

SHANNON BROOK FARM

ORGANIC • PASTURE-RAISED • LOCALICIOUS
CHICKEN & LAMB

2566 Jennings Road, Watkins Glen, NY 14891-9625 • 607.731.1840 • www.ShannonBrookFarm.com • shannon@ShannonBrookFarm.com

Shannon Brook Farm Newsletter

March 9, 2013

It's time to talk about eggs. Most Americans eat an egg, on average, every fourth meal. As we collect, wash, dry, pack, store and sell dozens of eggs each week we wanted to learn more about this elegant, self-contained compartment of protein. There's a lot of information available on egg cleaning and storage as well as nutrition.

When we first started packing several dozen eggs a week we researched how to properly clean and store them according to both the USDA as well as by organic standards. NOFA-NY published a very helpful, small handbook called "**Humane and Healthy Poultry Production**", which outlines exactly how one should process eggs. We found both sets of guidelines to be very similar with the exception of what is acceptable in terms of washing solutions. Organic standards don't allow for using most commercial chemical washing solutions though a drop of chlorine in the rinse water is recommended.

The key issue is keeping the eggs clean from the beginning with clean, dry bedding for the ducks and chickens. After that we handle the eggs in a manner that helps keep bacteria from entering the porous shell. Fortunately mother nature lends a helping hand with a "cuticle", which is the silky film that coats each egg. Once the cuticle is disturbed or removed it's important to move along, cleaning, drying and storing the eggs in a reasonable time frame.

On our farm we have ducks, chickens and guineas who lay eggs regularly. This time of year we are also starting to get the occasional goose egg, which is a real treat. Naturally we compare the various eggs as we collect them around the farm:

- The geese lay the fewest eggs but they are by far the largest - they are beyond 'jumbo' size.
- The ducks lay large eggs that range from medium to jumbo but they are less prolific than the chickens.
- The chickens lay a lot of eggs, which are very large, many times jumbo.
- The guinea hens seem to lay fewer eggs than the chickens or ducks but they are beautiful with their speckled texture and unique shape. We're not sure how many eggs the guinea hens average per bird because we can't tell the cocks from the hens! Each time we collect them we find them fascinating – they have an amazing shape, texture, pattern and color.



Goose, duck, chicken and guinea hen eggs

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When people visit the farm we often have amusing conversations about misconceptions concerning eggs such as, “Aren’t eggs fertilized after they are laid?” Ummm...no. This is not possible. Think about it! Or, “Don’t you need a rooster for a hen to lay an egg?” Actually, no. Hens lay eggs whether there is a rooster around or not. They just won’t be fertilized and therefore cannot hatch. Many people prefer not to keep a rooster because they tend to rise early and make quite a lot of racket crowing.

If you want to know more about buying eggs the USDA put out an interesting handbook called “How to Buy Eggs” which can be found here:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3022056>

Another interesting page, written by the American Egg Board can be found here:

<http://www.aeb.org/foodservice-professionals/egg-products>



Leghorn hen



Chicken eggs



Cayuga Ducks

This past week we made a Rum and Brown Butter Pound Cake using duck eggs, as they are the preferred egg for baking. The results were truly delicious...the cake was so good that we’re going to make another one today.

RUM AND BROWN BUTTER POUND CAKE

Makes one pound cake in a 8 ½” x 4 ½” pan

For the pound cake:

- 2 cups cake flour (which, you can make at home just Google it)
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 18 tbs. unsalted butter (that’s usually two sticks plus 2 tbs. in United States)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 4 chicken eggs – or 3 large Duck Eggs from Shannon Brook Farm
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 tbs. rum – just the basic stuff – nothing exceptional required!

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For the syrup:

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup white sugar
1 vanilla bean (or, 1 tbs. vanilla extract)
1/4 cup bourbon

Preheat your oven to 325 F. Butter and flour a 8 ½” x 4 ½” loaf pan, set aside.

Make brown butter. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. It will start to bubble quite a bit. Give it a gentle stir. You’re waiting for the bubbling to change into a more foamy action. Run your spoon through and you can see the butter has a tawny color. Pull it off the heat and pour the brown butter into a bowl. Let it stand for 5 to 10 minutes to cool.

In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.

In a large bowl, with a mixer on medium speed, beat together your cooled brown butter with the white and brown sugar. It may be a bit soupy because of the butter. What you’re aiming for is room temperature and combined. After two minutes begin to add one egg at a time. Add the vanilla and the rum. Beat gently until just combined. With the mixer at the lowest speed, add in a little of the flour mixture until it is all combined.

Pour the batter into your prepared loaf pan. Settle the batter then place in oven on the center rack and leave to bake for an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes, until a toothpick inserted into its center comes out clean.

Leave to cool in its pan for thirty minutes. In the last ten minutes make the syrup.

In a medium saucepan, combine water and sugar. Drop in the vanilla bean. Do not stir. Turn the flame on as hot as possible and allow the water to begin to boil. Swirl the pan a few times. Soon, with the water boiling the sugar will completely dissolve. Remove from heat. Remove the vanilla pod. (You can give it a rinse, pat it dry, and reuse it elsewhere.) Whisk in the rum. (If using vanilla extract instead of the pod, whisk that in now as well.) Allow to cool for about five minutes.

Remove the cake from its loaf pan and place on a plate. Now glaze the cake. Using a pastry brush coat the cake with the syrup every five minutes until it has all been absorbed. Leave to cool completely.



The rare egg laying cat of Watkins Glen