Scrambled Eggs





1. For 1 to 2 servings, in small bowl, beat together 2 eggs and 2 tablespoons skim or 1% low-fat milk with salt and pepper to taste, if desired, until blended.



3. As mixture begins to set, gently draw an inverted pancake turner completely across bottom and sides of pan, forming large, soft curds.



2. In 7- to 8-inch omelet pan or skillet over medium heat, heat 1 teaspoon butter or cooking oil (or use cooking spray) until just hot enough to sizzle a drop of water. Pour in egg mixture.



4. Continue cooking until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains. Do not stir constantly.

Microwave: In 10-ounce custard cup, beat together eggs and milk with salt and pepper, if desired, until blended. Omit or add butter, as desired. Cook on full power, stirring once or twice, until almost set, about 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. Stir. If necessary, cover with plastic wrap and let stand until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains, about 1 minute.

Microwave cooking time is based on a full power output of 600 to 700 watts. For a lower wattage oven, allow more time.

Oven-Scrambled Eggs

6 to 12 servings

12 eggs 3/4 cup skim or 1% low-fat milk 1 teaspoon salt, optional 1/4 teaspoon pepper, optional

In large bowl, beat together eggs and milk with salt and pepper, if desired, until blended. Pour egg mixture into lightly greased $13 \times 9 \times 2$ -inch baking pan. Place in preheated 350° F oven. As mixture begins to set, after about 7 minutes, pull out oven rack and gently draw an inverted pancake turner completely across bottom and sides of pan, forming large, soft curds. Continue baking. Repeat drawing a few more times until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains, about 12 to 15 minutes more. Do not stir constantly.

Scrambled Egg Tips

- The secrets to light, fluffy curds of scrambled eggs are: vigorous beating to aerate the eggs; even, medium heat; and slow, gentle movement easily accomplished by drawing a pancake turner or spatula across the bottom and sides of the pan. A nonstick pan and pancake turner make clean-up easy.
- Scrambled eggs may turn a greenish shade, especially if cooked in large batches. This harmless color change is actually a chemical reaction the formation of ferrous sulfide from iron in the yolks and sulfur in the whites. It occurs when eggs are cooked in an iron skillet, or cooked at too high a temperature, held for too long, or both. Using stainless steel equipment and a low to medium cooking temperature, cooking in small batches (also recommended for food safety) and serving as soon as possible after cooking will help prevent the discoloration.
- Some authors wax rapturous over scrambled eggs gently cooked over simmering water in a double boiler. While this does produce tender eggs, they should be cooked until no longer runny. For casual entertaining, scrambled eggs can be cooked in a chafing dish or electric skillet at the table while the host chats with guests. Or, a dozen at a time can be scrambled in the oven.
- Though suggestions to microwave scrambled eggs in styrofoam cups, food storage bags and other items abound, these materials are not intended for cooking and may melt particularly if fat is added to the eggs or diffuse unwanted chemicals into the eggs. Only microwave-safe dishes or bags made to withstand boiling or baking temperatures are appropriate.
- If necessary, scrambled eggs can be held for a short time if the pan of cooked eggs is placed over a pan of hot water, or *bainmarie*. They'll quickly become overdone, and may turn green, if held over direct heat. Eggs that have become dry should be discarded and a new batch prepared in a clean pan. Raw eggs should not be added to cooked eggs to "refresh" them.
- Some cooks add a dollop of butter, a few cubes of cream cheese or a spoonful or so of cottage cheese to scrambled eggs for richness. To make scrambled eggs special using less fat, substitute a reduced-fat salad dressing for the milk in the recipe.
- For a simple-to-prepare, economical and speedy skillet supper, cook pasta, rice or another grain. Drain, if necessary. Add diced cooked vegetables or meat and heat to serving temperature. Pour on beaten, seasoned eggs and scramble. If you like, top with a light drizzle of shredded cheese. Voila! Dinner. It's even faster, easier and more inexpensive with leftovers.

Fried Eggs





1. For 1 to 2 servings, in 7- to 8-inch omelet pan or skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 teaspoon to 2 tablespoons butter or cooking oil (or use cooking spray) until just hot enough to sizzle a drop of water. (If very large pan is used, more butter will be needed.) Break and slip 2 eggs into pan. Immediately reduce heat to low.

3. For over easy or over hard, gently lift eggs with pancake turner and flip upside down into pan to cook second sides.



2. Cook slowly until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard, covering tightly with lid (adding **1 teaspoon water** after edges turn white for steam-basted, if desired), spooning butter over eggs to baste or turning eggs to cook both sides.



Steam-Basted: Reduce butter to just enough to grease pan or use light coating of cooking spray and/or nonstick pan. In 7- to 8-inch omelet pan or skillet over medium-high heat, heat butter until just hot enough to sizzle a drop of water. Break and slip eggs into pan. Immediately reduce heat to low. Cook until edges turn white, about 1 minute. Add 1 teaspoon water. (For more eggs, decrease proportion slightly for each additional egg being cooked.) Cover pan tightly with lid to hold in steam. Cook until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard.

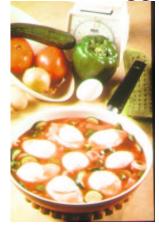
Microwave: Omit butter. Break and slip eggs into lightly greased or sprayed pie plate. Gently prick yolks with tip of knife or wooden pick. Cover with plastic wrap. Cook on 50% power just until eggs are almost done, about 2 to 3 minutes. Let stand, covered, until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard, about 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Microwave cooking time is based on a full power output of 600 to 700 watts. For a lower wattage oven, allow more time.

Fried Egg Tips

- Very fresh eggs produce the best shape an elongated oval with a thick white closely hugging, rather than spreading around, a high-standing yolk.
- A nonstick pan eliminates or, with cooking spray, reduces the need for added fat. The steam-basted method requires just a tad of fat to lightly grease the pan and the microwave method, none at all.
- While some prefer their eggs cooked over high heat, brown, lacy, crisp edges signify overcooked protein. Cooking slowly over gentle heat better preserves nutrients and also helps ensure even heat penetration, an important food safety consideration.
- Fried eggs can go beyond breakfast. For late-night snacking, make a fried egg sandwich. For lunch or dinner, serve fried eggs on top of steak, veal or hash or do as egg restaurants do and serve basted eggs over a vegetable and/or meat combination. To please children and adults alike, fry eggs within a hole cut in a slice of bread or frozen waffle.

Poached Eggs



1. In saucepan or deep omelet pan or skillet, bring 2 to 3 inches of water, skim or 1% lowfat milk, reduced-fat



broth, tomato juice, wine or other liquid to boiling. Reduce heat to keep water gently simmering. Break cold **eggs**, 1 at a time, into custard cup or saucer or break several into bowl. Holding dish close to water's surface, slip eggs into water.

3. There are many types of "poaching" gadgets: rings and egg-shaped, colander-like holders to corral eggs as they cook in liquid; tiny pans and nonstick pan inserts with egg-shaped cups for steam-cooking eggs held above the liquid; even steam-poaching electric egg cookers. The rings can also be used for fried eggs. Most electric egg cookers steam-cook eggs in the shell, too, and some have flat inserts for cooking fried or scrambled eggs. The easiest poaching method requires only a saucepan and a slotted spoon.

2. Cook until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not



hard, about 3 to 5 minutes. With slotted spoon, lift out eggs. Drain in spoon or on paper towels. Trim any rough edges, if desired.



Microwave – for 4 eggs, use amounts, bowl size and time in parentheses ():

1/3 (2/3) cup water 2 (4) eggs

Pour water into 10-ounce custard cup or small, deep bowl (1-quart bowl or baking dish). Break and slip in eggs. Gently prick yolks with tip of knife or wooden pick. Cover cup with plastic wrap. Cook on full power about 1 1/2 to 2 (1 1/2 to 3) minutes. If necessary, let stand, covered, until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard, about 1 to 2 minutes. Pour off water to serve in custard cup, or lift out with slotted spoon. Microwave cooking time is based on a full power output of 600 to 700 watts. For a lower wattage oven, allow more time.

Poached Egg Tips

- The secret to pretty poached eggs is using very fresh eggs which will hold their shape better and produce fewer "angel wings" in the liquid. Adding salt to the poaching liquid may promote coagulation and adding vinegar may lower the coagulation temperature, but neither are necessary and can flavor the eggs.
- Swirling the poaching liquid or creating a vortex merely serves to ruffle the delicate egg protein. Nicely-shaped eggs are easier to produce in relatively quiet water that is gently simmering.
- Adventurous cooks use broth, milk, tomato juice or wine as the poaching liquid. Any unclear liquid will lend its color to poached eggs. Eggs poached in beef broth pick up brownish highlights, while using tomato juice or sauce produces reddish tones and red wine results in unpleasant purplish specks.
- When entertaining or preparing poached eggs for more than just a few, it's tempting to poach the eggs in advance and hold them refrigerated in water. This is a questionable practice from a food safety standpoint. Leftovers should always be thoroughly reheated, preferably to 160° F, and delicate poached eggs can easily become overdone in the process.
 - To suit dieters, serve pristine poached eggs in custard cups or on toast. Or, spoon steamed vegetables onto toasted English muffin halves and top with poached eggs the golden yolks can serve as the sauce. For an indulgence instead, serve a Benedict variation or complement bland poached eggs with lemon juice and capers, caviar, truffles or almost any other edible for which taste buds yearn. On the more practical side, make a hearty cold-weather meal by poaching eggs in a pot of simmering soup.

Hard-Cooked Eggs





1. Place eggs in single layer in saucepan. Add enough tap water to come at least 1 inch above eggs.



2. Cover. Quickly bring just to boiling. Turn off heat.



3. If necessary, remove pan from burner to prevent further boiling. Let eggs stand, covered, in the hot water about 15 minutes for Large eggs (12 minutes for Medium, 18 for Extra Large).



4. Immediately run cold water over eggs or place them in ice water until completely cooled.

7. Peel, starting at large end. Hold egg under running cold water or dip in bowl of water to help ease off shell.



5. To remove shell, crackle it by tapping gently all over.



8. To segment eggs evenly, various styles of egg slicers and wedgers are available. For chopped



6. Roll egg between hands to

eggs, rotate a sliced egg 90° in the slicer and slice again. No slicer? A sharp pastry blender and a bowl work, too. When a wedger's wires are drawn down only partway, an egg can be opened to hold a stuffing or resemble a flower.

loosen shell.

Hard-Cooked Egg Tips

Coddled eggs made by very briefly immersing an egg in the shell in boiling water are not sufficiently cooked to satisfy today's food safety concerns. Eggs cooked in coddlers (porcelain, heat-proof glass, pottery or ceramic cups with screw-on lids) submerged in simmering or boiling water should be cooked until the whites are completely set and the yolks have begun to thicken but are not hard.

Whether hard- or soft-cooked, this method is incorrectly called boiled eggs. Although the cooking water must come to a boil, more tender, less rubbery eggs without a green ring around the yolk are produced, and less breakage occurs, when the heat is turned off or the pan removed from the burner, allowing the eggs to cook gently in hot water. This method is also more energy efficient and is food safe.

Shell cracking is most likely when eggs are cooked for too long and/or at too high a temperature because steam builds up more rapidly than the eggs can "exhale" it. Too rapid cooking is why eggs cannot be cooked in the shell in the microwave – they'll very likely explode. Overcooking produces enough steam to rupture the shells; proper cooking alleviates the problem. Cracking is particularly likely to occur if more than one layer of eggs is cooked at a time in rapidly moving boiling water which causes the eggs to bump against one another.

Piercing, puncturing the large end of the eggshell with a sharp tool before cooking, may allow some air to escape to help avoid cracking and water to enter which may make peeling easier. But, piercing also creates hairline cracks in the shell through which bacteria can enter after cooking, making piercing a food safety concern. Unless sterilized, the piercer, thumbtack, pin or needle itself can introduce bacteria.

To avoid a harmless, but unsightly, greenish ring around hard-cooked yolks, avoid overcooking and cool the eggs quickly after cooking by running cold water over them or placing them in ice water (not standing water) until they've completely cooled. The ring is caused by sulfur and iron compounds naturally reacting at the surface of the yolk. It's usually brought on by overcooking or a high amount of iron in the cooking water. Once the eggs have cooled, refrigerate them in their shells until use.

Very fresh eggs may be difficult to peel. The fresher the eggs, the more the shell membranes cling tenaciously to the shells. Though many techniques to make peeling easier have been tried, the simplest method is to buy and refrigerate eggs a week to ten days in advance of hard cooking. This brief "breather" allows the eggs to take in air which helps separate the membranes from the shell. Before peeling, it's important to crackle the shells until they have a fine network of lines <u>all over</u>. Eggshells usually come off much more readily, without tearing the whites, when they're in small pieces rather than large chunks.

Hard-cooked eggs in the shell can be refrigerated up to one week. Hard-cooked eggs out of the shell should be used immediately.

Pickled eggs, steeped in an acidic marinade, once appeared in a large glass jar on the bar of many a neighborhood tavern. Now making a comeback, these savory bites are served as snacks, appetizers, salad garnishes and deviled eggs. Keep pickled eggs refrigerated – in several small containers, quart-sized or less, if they're to be consumed intermittently over a period of time. Use a clean implement to remove eggs from the solution to avoid introducing bacteria.

Try this mussless, fussless deviled egg method that's so simple beginning cooks can master it easily. To tote deviled eggs to a picnic or tailgate party, knead all the filling ingredients in a sealed food storage bag until smooth and well blended. Transport on ice or coolant in a cooler, along with the egg whites in a separate sealed container, and assemble on the spot. Simply snip off a corner of the bag and squeeze to refill the whites, just as if you were using a pastry bag.

Unfortunately for mountain-top residents, it's almost impossible to hard cook eggs at altitudes above 10,000 feet.

Beyond making egg salad, use chopped, sliced or wedged hard-cooked eggs to add protein and a happy glow to casseroles and tossed and composed salads. Slice hard-cooked eggs to layer in sandwiches. With chopped yolks and whites, make creamy Eggs Goldenrod or pretty Polonaise Sauce. For a hand-held snack, in addition to comforting deviled eggs or zingy pickled eggs, simply sprinkle whole eggs with an herb or dollop them with a flavored mayo. Take just a wee bit more time to coat whole eggs in sausage and bake or fry them for Scotch eggs.

Baked (Shirred) Eggs



1. For 1 to 2 servings, break and slip **2 eggs** into greased ramekin, shallow baking dish



2. Spoon 1 tablespoon skim or 1% low-fat milk, half and half or light cream over eggs.



or 10-ounce custard cup.

3. Bake in preheated 325° F oven until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken



but are not hard, about 12 to 18 minutes, depending on number of servings being baked.

4. For eggs "baked" top of range, in omelet pan or skillet over medium heat, thoroughly heat grains,



vegetables or sauce. With back of spoon, make indentations (about 2 inches in diameter) in heated foods. Break and slip an egg into each indentation or into sauce. Cover. Cook until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard, about 15 to 18 minutes.

Baked (Shirred) Egg Tips

- For individual servings, use baking dishes that just fit the eggs plus the flavoring food or liquid, such as ramekins, custard cups, individual souffle dishes or small oval bakers. Grease or spray the dishes if the eggs are to be broken directly onto the dish.
- When baking eggs in other solid foods or in liquids, preheat the solid or liquid before adding the eggs for faster and more even cooking.
- Check the eggs after about 10 to 12 minutes baking time. When done, the whites should be completely set and the yolks beginning to thicken but not hard. Spooning a liquid over the eggs or sprinkling them with shredded cheese can help prevent drying.
- When the French dress up plain baked eggs (*oeufs en cocotte*) by lining the dish with bacon or pate and topping the eggs with cream, gravy or a sauce, they call them *oeufs sur le plat*. To make a more American meal, bake eggs in nests of other foods, such as vegetables or hollowed-out rolls, or shirr them in milk or cream. For meal-in-one convenience any time of day, "bake" eggs on top of the range. Nestle the eggs in grains and/or vegetables and cover the pan to hold in steam.

French (Plain) Omelet



1. For 1 to 2 servings, in small bowl, beat together 2 eggs and 2 tablespoons water with 1/8 teaspoon salt and dash pepper, if desired, until blended



2. In 7- to 10-inch omelet pan or skillet over medium-high heat, heat **1 teaspoon butter or cooking oil** (or use cooking spray) until just hot



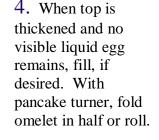
enough to sizzle a drop of water. Pour in egg mixture. (Mixture should set immediately at edges.)

3. With inverted pancake turner, carefully push cooked portions at edges toward center so uncooked portions can reach hot pan surface.



Tilt pan and move cooked portions as necessary.

5. Invert onto plate with a quick flip of the wrist or slide from pan onto plate.







Microwave: In 9-inch pie plate, heat butter on full power until melted, about 45 seconds. Tilt plate to coat bottom evenly with butter. Set aside. Meanwhile, in small bowl, beat together eggs and water with salt and pepper, if desired, until blended. Pour into hot pie plate. Cover <u>tightly</u> with plastic wrap. Cook on full power about 2 to 3 minutes, rotating 1/4 turn each 30 seconds. Do not stir. When top is thickened and no visible liquid egg remains, fill, if desired. With pancake turner, fold omelet in half or roll and slide from pie plate onto serving plate.

Microwave cooking time is based on a full power output of 600 to 700 watts. For a lower wattage oven, allow more time.

French (Plain) Omelet Tips

- Though classically-trained chefs once reserved a pan for omelets only, seasoned the pan carefully and cleaned it by wiping to preserve the seasoning, we now know better than to employ this unsanitary practice and it's no longer necessary. Thanks to pans with nonstick coatings, an omelet is easy to make and the pan easy to care for and suitable for many uses. Omelet pans are shallow for ease in moving the omelet mixture and have sloped sides to facilitate sliding out the finished omelet. You can use a pan with a diameter from 7 to 10 inches for a standard 2-egg omelet.
- The secret to preparing a tender, easily rolled, microwave French omelet is a tight-fitting cover. No stirring is needed since trapped steam helps cook the omelet evenly.
- For a family meal or small party, multiply the recipe by as many servings as you need and use 1/2 cup of the egg mixture for each omelet, breaking only the amount of eggs you will use in a short time. For a sweet omelet, substitute a pinch of sugar for the salt and pepper.
- French omelets are quick and easy to make in about a minute or two. In fact, omelets cook so quickly that you should select and prepare the garnish or filling before starting the eggs. Fillings that can go right into an omelet include herbs, cheese, yogurt, peanut butter, jam and diced or sliced fruit. Preheat other refrigerator-cold fillings and cook raw foods before cooking the omelet.
- The filling and topping possibilities for omelets are endless, limited only by your imagination and refrigerator contents. An omelet may hold, or be topped with, virtually any savory or sweet food from artichokes to zucchini, with leftovers serving as strong contenders. To invent your own filling, use one or more filling ingredients to total about 1/2 cup for each 2-egg omelet. Flavor the omelet, filling, or both, with about 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon or so of a complementary herb, spice or seasoning blend. For ready-made pizzazz, use bottled salad dressing in place of the water in the recipe. Or, add cooked filling ingredients in small enough pieces to prevent tearing the omelet to the omelet mixture itself. Top the omelet with a dab of its filling, as restaurateurs do, to make the flavoring apparent to the diner.
- Chef-manned omelet stations at restaurant brunches often provide a choice of omelet-filling ingredients, allowing patrons to choose their favorites just as they would select sundae toppings. The same concept works at home for a brunch, shower or other entertaining occasion. You can be the omelet chef or let your guests prepare their own creations.
- For a portable meal, roll up an omelet in a tortilla or spring roll wrapper or slide the omelet between halves of horizontally sliced focaccia bread. Grab and go.

Savory Souffle



1. For 2 to 4 servings, evenly coat 1 1/2- to 2quart souffle dish or straight-sided casserole with **cooking spray**. Dust with **fine**, **dry bread crumbs**, **grated Parmesan**



cheese or cornmeal. Set aside. In covered jar or blender container, shake or blend together 1 cup skim or 1% lowfat milk, 1/4 cup all-purpose flour and 1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired, until smooth. Pour into medium saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until mixture boils and is smooth and thickened. Stir in cheese, if used, and seasoning, if desired, until cheese is melted. Set aside.

3. Stir 4 egg yolks into reserved sauce until well blended. Stir in up to 1 1/2 cups additional ingredients, if desired.



For 3 to 6 servings:

Cooking spray

Fine dry bread crumbs, grated Parmesan cheese or cornmeal

- 1 1/2 cups skim or 1% low-fat milk
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, optional
- 1 1/2 cups additional ingredients, optional Seasoning, optional 6 eggs, separated
 - 3/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

2. In large mixing bowl at high speed, beat 4 egg whites with 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar until stiff but not dry, just until whites no longer slip when bowl is tilted.



4. Gently, but thoroughly, fold yolk mixture into whites. Carefully pour into prepared dish. For a "top hat", hold spoon upright and circle mixture to make ring



about 1 inch from side of dish and 1 inch deep. Bake in preheated 350° F oven until puffy, delicately browned and souffle shakes slightly when oven rack is moved gently back and forth,

about 30 to 40 minutes. Serve immediately.

Prepare 2- to 2 1/2-quart souffle dish or straight-sided casserole as above. Prepare souffle mixture as above. Bake in preheated 350° F oven about 35 to 45 minutes.

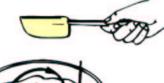
Savory Souffle Tips

• Bake a souffle in an ungreased or specially coated, straight-sided dish so the airy mixture can cling to the sides as it climbs. To coat the dish, lightly grease with butter, oil or cooking spray, then dust evenly with grated Parmesan cheese, fine dry bread crumbs or cornmeal or, for dessert souffles, cookie crumbs, finely chopped nuts or granulated sugar.

Beyond traditional souffle dishes, you can use a straight-sided casserole or saucepan – if nonstick, lightly grease and coat with crumbs. Individual souffles can be baked in custard cups or ovenproof coffee mugs. It's important, though, that the container be the right size since the souffle mixture will increase in volume two to three times. A souffle will overflow a too-small container; it won't rise well above the rim of a too-large container and will lose the lofty look that is part of its charm. Depending on your beating and folding skills and the weight of any added ingredients, a 4-egg souffle usually requires a 1 1/2- to 2-quart container, a 6-egg souffle, a 2- to 2 1/2-quart container. Fill to about 1/2 inch from the top.

- If your container is a tad too small or your beating and folding skills are exceptional, you can collar the container to keep the souffle in bounds. Make a 4-inch band of triple-thickness aluminum foil long enough to go around the container and overlap 2 inches. Grease and dust the band just as you coated the dish. Wrap the band around the outside of the container with the dusted side in. Fasten with strong masking tape or string. The collar should extend at least 2 inches above the rim of the container.
- As you would with all other egg white-leavened dishes, separate the eggs when they're refrigerator-cold. Using an egg separator or funnel, separate one egg at a time into a cup or small bowl, transferring each white to the mixing bowl only after it is successfully separated. Even a mere drop of yolk can hinder foam formation, as can any other form of fat. So, be sure your bowl and beaters are spotlessly clean. Use only glass or stainless steel bowls as plastic may retain a film of oil.
- Let the egg whites stand at room temperature in the mixing bowl while you assemble the remaining ingredients and make the sauce. Egg whites will whip to greater volume when they've had a chance to warm slightly. Depending on the ambient temperature, about 20 minutes is adequate and no more than 30 minutes is necessary.
- Since the use of copper bowls is a questionable practice, use cream of tartar or lemon juice (1/8 teaspoon or so per each 1 to 2 whites) or vinegar (1/4 teaspoon) to help stabilize the egg-white foam. As salt decreases egg-white foam stability, add it to other ingredients. Beat at high speed just until the whites are stiff but not dry and no longer slip when the bowl is tilted. If the whites are underbeaten, they won't achieve full volume. If overbeaten, the whites will form clumps of dry puffs that won't hold air well and will be difficult to incorporate in folding, and the foam will not expand properly when heated.
- Strictly speaking, a true souffle is a thick *bechamel* (white) sauce, thickened with egg yolks and leavened by stiffly beaten whites. To accommodate today's concern with excess fat consumption, flour blended with milk gravy-style can substitute for the white sauce or, if speed of preparation is preferred, ready-made condensed cream soups can be used. Sugar sweetens dessert souffles. A souffle may also contain other pureed, shredded or finely chopped, well-drained, cooked flavoring foods. The size of the pieces is important large chunks of food will not only sink, they'll weigh down a souffle and hamper its rise. Flavoring foods should be cooked and well drained, if necessary, before they are folded into the souffle.

• Gentle folding is the key to maintaining volume. Some cooks like to sacrifice about a quarter of the beaten egg whites to lighten the yolk mixture before adding the rest of the whites. They maintain that this pre-folding helps blend the whites with the base and makes the real folding easier. Depending on your folding skills, "lightening" the yolk mixture by forcing some of the egg whites into it may, instead, serve to push air out of those whites. Another method is to simply pour all the yolk mixture onto the beaten whites. Use a rubber spatula or spoon to gradually combine the mixtures with a downward stroke into the bowl, continuing across the bottom, up the side, and over the top of the mixture. Come up through the center every few strokes and rotate the bowl often as you fold. Fold just until there are no streaks remaining. Then, gently pour into the prepared dish.





- The best souffle is one that is baked immediately but, if necessary, you can cover and refrigerate an unbaked souffle for up to 2 hours before baking. With the loss of some puff, a souffle can also be frozen for several weeks. Defrost in the refrigerator before baking as directed.
- Just before baking a savory souffle, you can set the stage for a "top hat", a center rising higher than the sides, by simply circling the mixture with a spoon, table knife or narrow spatula. Sweet souffles seldom form top hats and may crack. Cover any cracks with sifted confectioners' sugar, whipped cream or a sauce.
- Resist the urge to open the oven door and peek for at least the first 25 minutes of the baking time for a full-sized souffle. A cool draft or slammed door might deflate it. Though the French prefer souffles with runny centers that are spooned over portions as a sauce, for food safety, it's best to cook a souffle through and make a separate sauce, if you want one.
- When baking is complete, if you've collared the container, quickly, but gently, remove the collar. Then, hurry the finished souffle to the table. It's an age-old rule that guests wait for the souffle, *not* the souffle for the guests! Serve by gently breaking the top crust into portions with two forks held back to back. Then, lightly spoon out, including some of the center and crust in each portion.

Soft (Stirred) Custard Sauce



1. For about 3 1/2 cups, in large saucepan, beat together 4 eggs or 8 egg yolks, 1/2 cup sugar and 1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired.



2. Stir in 2 1/2 cups skim or 1% low-fat milk.



3. Cook over low heat, stirring <u>constantly</u>, until mixture is just thick enough to coat a metal spoon with a thin film and reaches 160° F. Remove from heat.



4. Cool quickly by setting pan in bowl of ice or cold water and stirring for a few minutes. Stir in **1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla**.



5. Press plastic wrap onto surface of custard. Refrigerate until thoroughly chilled.



Soft (Stirred) Custard Sauce Tips

- Some cooks prefer to prepare soft custard over water in a double boiler for greater control over the coagulation process. It also works to constantly stir while cooking over low heat in a heavy saucepan.
- The usual custard proportions are 1 egg plus 2 tablespoons sugar for each cup of milk. This is the minimum ratio of eggs to milk which will produce a properly thickened custard, although as many as 4 eggs may be used and the sugar may be increased to 1/4 cup. Increasing the sugar makes the custard less firm and lengthens the cooking time. Increasing the egg makes the custard more firm and shortens the cooking time. Two egg yolks may be substituted for 1 whole egg. Two egg whites will also thicken the custard as much as 1 whole egg, but the characteristic color and flavor will be missing.
- Stir constantly while cooking soft custard and be especially alert after about 12 to 15 minutes. Over low heat, it will take about 15 to 20 minutes for a standard recipe to reach doneness and the last few minutes are crucial. An undercooked custard sauce will be thin and watery; an overcooked sauce will curdle. The difference is a matter of only a few degrees. Test by dipping a metal spoon into the custard, using a thermometer, or both. When done, a thin film should cling to the spoon; the thermometer should register 160° F.
- To prevent overcooking and curdling, when it's done, immediately remove the custard from the heat and cool it quickly. If the custard is to be served warm, use it immediately and refrigerate any leftovers. To serve chilled, prevent a skin from forming by pressing plastic wrap onto the surface of the custard. Chill thoroughly.
- For safety, always make <u>egg nog</u> and <u>ice cream</u> from a cooked custard base. (*make underscored items hot links to recipes in classics subsection*)
- An elegantly simple custard sauce makes a velvety topping for fresh fruit or steamed puddings, turns plain cake into a sumptuous trifle and serves as the golden pond over which poached meringues drift in Floating Island. You can also use the creamy sauce to enhance summer's fresh fruits or to revive drying pieces of cake. Add more milk and lace with spirits, if you like, and you have egg nog. Enrich with cream and your favorite flavoring ingredients to make French-style frozen custard, the richest and smoothest of all ice creams. Nip soft custard with liqueur or marsala wine and whip it while cooking and you'll produce the frothy delight known as *sabayon* to the French and *zabaglione* to the Italians. (*make underscored items hot links to recipes in classics subsection*)

Baked Custard



1. For 6 servings, in medium bowl, beat together 4 eggs, 1/2 cup sugar, 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla and 1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired, until well blended.



2. Stir in 3 cups skim or 1% lowfat milk, heated until very hot.



3. Place 6 lightly greased 6-ounce custard cups or 1 lightly greased 1 1/2quart casserole in large baking pan. Pour egg mixture into cups or casserole.



4. Sprinkle with ground nutmeg or cinnamon, if desired. Place pan on rack in preheated 350° F oven. Pour very hot water into pan to within 1/2



inch of top of cups or 1 inch of top of casserole.

5. Bake until knife inserted near center comes out clean, about 25 to 30 minutes for cups or about 35 to 40 minutes for casserole. Remove promptly from hot water. Cool on wire



rack about 5 to 10 minutes. Serve warm or refrigerate and chill thoroughly to serve cold.

Baked Custard Tips

- You can bake dessert custards individually in custard cups or as a large pudding in a casserole, baking dish or souffle dish. A *bain-marie*, or water bath, promotes even cooking by insulating the custard from direct oven heat which can cook the custard too fast and cause curdling. To make a water bath, place the dish/es in a larger pan deep enough to hold water that will reach within 1/2 inch of the top of the cups or 1 inch of the top of the dish.
- Time the baking carefully. Too short a time and the custard will not set; too long and it will curdle. Test for doneness by inserting a knife into the custard near, but not at, the center. For dessert custards, the knife will come out clean when the custard is done. Savory custards containing cheese may continue to test "wet" when they are done. Use a thermometer to see if the custard has reached at least 160° F and jiggle the dish slightly to judge whether or not the vast majority of the custard is set. With the retained heat in the custard, the innermost center will continue to cook after removal from the oven and will quickly set.
- Easy additions to an unbaked dessert custard mixture are drained canned fruits, dried or candied fruits, fruit preserves, flaked coconut and nuts with the exception of pecans and walnuts which will turn the custard an odd brownish-purple wherever they touch. You can add any flavoring extract you like to the egg-milk mixture lemon, orange, mint, rum, maple or use a liqueur, cocoa or instant coffee.
- To prepare soothing, classy *creme brulee*, top either stirred or baked custard with brown sugar and heat until crispy under the broiler or with a small blowtorch or salamander. Beyond the classic cup custard of ancient Greece, other sweet custard delights include simple custard pie, rich Latin-American *flan*, homespun rice or bread pudding and syrup-topped creme caramel. Unsweetened, baked custard can be a *timbale* (a cupful) or a *quiche* (a dishful), each flavored with vegetables, cheese and/or meats.

Soft (Pie) Meringue and Hard (Swiss) Meringues



Note: Use amounts and instructions in brackets [] for hard meringues.

1. For 9-inch pie meringue [or 1 (9-inch) or 8 (3-inch) hard-meringue shell/s], in small mixing bowl at high speed, beat 3 egg whites with 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar until foamy.

3. Lift beater/s. Egg whites should be glossy. Soft peaks should curl at tips. [Stiff peaks should stand straight and tall.]

5. For soft (pie) meringue, spread meringue over <u>hot</u> pie filling, starting with small amounts at edges and sealing to crust all around. Cover pie with remaining







meringue, spreading evenly in attractive swirls. Bake in preheated 350° F oven until peaks are lightly browned, about 12 to 15 minutes. Cool at room temperature. Refrigerate until serving.

> 7. Bake in preheated 225° F oven until firm and cake tester inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Turn off oven. Let stand in oven with door closed until cool, dry and crisp, at least 1 additional

2. Add 6 tablespoons [3/4 cup] sugar, 1 [2] tablespoon/s at a time, beating constantly until sugar is dissolved and whites are glossy and stand in soft [stiff] peaks.



4. Rub just a bit of meringue between thumb and forefinger to feel if sugar has dissolved. Beat in 1/2 teaspoon vanilla.



6. For hard meringue/s, with spoon or pastry bag, spread mixture over bottom and up sides of greased 9inch pie plate. OR, on lightly greased or lined (foil or waxed, brown or

parchment paper) baking sheet, shape into 1 (9-inch) nest. OR, using about 1/3 cup of the meringue for each, shape into 8 (3-inch) nests. Build up edges to form rims.



hour. (Do not remove shell from pie plate.) Store in tightly sealed container. Fill as desired just before serving.

Microwave Soft (Pie) Meringue: Prepare meringue and cover pie as above. Cook on full power, rotating 1/4 turn every minute, until knife inserted horizontally into side comes out clean, about 3 to 3 1/2 minutes (about 1 minute for each egg white).

Microwave cooking time is based on a full power output of 600 to 700 watts. For a lower wattage oven, allow more time.

To poach Soft Meringue: In large saucepan or skillet, bring milk or water to simmering. Drop meringue mixture by spoonsful onto milk, leaving space between spoonsful. (Meringue expands as it cooks. Poach in batches, if necessary.) Simmer, uncovered, until firm, about 5 minutes. Smaller spoonsful will not need to be turned over, but larger ones may require turning halfway through the cooking time. With slotted spoon, remove meringues from milk and drain on paper towels. Serve or chill until ready to serve. (The milk may be used to make a stirred custard.)



Note for Hard Meringues: The oven temperature and time given here will produce crisp, white meringues. For a Pavlova or *Schaum Torte* with a more chewy inside texture, reduce baking time. After baking about 45 to 55 minutes, judge texture by testing occasionally with cake tester or wooden pick inserted into side of meringue. When baked to your liking, check with thermometer to be sure that meringue has reached 160 F. Dry as above.

For lightly browned meringue, increase temperature to 250° F. Bake until delicately browned and cake tester inserted in center comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Dry as above.

General Meringue Tips

• Although egg white does not readily support bacterial growth – especially when a great deal of sugar is present, it is possible for *Salmonella* to be in either the white or yolk of an egg. Many meringue-based desserts require refrigeration to maintain their character, a safety factor, and these dishes may be considered low risk for healthy people. However, for full safety, it's best to cook both yolks and whites in all recipes.

You can use a method similar to that used for Seven-Minute Frosting to update old recipes calling for raw or very lightly cooked egg whites or meringues, such as Royal Icing, mousses, chiffon pies, sweet souffles and ice box cakes and for Baked Alaska and similar dishes that are only very briefly baked. Use this method with any number of egg whites.

To cook egg whites: In heavy saucepan, top of double boiler or metal bowl placed over water in a saucepan, stir together the **egg whites** and **sugar** from the recipe (at least 2 tablespoons per white), **water** (1 teaspoon per white) and **cream of tartar** (1/8 teaspoon per each 2 whites). Cook over low heat or simmering water, beating constantly with portable mixer at low speed, until the whites reach 160° F. Pour into large mixing bowl. Beat on high speed until the whites stand in soft peaks. Proceed with the recipe.

Note that sugar must be used or the whites will coagulate too rapidly and produce an unsatisfactory end product and a thermometer must be employed as there is no visual clue to doneness. If using an unlined aluminum saucepan, eliminate the cream of tartar as it will react with the aluminum to produce an unattractive gray meringue.

The recipe for Soft (Pie) Meringue here was tested in a scientific lab. After baking as directed, all injected bacteria perished. Since it is not possible to lab test every conceivable meringue recipe, all other recipes should be cooked until the whites reach 160° F.

- Italian meringue, also called Boiled Frosting, is made by beating a hot sugar syrup into egg whites and is used, as is, as a cake frosting or topping like soft meringue; folded into whipped cream (Chantilly Meringue) for use as a frosting or combined with fruit as a cream puff filling; or baked or poached as other forms of meringue. In most cases, however, neither using warmed sugar nor using a sugar syrup to make an Italian Meringue is a suitable substitute for the fully cooked method. No matter how hot the sugar, it's the egg whites that must reach 160° F for total destruction of any potential bacteria to occur. By the time a very hot sugar syrup is fully incorporated into beaten whites, the whites seldom reach much over 125° F and recipes that are not further cooked cannot be considered completely safe. If, however, the sugar syrup is brought all the way to the hardball stage 250 to 266° F, the whites will reach sufficient temperature. Use a sugar syrup at hardball stage for Divinity and similar recipes.
- The most critical factor in making a successful meringue is humidity. Make it on a dry day. Since sugar is *hygroscopic* (moisture-absorbing), meringues made on a humid day can become limp and sticky.
- Use a mixing bowl large enough to hold the expanding whites which will increase in volume 6 to 8 times, but not so large that the whites are spread too thin and wide in the bowl. The bowl should be deep enough for the beaters to be in contact with as much of the whites as possible. For proper aeration, a small mixing bowl is best for up to 3 whites, a large mixing bowl for 4 or more.
- In making meringues, separate eggs, choose beating equipment and add acid to the whites and salt to other ingredients as you would for souffles. (see <u>Savory Souffle Tips</u>)

• For optimum volume and faster beating, add sugar between the beginnings of foam formation and soft peak formation. Adding some or all of the sugar before beating will decrease volume.

The recipes here are written for regular granulated sugar but you can use any size of sugar crystal as well as brown sugar. When substituting, 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar or 1 cup superfine sugar both equal 1 cup granulated sugar, while 1 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar equals 1 cup granulated. Light brown sugar is simply half dark brown and half granulated sugar.

While finer sugars may dissolve more readily and more quickly and will produce a smoother, glossier meringue than coarser sugars, they will also produce one of less volume. Finer sugars must still be added slowly and the meringue mixture beaten to the proper stage. Be very cautious when adding very fine sugars. They have a tendency to float in the air and it's easy to end up with more sugar on the chef than in the meringue. Confectioners' sugar contains cornstarch and may produce a slightly drier meringue.

With the exception of corn syrups, you can also use syrups and honey which will impart their own flavors and colors to the meringue. Use about 1 tablespoon per egg white and expect to beat longer and to obtain a greater volume than with a sugar-sweetened meringue. Due to the added moisture of the syrup, though, the meringue will be slightly more frothy and will have a greater tendency to leak.

Using a portable or stand mixer at high speed, or a rotary beater or balloon whisk and lots of elbow grease, beat the whites with the cream of tartar just till foamy. Then, gradually add the sugar, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time, and beat until soft or stiff peaks form. Lift the beater/s or whisk to test. When the whites turn glossy and their tips curl over slightly, they're at the soft peak stage; when the peaks stand tall without bending, they're at the stiff peak stage. For a smooth, rather than gritty, meringue, test to see that the sugar has dissolved by rubbing a bit of the meringue between your fingers. Undissolved sugar can cause sugar spots on the surface of the meringue.

With the amount of added sugar, the beating for meringues takes longer than for unsweetened whites. Using a mixer is much easier for those of average arm strength and endurance. Neither a blender nor a food processor will aerate the whites properly.

Soft (Pie) Meringue Tips

- To minimize weeping, the accumulation of liquid between the meringue and the pie filling or pudding, spread the meringue on when the filling is hot. And, to prevent the meringue from shrinking as it bakes, spread the meringue so it touches the crust or the edges of the dish all around.
- If using more than 3 egg whites, use 2 tablespoons sugar per white and 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar per each 2 whites, lower the baking temperature and increase the time so the meringue will reach 160° F without excessive browning. For a few egg whites more, 325° F for 25 to 30 minutes works well; for many more than 3 egg whites, 300° F or an even longer time at 325° F may be necessary.
- Although 2 tablespoons sugar per egg white is considered the most satisfactory for soft meringues, from 1 to 3 tablespoons may be used. The more sugar used and the more coarse the sugar, the more difficult it will be to dissolve it in the egg whites and the less tendency to brown. In either case, beat until soft peaks form.
- When baked as a topping, a billowy meringue can add a welcome sweet counterpoint to a tart fruit-filled pie, give textural interest to a smooth cream pie or lend high-rising class to a homespun rice or bread pudding. When poached in dollops and served with a custard or fruit sauce, meringues become Floating Islands or *Oeufs a la Neige* (Snow Eggs).

Hard (Swiss) Meringue Tips

For preparation see General Meringue Tips)

- Hard, or Swiss, meringue is usually made with 4 tablespoons sugar per egg white and is beaten until stiff peaks form.
- You can bake hard meringues on a baking sheet lightly greased with unsalted shortening, butter or oil, or lined with waxed, brown or parchment paper or foil. American Egg Board testing has found meringues stick least on sheets coated with paper or foil and that both shortening and butter are preferable to oil, though any of these may be used. Nonstick surfaces <u>do</u> require lining or greasing.
- To form practical or fanciful shapes, pipe meringue with a pastry bag or gently shape it with a spoon or spatula. With minimal shaping, you can also simply bake hard meringue in a lightly greased pie plate, cake pan or springform pan.
- Hard meringues are not actually baked, but are dried in a 225° F oven for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. They then spend at least another hour basking in the heat with the oven off a process which keeps them from browning. While generally baked until crisp and dry throughout, a shorter baking time will produce a more chewy, marshmallow-like center. For a light golden hue, bake at 250° F until the center reaches 160° F and is chewy or crisp, as you like. Oven-baked meringues turn golden brown at the tips; microwaved meringues remain white. Both are fluffy, tender, glossy and smooth with a fine-grained texture.
- Fully baked hard meringues may be stored for months in a tightly sealed container with waxed paper between any layers. If they should lose crispness, bake in a preheated 250° F oven for 15 to 20 minutes.
- In hard meringues, egg whites robe pure sugar in a mantle of respectability. To keep them from being cloying to the average sweet tooth, hard meringues are often most successfully served with tart fruits or fruit-flavored fillings, such as Key lime pie filling or lemon curd. A puffy hard meringue has a relatively smooth but crisp crust with little to no browning from the long, slow baking process. The interior may be crisp or creamy/chewy as a marshmallow depending on the meringue's

size and the length of baking. If you bake hard meringue until crisp and dry, it forms an Angel Pie when made in a pie plate or becomes Forgotten Cookies or Meringue Kisses when dropped from a spoon. You can also form hard-meringue into a pie-crust shape or tart shells to hold fruit or pudding. When you bake hard meringue in a cake or springform pan just until the outside becomes crisp, but the inside is still creamy/chewy and then top it with fruit and whipped cream, it becomes Pavlova or *Schaum Torte*. Just as for soft (pie) meringue, you can also poach hard meringue to make Floating Islands.

