

# FREE RANGE CHICKEN & EGGS

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## Why Free Range Eggs are Best?

Free range chickens are allowed to roam freely eating insects and corn as there are no cages to contend with. However, with farm factory eggs, chickens are kept in wire pens or special cubicles resembling chicken jails. Therefore, not being exposed to daily sunshine and fresh air can inhibit a hen's natural bodily instincts about producing quality eggs.

When chickens are allowed to roam freely, their eggs are more nutritious because they are allowed to eat items with nutritional value like the green grass and bugs. The great news is that free range eggs have no more calories than the average factory farm egg but do have three or more times the nutritional value.

Factory farm hens often do not have a varied diet but rather the same chicken feed day in and day out. With no extra nutrition, it is no wonder that the benefits for free range eggs far outweigh factory farm eggs.

## Environmental Impact

Large numbers of animals confined in small spaces, as seen in conventional egg-production facilities, pollute the air, water and soil with the vast amounts of manure they produce. Livestock manure runs off into waterways, causing nutrient pollution and algae blooms; gases from the manure pollute the air; and the medications and pathogens in the animals' waste causes' health risks.

## Vitamin D and E Benefits and More

Many scientists has measured the nutrients in free range eggs and have found that the vitamin D levels were a lot higher than the average in regular eggs, as much as six times! Eggs are one of the few natural ways to obtain vitamin D through food sources. The vitamin E levels were almost four times the average of factory eggs. Vitamin D and vitamin E are both essential nutrients for optimal brain, heart, skin and immune system operation.

There are other benefits of free range eggs too. For instance, they have 33% less cholesterol than their factory farm egg counterparts. In addition, there is 25% less saturated fat and two times the average omega three fatty acids. Just eating two free ranges eggs could virtually satisfy the minimum daily requirements for vitamin D.

## Price Comparison Free Range Eggs & Conventional

It is difficult to evaluate the economic impact of free range verses conventional as most Government agencies do not collect data on free-range egg prices or sales. The closest egg category that is tracked is free-range organic eggs. Like free-range eggs, National Organic Program regulations require that organically raised hens have outdoor access; however, additional regulations concerning the animals' feed and other aspects of care can drive prices for organic eggs above those for free-range eggs. According to 2009 data collected by the USDA, conventional eggs cost, on average, \$1.46 per dozen. Organic eggs, on the other hand, cost an average of \$3.99 per dozen that year. Between March 2009 and March 2011, egg prices in general increased 33 percent, according to Consumer Price Index data.

## Free Range Chicken

Free-range chickens are allowed to have some access to an outside area. The definition of free-range does not include specifications on how long chickens should remain outside and under what conditions. Chickens can be outside on concrete for a short period of time each day, for example, and still be labeled as free-range. The labels free-range and cage-free can cause confusion.

### **Free Range Chicken** (continued)

Cage-free means chickens raised for meat were not kept in cages within a warehouse. Cage-free does not mean that chickens have access to outside areas. To ensure we are purchasing meat and eggs from free-range chickens that foraged on grubs and plants as in a natural environment, we look for indications on the packaging that the chickens were pastured, or find poultry with the "Animal Welfare Approved" label, which is handed out by a nonprofit watchdog group.

### **Animal Welfare**

Chickens confined to shared cages inside warehouses do not engage in their natural behaviors, such as foraging, taking dust baths and flapping their wings. Garrets are concerned about the amount of antibiotics fed to chickens; therefore, we try to source poultry and eggs labeled with both free-range and no-antibiotic-added labels. Subject to availability.

### **Environmental Benefit**

Free-range chickens on a farm can benefit the landscape. Farmers generally use mobile chicken pens to move chickens around on their agricultural lands. Chickens forage for insects and eat leftover crops such as lettuce and other greens while at the same time fertilizing the soil, enabling organic growth of other crops that can benefit the food chain.

### **Stress-Free Chickens**

Because chickens are living organically and free-range, they are not as stressed out as chickens raised in cages. The chickens have more space instead of being raised in tight crowded quarters next to thousands of other chickens. Disease is less apt to spread when chickens are raised free-range and their lives are less stressful. Because they are not as stressed, they live healthier lives and are healthier for people to eat.

### **No Antibiotics**

Most chickens raised in the meat production industry are given antibiotics. The antibiotics given to chickens are then ingested by consumers when the chickens are cooked and eaten. These antibiotics could have unintended effects on the people who eat them. The antibiotics could make bacteria and infections more resistant to treatments and create stronger strains of bacteria. Free-range chickens are not given antibiotics and are also free of hormones.

### **Flavorsome**

When chickens are able to grow healthy and naturally, their meat is in better condition and has more flavor than meat from conventionally grown chickens. The chickens are able to get more exercise, which is healthy for their bodies and improves the quality of their meat. Also, they receive better nutrition, which also contributes to the flavor of the meat. The end result is chicken meat that is juicy, moist and rich in flavor.

### **Price Comparison Free Range Chicken & Conventional**

The cost of purchasing free range chickens is significantly higher than purchasing conventional chickens, however at Garrets we are committed to helping the environment and world we all share. Small changes in the way we purchase chicken and eggs can have a significant impact on the environment.

### **Advice and Assistance**

If you require any advice on Free Range Eggs or Chicken please contact one of the Garrets Superintendents.











# FREE RANGE EGGS AND CHICKEN

'Free range' stamped on an egg or poultry meat is a special marketing term to indicate that the product has been produced in compliance with the criteria set out in the marketing regulation.

## EGG PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

### Cage

A cage system consists of tiers of cages. The cages have sloping mesh floors so that the eggs roll forward out of reach of the bird to collect. For each cage there must be at least 10 cm of feed trough and at least two drinkers.

### Free range

In the free range system the birds are housed as described in the barn system, but in addition birds must have continuous daytime access to the open, which is covered by vegetation.

### Barn

The barn system has a series of perches and feeders at different levels. The maximum stocking density is 9 birds per square metre and there must be at least 250 cm square of litter area.

### Corn fed chicken

The birds have a feed made up of a percentage of corn (50%).

### Free range poultry meat

Free range birds are provided with outside access for at least half of their lives. Producers may make further options that will lead to a tastier product grown in less intensive environments.

CAGE



FREE RANGE



BARN



CORN FED



FREE RANGE POULTRY MEAT









