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Ohio Egg and Pork Experts Offer Consumers Tips for Preparing Easter Favorites, Making Most of Leftovers

COLUMBUS – Easter is just around the corner and many Ohio families will soon be decorating eggs for traditional hunts and preparing ham as the centerpiece of their dinner feast. To assist families this holiday, the experts from Ohio's egg and pork industries are offering consumers tips from selecting the best ham to deciding what to do with the leftovers.

Preparing the perfect hard-cooked egg for decorating

According to the American Egg Board, 62 percent of Americans typically purchase at least two dozen eggs to celebrate the Easter holiday. To prepare the perfect egg for decorating, experts from the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA) recommend hard-cooking eggs instead of boiling them.

“This gentle cooking approach will prevent cracking and an unattractive green ring from forming around the yolk,” said Jim Chakeres, OPA executive vice president.

The Ohio egg experts recommend following these three simple steps for hard-cooking eggs:

1. Place eggs in a saucepan large enough to hold them in a single layer. Add cold water to cover eggs by one inch. Heat over high heat just to boiling.
2. Remove the saucepan from the burner. Cover pan. Let eggs stand in hot water about 15 minutes for large eggs (12 minutes for medium eggs; 18 for extra large).
3. Cool completely under cold running water or in a bowl of ice water. Peel and eat.

At an average retail cost of 15 cents apiece, eggs are one of the most affordable sources of high-quality protein per serving in today's marketplace. The incredible egg provides 13 essential nutrients, while only containing about 75 calories. Research shows that high-quality protein, like that found in eggs, helps build muscle strength and allows people to feel full for longer, helping them stay energized and maintain a healthy weight.

Selecting the perfect ham for the holiday feast

Ham is the perennial favorite for Easter feasts. According to the National Pork Board, 70 percent of Americans serve ham for their holiday dinner. The treasured centerpiece is an affordable choice and also is versatile, which is good news for consumers with tight budgets this year.

“While ham may be the Easter favorite, nearly 50 percent of people who serve this dish admit they need help selecting one for their special meal,” said Jennifer Keller, director of education and marketing for the Ohio Pork Producers Council (OPPC). Keller said that hams are labeled according to the amount of water added during the curing process. Dry-cured hams have been rubbed with salt and spices onto the meat's surface; wet-cured hams contain a brine solution including water, salt, sugar and spices.

Below is a simple guide from the OPPC experts that takes the guesswork out of choosing the right ham for holiday gatherings:

- *Ham (Old-fashioned, Country-style or Southern-style)* – A Southern specialty, this style of ham is dry-cured and contains no added water. It is extremely salty and is usually served in small portions, very thinly sliced.
- *Ham with Natural Juices* – A favorite choice for a dinner centerpiece, this ham has little water added in the curing process. Its velvety texture and attractive appearance make this crowd-pleaser an ideal choice for holiday meals.
- *Ham – Water Added* – Ideal for steaks, thin slicing and shaving, ham with water added is a versatile choice for any menu. It retains more water during the curing process than ham with natural juices.

- *Ham and Water Product* – A good choice for sandwiches, this ham is commonly found in the deli and has the most water added.

Pork contains many of the nutrients recommended by health organizations to build and maintain a healthy body, including six essential vitamins, four important minerals, protein and energy. Pork's lean meat serves as an excellent source of thiamin, vitamin B6, phosphorus and niacin, and a good source of riboflavin, potassium and zinc.

Making the best of Easter leftovers

After the feast is over and the eggs have been accounted for, the real challenge begins with deciding what to do with the leftovers.

“Ham and eggs’ versatility makes it easy for home chefs to turn leftovers into masterful dishes that families will love,” said Chakeres. He said that leftover ham and eggs can be used in an array of recipes, such as Ham and Eggs en Croute (recipe included below).

Ohio is the second-largest egg producing state in the nation, producing eight billion eggs each year at an estimated retail value of more than \$607 million. Also, the state ranks ninth in the nation for pork production and is third in the nation for the total number of hog farms per state with 4,000 hog farms, the vast majority of which are family owned and operated.

For more information on Ohio's egg industry, please visit www.OhioEggs.com. Or, for more information on Ohio's pork industry, visit www.OhioPork.org.

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(recipe below)

Ham and Eggs en Croute

6 servings

Ingredients:

2 eggs
1 tablespoon prepared mustard
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
4 Ohio hard-cooked eggs, chopped
1 cup chopped cooked lean ham
1/2 cup (2 oz.) shredded reduced-fat Swiss cheese
1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
Lettuce leaves, optional

Preparation:

In large bowl, beat 2 eggs well. Set aside 2 tablespoons for glazing.

Stir mustard and lemon juice into remaining eggs until thoroughly blended. Stir in spinach, hard-cooked eggs, ham and cheese until well combined. Set aside.

On lightly floured surface, roll puff pastry into 15 x 9-inch rectangle. Brush lightly with some of the reserved 2 tablespoons beaten eggs. Spoon reserved spinach mixture lengthwise down center of pastry. Fold both sides over to cover. Pinch together edges and short ends of pastry to seal. Place seam-side down on lightly greased baking sheet. Brush top and sides with remaining beaten eggs. Cut 5 diagonal slashes in top of pastry to make steam vents.

Bake in preheated 425° F oven until golden brown and heated throughout, about 20 minutes.

To serve, cut into 1-inch slices. Garnish with lettuce leaves, if desired.