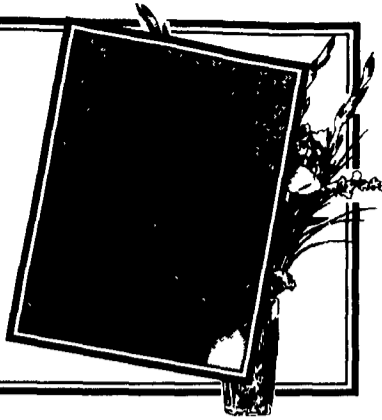


**Family Living
Focus**
by
Ginger Clayton
Mercer County
Extension Agent



**PLAYING IT SAFE
WITH EGGS**

As Easter approaches, many of us begin to stock up on eggs for decorating or to serve in special dishes. Eggs have been used as a source of human food for thousands of years, so there are dozens of ways to prepare eggs.

In some instances, the bacteria Salmonella has been associated with egg consumption. Since we can't tell which eggs may carry the bacteria by looking at them, food safety precautions should be used anytime eggs are handled.

When purchasing eggs, look for ones that have clean, uncracked shells. Be sure that the eggs you purchase are being held in a refrigerated case. Pick up your eggs and other refrigerated foods just before you check out, allowing them to remain under refrigeration while you are shopping. Then, take these foods home immediately and put them in the refrigerator. You should also check the date that is stamped on the egg carton. Don't purchase eggs that are out of date.

When you get the eggs home, always store them in your refrigerator. Eggs do not need to be washed before being stored as they are washed and sanitized at the plant. By washing eggs purchased at the store, you may be washing of a protective coating the plant has placed on the eggs.

Store the eggs in their original carton to retain moisture. Do not place the eggs in the egg holder located on your refrigerator, because as the door is often the warmest part in your refrigerator. Eggs can usually be stored for four to five weeks after purchasing. Eggs that have been removed from the shell should be used within a few days of removing them from the shell.

While the appearance of eggs may differ slightly, these factors are not usually related to the safety of eggs. Blood spots in eggs are caused by the rupture of blood vessels and do not indicate that an egg is unsafe. If the white part of an egg is cloudy, this indicates the egg is fresh. The color of an egg yolk can vary according to the diet of the hen. However, a

pink colored egg white may be an indication of spoilage.

A very important rule to keep in mind whichever way you are preparing your eggs is always wash your hands both before and after handling raw eggs. Countertops, utensils, and equipment that come into contact with eggs should be thoroughly washed with warm, soapy water after use. These rules are important because bacteria from raw eggs can be spread to foods that are ready to eat.

When preparing eggs, cook them until both the whites and the yolks are firm. Scrambled eggs should not be runny. If you are preparing a dish that contains eggs, cook it until it reaches a temperature of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit, according to a thermometer. If you are making an item that calls for raw eggs such as homemade ice cream, Caesar salad dressing, or certain frostings, use pasteurized eggs. Serving undercooked egg products to infants and children, the elderly, or others with weakened immune systems can be very risky as these people are more prone to illness. Try to serve your eggs dishes immediately after preparation for both safety and

quality reasons.

Hard-cooked or hard-boiled eggs are often prepared for Easter egg hunts. Use a food-safe coloring when dyeing eggs. Keep your hard-boiled eggs in the refrigerator until immediately before the egg hunt. If eggs have been out of the refrigerator for more than two hours, they should not be consumed. You may consider preparing additional eggs that will not be used in the egg hunt for consumption. If do plan to eat the eggs that you hide, be sure they are clean and unbroken after the hunt. The eggs should be placed back into the refrigerator immediately following the egg hunt. They should be used within one week since the protective coating on the outside of the eggs is washed away during boiling.

Occasionally, the outside of the yolk of a hard-cooked egg takes on a greenish tint. This happens as a result of a reaction of sulfur and iron compounds. Another possible cause for this reaction could be high amounts of iron in the water in which the eggs have been boiled. This greenish color can also be seen when scrambled eggs are held at a temperature that is too high for an extended period of time. While it is not visually appealing, this greenish tint is not harmful and the eggs can still be consumed.

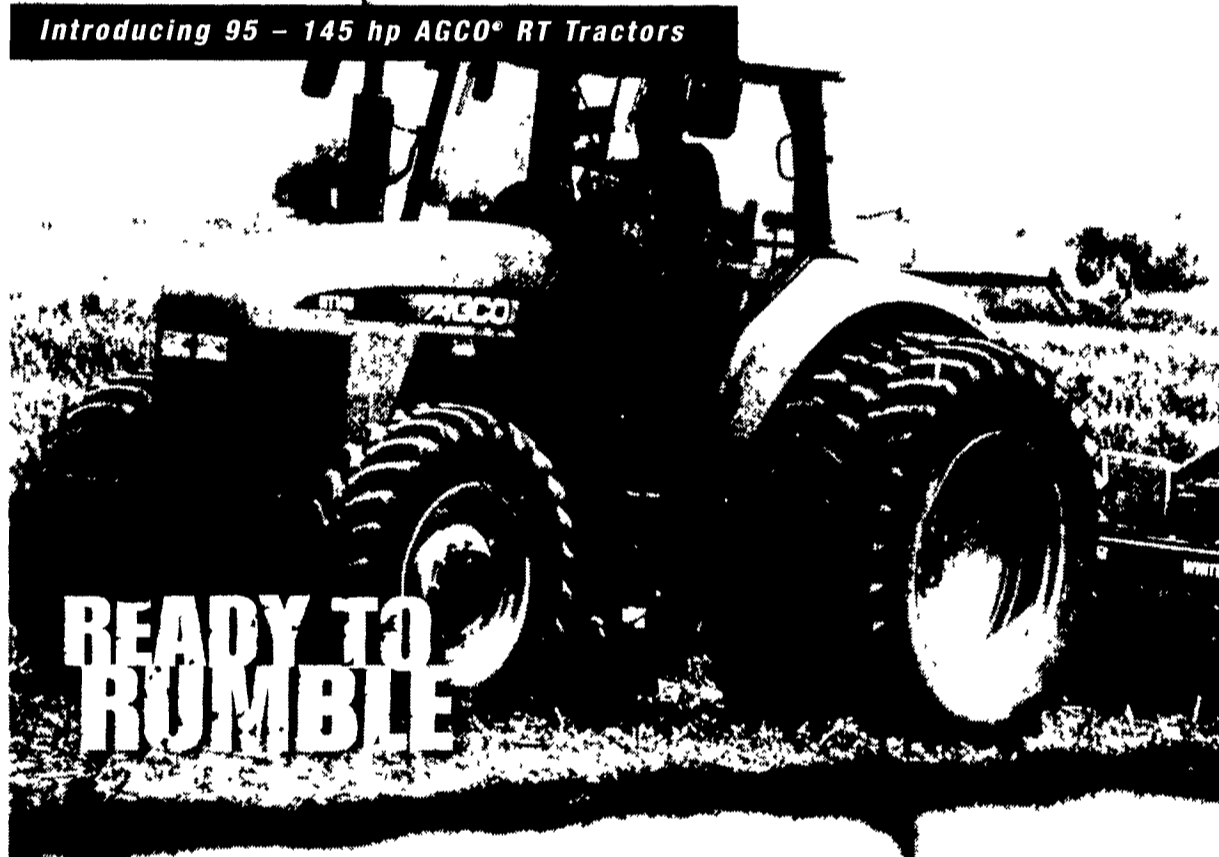
**Pies, Pies, And More
Pies At Dairy Day**

MONTROSE (Susquehanna Co.) — The Elk Lake School stage was host to 29 delectable pies ranging from blueberry, strawberry cream, and candy apple to chocolate chip nut and banana cream. The pies were baked by local residents to be part of the pie auction at Dairy Day.

But first, Susquehanna County Commissioner Lee Smith, Chief Clerk Suzanne Brainard, and Sheriff Lance Benedict had the tough job of tasting the adults' pies to determine which three were the top prize winners. This year's pie baking winners were Reba Loomis, Robin Campbell, and Becky Darling.

Auctioneer Barry Sands rallied the "pie-eyed crowd" and began the bidding high. After all of the 29 pies were auctioned off and the buyers smiling, the total amount was about \$1,200. This money will be split between 4-H Dairy program and Susquehanna County Dairy program.

Mike McDavid, Penn State Cooperative Extension's northeast regional director, judged the newest division of the pie contest — youth. Nine young bakers prepared pies to be auctioned off that day with Amanda Miner winning the contest.



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