

From Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens:)

Pickling:

Pickling is a good way to preserve hard-cooked eggs. Pickled eggs may be used in place of hard-cooked eggs in salads or in place of pickles in sandwiches. They also make a great snack.

Over the years, I have prepared many dozens of pickled bantam eggs, packed hot in boiling vinegar and processed in sealed pint jars in boiling water for ten minutes. Various experts I have consulted can't agree on whether or not such eggs are safe for long-term storage out of the refrigerator. A problem would arise if the pickling solution did not penetrate all the way through the eggs.

The fresher the eggs, the better. Select small and medium eggs so the pickling solution can easily penetrate. Half a dozen bantam eggs will fit into a wide mouth pint jar. One dozen medium eggs will fit into a wide-mouth quart jar.

For the pickling solution, mix your own vinegar and spices or use the juice from prepared cucumber pickles or pickled beets. The eggs will be more tender if you pour the solution over them when it is boiling rather than let it cool first.

Season small eggs for at least two weeks, medium eggs for at least four weeks before serving them. The acidity in the pickling solution keeps bacteria from growing, but also causes eggs eventually to deteriorate. Stored in the refrigerator, pickled eggs keep well for six months.

Old-Fashioned Pickled Eggs

4-6 whole cloves

1 stick cinnamon
2 cups white vinegar
1/2 tsp dry mustard
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
6 hard-cooked eggs

1. Place the cloves and cinnamon in a saucepan with the vinegar, and bring mixture to a boil.
2. Blend the mustard, salt, and pepper with a little water and stir into boiling vinegar. Simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Peel the eggs and place them in a jar
4. Pour hot mixture over eggs
5. Cover and refrigerate

Oiling:

Coating eggs with oil seals the shell to prevent evaporation during storage. Eggs should be oiled 24 hours after being laid so some of their carbon dioxide can escape and the whites won't take on a muddy appearance.

Into a small bowl pour white mineral oil, available at any drug store. The oil must be free of bacteria and mold, which you can ensure by heating the oil to 180 degrees F (82 degrees C) for 20 minutes. Cool the oil to 70 degrees F (21 degrees C) before dipping the eggs.

The eggs must be at room temperature (50 to 70 degrees F/10-21

degrees C) and fully dry. With tongs or a slotted spoon, immerse the eggs in the oil one by one. To remove excess oil, place each dipped egg on a rack (such as a rack used for cake cooling or candy making) and let the oil drain for at least 30 minutes. Catch the dripping oil for reuse. Discard oil that contains debris or water, or that takes on a strange color.

Oiled eggs may be used like fresh eggs except when it comes to cake baking -- oiling eggs interferes with the foaming properties of the whites so they won't whip up as well as fresh ones. Experiments in Australia prove that oiled eggs will keep for as long as 35 days at tropical temperatures. Stored at 50 degrees F (10 degrees C) for eight weeks or 70 degrees F (21 degrees C) for five weeks, they retain their flavor better than untreated eggs.

In clean, closed cartons in a cool place, eggs dipped in oil will keep for several months. Like all eggs stored for the long term, they'll eventually develop an off flavor. The longer the eggs are stored, the greater becomes the flavor intensity compared to untreated eggs. This flavor change is pronounced in eggs stored at 34 degrees F (1 degree C) for more than four months, and by six months the off flavor is unacceptable to most people.

To be continued...

Misty