

From Hen House to Your House

By Katrina Wright, Thompson Falls Market

Where does your food come from? To be funny some might say, "The grocery store." Though true, the reality is that most food travels over 1,500 miles before reaching your local store. If you trace food back to its source, more often than not you will discover a large corporate ran farm whose sole interest is quantity and sales over quality and care.



Modern day food systems have systematically eliminated the family farm causing the food source to move farther and farther away from the dinner table. Large corporations have engineered methods to increase food production and decrease costs resulting in more profits for them and substandard quality for the consumer.

Recent trends point to a resurgence of local farms being supported by the local consumer. With the sharp rise and fall of the stock markets, and the ever changing demands on the global food supply, it makes sense for consumers to support their local farmer first. Area farmers may not be able to replace the huge food supplying conglomerates, but they can put an element of certainty in an uncertain world – direct knowledge of where the food comes from and how it was raised or treated.

Next question, how can you support farmers in the winter? Eggs. Yes, hens are laying eggs this time of year and quite frankly – the incredible edible egg is 100% better when within a few miles it travels from hen house to your house.

Here are egg facts to consider. The average American consumes 254 eggs per year. That adds up to 76 billion eggs that need produced annually.

The eggs you buy in the grocery store are more than likely purchased from a mass egg supplier. Iowa, Ohio, California, Pennsylvania, and Indiana are the five largest egg producing states and they represent about 50% of all U.S. laying hens (www.FoodRoutes.org).

The Single Comb White Leghorn hen dominates today's egg industry decreasing the genetic diversity of chickens and diluting the nutritional quality of an egg. Egg suppliers that live in your community more than likely care for a variety of traditional breeds that lay eggs in various shades of color; most often brown.

In conventional egg production, four to six hens are confined to an 18 by 20 inch cage. In a recent Oprah Show special titled "How We Treat the Animals We Eat", reporter Lisa Ling visited an egg farm that housed over 70,000 chickens in one hen house. The hens never step foot on soil or feel the warmth of the sun on their backs, and the cages are stacked to the ceiling of a massive hen warehouse.

Alternately, locally raised hens are often cage free, their feet get to touch the ground, they enjoy basking in the sun and they eat healthy grains fed directly to them by the farmer, *your neighbor*.

Are locally produced eggs more expensive than grocery store eggs? At Harvest Foods in Thompson Falls, one dozen eggs cost between \$1.95 for large white eggs to \$2.99 for brown

eggs from Washington. The cost for local large brown eggs are between \$2.00 to \$3.00 per dozen.

Diversifying where you purchase your food will help strengthen the local economy and develop the local food supply. The following is a list of farmers that sell free range or cage free eggs in Sanders County (the list can also be found on www.ThompsonFallsMarket.com):

Farm Geeks

Eric & Lori Kaharl

3.5 miles on Cherry Creek Road, Thompson Falls

\$2.25/dozen

Call to verify availability and arrange pick up or eggs can be brought into town.

(406) 827-0473

Jensen's Corner Acres

Roger & Charon Jensen

3 miles east of Trout Creek

\$2.25 - \$2.50 per dozen large eggs

Call to verify availability and arrange pick up

(406) 827-8006

Meadows Ranch, Thompson Falls

Bill & Helen Meadows

\$2.25/dozen

Call to verify availability and arrange pick up or delivery.

(406) 827-3578

Shofar Farms, Thompson Falls

Margaret & Joe Juneman

\$3.00/dozen fertile eggs by cage free chickens

Call to verify availability and arrange pick up or eggs can be brought into town.

(406) 827-3115

Buck's Grocery Store

210 Main Street, Hot Springs

\$2.29 for a dozen brown eggs from cage free hens that live in Camas Prairie

(406) 741-2125

This summer farm fresh eggs, baked goods, produce, arts and crafts and live music will be available at the Thompson Falls Market every Saturday, June 27-September 26, 2009 from 9:00am-1:00pm at West Lot of the Falls Motel (Lincoln Street & Maiden Lane). Go to www.ThompsonFallsMarket.com for details. The Thompson Falls Market encourages the community to plant an extra row of produce this spring in preparation for the upcoming market season.

The Perfect Hard Boiled Egg

Place eggs in cold water in large sauce pan, water should cover eggs.

Salt water.

Bring to a *rolling* boil.

When water is starts to boil, turn off the heat, put on a tight fitting lid and allow to sit for at least 20 minutes.

You will have the perfect hard boiled egg.