summer" in 1816, when the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia caused climate aberrations throughout the northern hemisphere.

Today's concerns over global climate change keep some farmers - and many other people - awake at night. Temperature increases and rising sea levels are bad enough, but many scientists predict warming trends could dump so much desalinated iceberg runoff into the ocean the "North Atlantic pump" current that brings warm water and weather to the north could shut down entirely and trip off a new ice age.

Then, just last week, a Seattle radio host forwarded me an article warning of an impending and catastrophic collapse of the dollar as foreign governments diversify out of American investments, dropping the floor out from under the debt-ridden greenback and sparking hyper-inflation (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article15440.htm>).

The old-timers' advice not to keep money in banks falls short under this scenario. Coffee cans full of bills wouldn't be worth a thing and gold doesn't fill bellies or keep us warm.

It's common to worry how urban residents would survive a supply-disrupting crisis. One farmer suggested to me major cities would run out of food in 21 days if supermarkets could not be restocked. That's if everyone kept their cool and supplies were parceled out carefully and equitably, not looted in panic.

Most people assume help will come in from elsewhere, and that local farms will quickly begin to fill the voids. Some of those local farmers aren't so sure.

"The first thing I'd have to do is sell most of my animals because I couldn't keep buying feed," said one neighbor. "My equipment would be useless to me without fuel," and without the seed to start fuel crops or the oil presses and stills to process them, a seamless transition to biofuels is unrealistic, he lamented. This is coming from a farmer who has already spent a lot of time thinking about, and working at, building a self-sufficient farm.

As his wife and I peeled and sliced pears from their tree to can for the winter, I felt better to be putting food away, while she offered sobering perspective. In the harsh winters of Minnesota, her grandmother had food preservation worked out to a science: each year the woman canned more than 1,000 quarts so the family wouldn't risk starvation before the next harvest. Her neighbor canned more than 2,000 quarts each year.

The meager stocks we put away these days give peace of mind and concern at the same time. Friends and relatives from near and far have said they're coming to us if major disaster strikes. Loved ones are always welcomed with open arms, but what of the unprepared strangers? The thought of having to defend our farms with loaded weapons against other humans in desperation and need weighs heavy on our hearts.

When basic necessities are as close as the corner market, survival instincts atrophy, but if that changes and those instincts kick in, one shudders to think how people might turn on each other. Our fractured society isn't used to working

together on a voluntary basis; we haven't built trust in our communities.

Four years ago, when my husband and I left the city for the remote Wallowa Valley in Northeast Oregon, we started a project called Freedom Solutions to address these concerns. Our goal was to establish a decentralized network of independently run freedom resource centers. Our family operates Freedom Solutions NW, where we raise livestock guardian dogs and heritage breeds of poultry. We've learned and now teach self-sufficiency skills like fuel production and self-defense. And we maintain a lending library of freedom-oriented movies, documentaries, books and how-to manuals.

Other freedom centers could host farmers' markets, operate ham radios, teach emergency medical care, build seed banks and much more.

Winter is a perfect time to contemplate what skills and resources you have to offer, and where you are lacking. It's the time to speak candidly with neighbors and loved ones, huddled around the wood stove, and to begin enacting plans for a strong society that's prepared for whatever this world has in store.

Angela Eckhardt writes on freedom and farming issues from her home in Lostine, Ore. Her website is www.freedomsolutionsnw.org.

What fruit and vegetable products are you buying at the store now that we can grow for preservation this summer? Tomato sauce? Pickles? Jam? Pesto?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Gratin of Rutabaga with Fresh Rosemary

- 1 pound rutabaga, peeled, cut in half and sliced very thin
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic

In a steamer basket set over boiling water, steam the rutabaga slices, covered, for 3 to 4 minutes, or until crisp-tender. Lift out the basket and allow the rutabaga to drain and cool; pat the slices dry with paper towels. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Butter an 11 or 12 inch oval gratin dish or a 1-½ quart baking dish. Arrange one-third of the rutabaga slices evenly over the bottom and sprinkle them with 1 tablespoon of the flour, ½ teaspoon of the rosemary, 1/3 cup of the Parmesan, and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange half the remaining rutabaga slices over the Parmesan, sprinkle with the remaining flour and rosemary, 1/3 cup of the remaining Parmesan, and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange the remaining rutabaga over the Parmesan and season with salt and pepper.

In a small saucepan over moderately high heat, combine the cream, chicken stock, and garlic and bring the mixture just to a boil. Pour it evenly over the rutabaga layers, and sprinkle the top with the remaining Parmesan. Cover with foil and bake in a preheated oven for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for 20 minutes more, or until the top is golden brown. Let the gratin stand for 5 minutes before serving.

and 40 percent more vitamin A in the yolks of the pastured birds.

Eggs are not the only instance of declining nutrition and other problems associated with industrial food products: Vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables have been declining over the last 50 years (see “Green Gazette,” April/May 2005); and meat and dairy products show lower levels of nutrients in industrial production systems compared to animals raised on pasture (see www.eatwild.com). On the food safety front, grain-fed beef is more likely to be contaminated with toxic E. coli bacteria than meat from pasture-raised animals.

Researching this article, we came across this statement on the Web site of the American Egg Board: “The nutrient content of eggs is not affected by whether hens are raised free-range or in floor or cage operations.”

Because the egg board has a \$20 million annual budget and a nutrition advisory committee of seven physicians and professors, one would think we could trust what it says. But when we asked on which studies it had based this statement, the reply was: “We know of no research on nutritional content of eggs laid by hens who ate exactly the same feed in cage, floor or free-range operations. The nutritional content of eggs is affected by feed, not how birds are housed.” The board is clearly trying to deny what the research shows: Hens housed in free-range conditions are able to consume large amounts of grass, clover, weeds and insects in addition to grain. This diverse natural diet makes free-range eggs rich in nutrients, while hens confined in “cage or floor operations” produce substandard eggs.

The egg board represents the producers who raise chickens in confinement. These producers keep their 300 million chickens entirely indoors. The birds never see grass, let alone feed on it. They raise birds in tiny cages where they barely have room to turn around. They routinely “debeak” the hens so they won’t peck each other to death. They withhold food and water to force the birds to molt all at once. The buildings where birds are confined reek of ammonia from the

accumulated manure. Many birds die of heart failure.

Most of us are aware the chickens that lay supermarket eggs are not treated well. Now, we have clear evidence of what the egg board doesn’t want us to know: Intensive confinement operations are giving us substandard food. We have asked the board to remove its incorrect claims about the quality of free-range eggs. If you’d like to join us, contact the board via its Web site, www.aeb.org.

To help spread the word about this Real Food issue, we’ve created this “Chicken and Egg Page.” Free-range producers are invited to post nutrient test results for their flocks, and we’ve listed the addresses and prices of the labs we recommend for testing. (We are especially interested in receiving nutrient data on eggs from modern “high-production” breeds raised on pasture, and data on how much less grain birds require when kept on pasture.)

Chickens are fun and easy to keep in your back yard. All they need is protection from predators (many folks use a movable pen) and a few minutes of daily care. If you decide not to produce your own eggs, you probably can find a local free-range source. These eggs may cost more than supermarket eggs, but they’ll give you better flavor, lower cholesterol and higher nutrients. Paying a premium is well worth it when you know that the birds were treated well.

Rejecting substandard food by paying more for quality products is the only thing that will improve our food supply and force producers to treat livestock more humanely.

— Mother Earth News editor-in-chief Cheryl Long’s flock of six Welsummer hens was among those tested for this article. Their eggs are shown in the image gallery for this story. Associate editor Umut Newbury is a passionate advocate of Real Food and humane treatment of animals.