

Green Eggs & Ham!

Are you excited yet? If you have to ask, “Excited about what?”, you’re definitely seeing a different world than I am and you’d best get those eyes examined. I’m seeing lots of green all around me with splashes of forsythia, dabs of daffodil, hyacinth and those magnificent Spring tulips. If you’re having a particularly great day throw in a cluster of Easter lilies and be sure to thank your Maker for the great art show.

How can you be anything but excited about this magnificent time of year? When you walk outside take a deep breath and give us a big, “Yeah!”

It’s Easter time, the kids are enjoying Spring break, and I’m ready to celebrate. How about you?

Whether your celebration is a big family get-together, a covered dish dinner at church or a small intimate affair, we need to approach the whole thing with a heart full of thanks and a spirit of family and community. This is a wonderful time of year to show kindness and love to people around you and who couldn’t use more of that in their life? A couple of thousand years ago when this all began an example was established and I would challenge you to make an effort to let your own love and compassion shine. Do something nice for someone that only you will ever know about. Wouldn’t that be really neat?

First things first, lets talk about eggs. Ever thought about what goes into making that perfect hard-boiled egg either for decorating or eating. Here’s a foolproof method I’ve used to make about a zillion great eggs over the years that was taught to me by a professional “egg-spert” in a moment of weakness. He was a “hard” case, if you know what I mean, but I finally “cracked” his resolve. (Oh, brother!)

If you’ve ever noticed most hard-boiled eggs are rubbery in texture and the outside of the yolk can even get a slightly green cast. This technique will avoid those results and you’ll never make another one the old fashioned way again. You’ll end up with a tender white and a smooth, butter-yellow yolk.

The Perfect Hard-Boiled Egg

1. To prevent cracking during cooking, prick the larger end of the egg with a pin. This provides an escape hatch if there’s any air trapped inside.
2. Place your eggs in a deep saucepan in a single layer. When you pour in water make sure you cover your eggs by at least one inch.
3. Put your saucepan on the burner at medium high and bring just to a gentle boil.
4. Immediately remove your saucepan from the burner, put on a tight fitting lid, and allow it to set for 15 minutes.
5. Place your eggs in a bowl filled with ice water for approximately 5 minutes to cool them. Store in the refrigerator until you are ready to use them.

If you plan on decorating your eggs, have at it, but if you'd like to make a new version of the old standard, the deviled egg, here's a recipe you need to try out. My family are salmon lovers and this is one of their favorite treats for Easter.

Salmon Deviled Eggs with Fresh Dill

(Makes 24 servings)

12 hard-boiled eggs

1 shallot, finely minced

1 (6 ounce can) salmon, drained and flaked (I've also used baked fresh salmon with great results!)

½ cup mayonnaise and just a bit more

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill

Kosher salt & fresh ground pepper

Peel off the shells on your eggs and slice them lengthwise. Remove the yolks and place them in a medium bowl. Place the egg whites onto a serving platter. To the yolks, add your shallot, salmon, ½ cup of mayonnaise, mustard, salt & freshly ground black pepper. Mix until well blended and if the mixture seems a bit dry, stir in just a bit more mayonnaise. Either use a spoon to fill each of your half egg whites or if you want to kick up your presentation use a pastry bag and pipe your filling into the egg whites with a decorative tip. Sprinkle just a touch of dill on each and hold in the refrigerator until ready to serve. I've also sprinkled fine textured caviar on each egg with great results but remember to back off the salt if you do, you'll get plenty of saltiness from the fish eggs.

I would imagine that many of you plan to serve a traditional Easter ham this holiday and many will opt to get a pre-sliced spiral cut honey baked ham from one of the companies that specialize in them. Most of these companies produce excellent ham but be prepared to pay a premium for it. If you are a bargain conscious kind of cook like I am the ham you are going to serve will be a fully cooked smoked bone-in ham from the market that you will glaze yourself. I love to make these inexpensive hams into ones that get great comments and I've got a few suggestions for you to help with your results.

Sure Fire Glazed Baked Ham



(Serves about 12)

6 to 8 pounds fully cooked smoked bone-in ham
whole cloves, if desired
1 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon balsamic or apple cider vinegar
½ teaspoon ground mustard
½ cup juice (pineapple, orange and mango all work great)

Preheat your oven to 300°F and place your ham, fat side up, on a roasting pan using a rack. Insert a meat thermometer in the thickest part of the ham making sure it does not touch bone or rest in fat. Cover loosely with foil and figure on baking an 8 pound ham about 20 minutes per pound. One of the things you are doing during baking is eliminating as much water as possible in your ham which is one of the down sides of using this style of ham. You want to reach about 135°F on your meat thermometer.

In the mean time in a heavy bottomed saucepan combine your brown sugar, vinegar, mustard and juice and gently cook it at medium low until it just begins to bubble. Continue to cook it down until the mixture is very thick and richly aromatic. Hold it at just warm until you are ready to use it.

About 20 minutes before the ham is done, remove it from the oven, remove the foil covering and pour out the drippings in the pan. Using a very sharp knife, remove any skin and score the fat surface with uniform diamonds. Insert a whole clove into each diamond. Using your glaze mix, coat the entire surface thoroughly and place the ham back into the oven for an additional 20 minutes. When cooked remove from oven, cover with foil and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before carving it.

I want to wish all of you a wonderful Easter celebration this year and I pray that your's will be deeply meaningful and filled with the Holy Spirit. If you have any questions or comments we invite you to call us at (888) 288-0668 or visit our website at www.winedog.com. Cheers and God Bless!

