

## Farm Fresh Vs Store Bought

These are the facts: The USDA conducted tests comparing the nutritional quality of supermarket eggs to farm fresh eggs produced by hens whose diet is regularly supplemented by grasses, vegetables, and insect protein. These tests revealed that farm fresh 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. Additionally, farm fresh eggs tend to have as much as 50 percent more folic acid and 70 percent more vitamin B12 than eggs from factory-farmed hens.

In regards to food safety concerns, farm fresh eggs tend to be much less of a threat in regards to E coli and Salmonella contamination due to the handling of the family farm-raised product. When laying an egg, a protective coating called the 'bloom' is deposited on each egg. This 'bloom' is what keeps eggs fresher and more viable for hatching during the up to two week period during which the hen is accumulating her clutch before the three week incubation period begins. At factory farms, this protective bloom is washed off – making commercially produced eggs more vulnerable to later contamination. Incidences of E coli and Salmonella poisoning from store bought eggs is what prompted the warnings to consumers not to consume uncooked egg products.

The **American Egg Board** has stated: "The nutrient content of eggs is not affected by whether hens are raised free-range or in floor or cage operations." The AEB makes this statement by citing the main difference between farm fresh eggs and eggs produced in huge commercial operations is housing. This is true in one respect however; the housing difference also allows hens in small, family-owned enterprises to supplement their diet through foraging as they are allowed to roam as did their wild ancestors. 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.

It is natural for the AEB to discount the benefits of producing eggs via small farm flocks since they represent producers who raise chickens in confinement. These producers keep their 300 million hens entirely indoors. The birds never see grass, let alone feed on it. Birds are housed in batteries of wire cages. Commercial pullets (term for young female birds under one year of age), are routinely "debeaked" to prevent them from pecking each other to death – a vice which occurs often in over-crowded conditions. Food and water is routinely withheld to force the birds to molt all at once. The mortality rate in these large commercial flocks is high.

Farm fresh 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 are treated well and consequently are producing a superior product.