

Consuming Thoughts

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Many of us were probably brought up with the potato as the centerpiece of our daily diet. Then, in recent years, some people got the idea that the spud was responsible for the extra bulges and therefore not worth a second glance in the supermarket.

Far too many of us have an unreasonable fear of a perfectly harmless vegetable — the potato. We pass up 100 calories worth of potato for a second helping of

steak. A smart consumer learns to enjoy America's favorite vegetable year-round and serves it in versatile dishes at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.

The potato, of course is a good deal more than starch. Besides being an appetite appeaser, the potato is a low-fat, high-nutrition vegetable that contributes only 80 calories to your dinner plate, and 30 percent of your vitamin C requirement, a good deal less than

most of the foods that might take its place. (Another lamb chop or second helping of roast beef could cost you 300 calories or more. Even your salad dressing is probably higher in calories than the potato.)

If potatoes are so harmless, why the pound-provoking image? One reason, of course, is that potatoes are seldom seen except in the company of high calorie-high fat companions — butter, sour cream, rich sauces, and gravies, shredded cheese, or crumbled bacon. Like a lot of other perfectly good foods, potatoes are the victim of guilt by association.

So, how do you keep a potato virtuous? Become a creative low-calorie cook and strip away the unneeded extra calories in the most popular potato dishes. There are lots of good companions you can provide for everybody's favorite vegetable, sinfully rich-tasting toppings and sauces that only seem fattening.

Here are just a few examples of low-calorie potato companions:

- **Mock sour cream** — non-dairy flakes, averaging 25 calories a tablespoon. Choose low-fat sour dressings, with only a few calories a tablespoon. Heart-smart dieters, take note: Most "vegetable oil" sour cream substitutes are made with highly saturated coconut oil and should be avoided by the cholesterol-wary.

- **Plain yogurt** — only eight calories a tablespoon, with a taste and texture similar to sour cream. Try it mixed with parsley or chives.

- **Low-fat cottage cheese** — about 15 calories a tablespoon. Tangy style small curd cottage cheese has a flavor similar to sour cream. "Whipped" cottage cheese is also available.

- **Homemade "sour cream"** — prepared by whipping equal parts cottage cheese and buttermilk in your blender. About 10 calories a tablespoon.

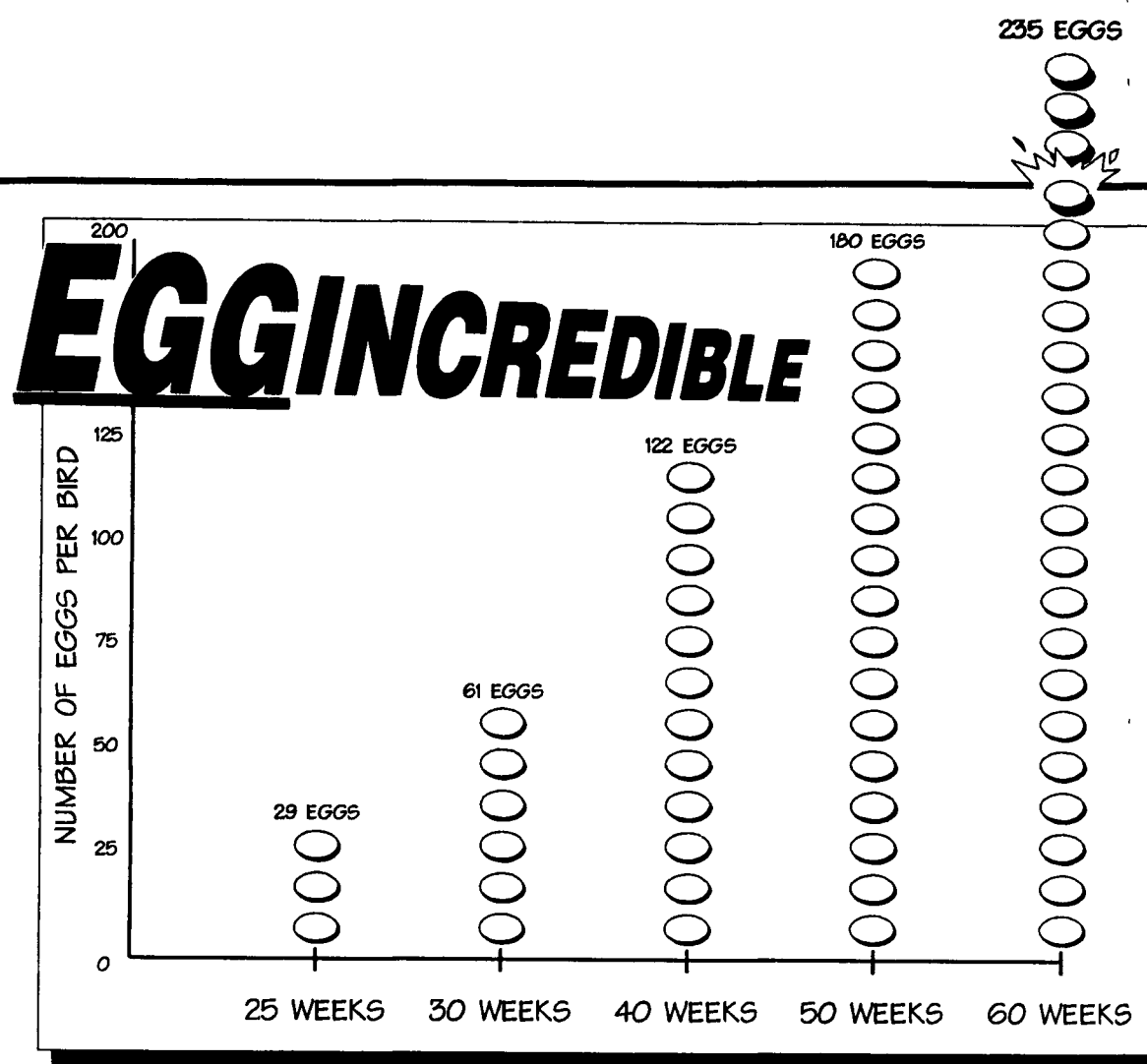
- **Diet margarine** — 50 calories a tablespoon instead of 100 for ordinary margarine or butter. (Note that regular margarine and butter have the same caloric count.) One teaspoon (16 calories) is enough.

- **Diet salad dressing** — pick blue cheese, cream Caesar, French, or any flavor you favor. Most are 10 to 24 calories a tablespoon.

- **Imitation bacon bits** — smokey-flavored soy protein chips at only 7 or 8 calories a teaspoon, a fraction of the calories or real bacon.

- **Low-calorie cream sauce** — made by stirring 1 cup skim milk gradually into 2 tablespoons flour. Cook over low heat until thickened. Season it with onion flakes, butter-flavored salt, and pinch of cayenne. Nine calories a tablespoon.

- **Low-calorie gravy** — made with fat-free pan juices left from a roast. Chill the drippings until all the fat congeals on the surface. Strip off the fat (and calories) and simmer each cupful with 2 tablespoons flour. Less than 10 calories a tablespoon. Canned beef or chicken broth can be thickened the same way.



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