

Frequent Questions About Our Chickens



Often I get questions about our chickens. I don't recall the day we made the decision to have chickens. When we were living temporarily in a double wide trailer while restoring Bella Terra (that's a complete story in itself!), I remember having 2 toddlers, a newborn, a puppy and baby chicks. Crazy times.



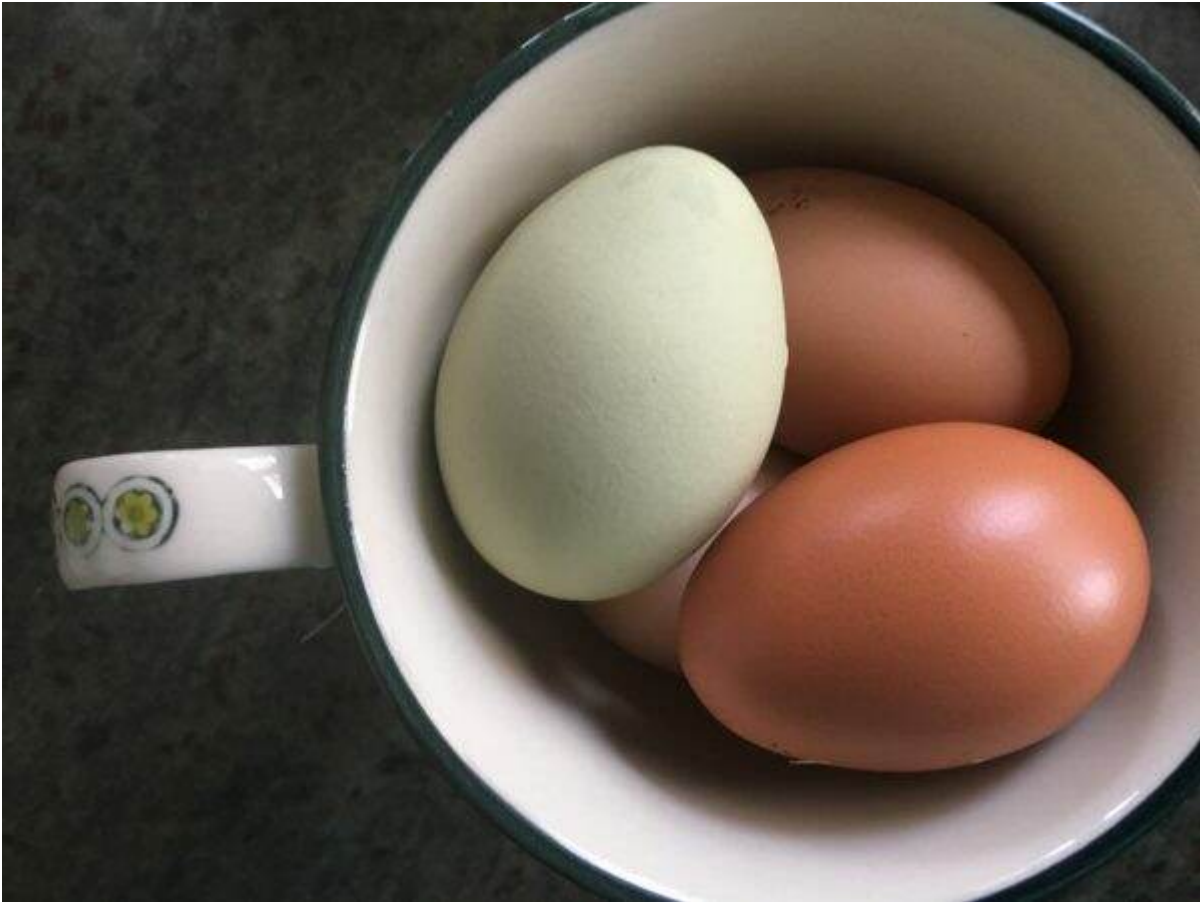
A daily trip to the hen house is restorative for me. The girls are always happy to see me!



Their quarters are designed for up to 25 chickens. If you missed my previous post on the hen house, click [here](#).



Here are some questions I get asked about our having chickens:



How long do fresh eggs keep?

When an egg first comes out, it is covered in a wet coating and then dries within seconds. This invisible coating is called the “bloom” and works to keep air and bacteria from seeping through the pores of the shell.

In the United States, commercial egg growers are required to wash their eggs, which then requires refrigeration. Unfortunately, washing off the bloom accelerates the aging of the egg.

I never wash our eggs and if I do, it is just before I use them. I have read that an unwashed egg can last up to a year!



One of my first paintings!

How do you tell if an egg is old?

Gently drop an egg into a glass of water. If an egg sits flat on the bottom of the glass, it is fresh egg. If the egg floats, it may still be good but it is definitely an older egg. As it continues to age, more air enters the shell and it

will float at a steeper angle. But why eat an old egg if you can use a fresh one?



Why are hard-boiled fresh eggs hard to peel?

As an egg ages, air gets in through the pores on the shell. The air forms a pocket between the membrane and the shell

making it easier to peel. Older eggs are best hardboiled.

Does each chicken lay an egg every day?

First, the female chicken, a hen, will lay eggs. It depends on the breed as some hens lay more eggs than others. Typically, a hen will lay only one egg per day but can also skip days. The average hen will lay approximately 300 eggs per year. Chickens require a certain amount of light per day in order to lay. Therefore, hens typically lay more eggs in the spring and summer.



Does a female (hen) need a male (rooster) in order to lay an egg?

No, the female lays eggs regardless. The hen does need a rooster if she is laying a *fertilized* egg = baby chicks.



Why don't you have any roosters?

The City of Phoenix does not allow male poultry within the City limits. Since it is rather difficult to determine the sex of a baby chick, we have had roosters. Typically we discover a rooster when a neighbor calls to complain about the crowing.



Do roosters only crow in the morning? No, they tend to crow all the time.

Is there really a pecking order? Yes, the chickens do determine their own hierarchy of status.



Why do you have different colored eggs?

The color of the egg is based on the breed of chicken. We have white, brown, tan, blue and green egg layers. But like people, we may be different colors on the outside but the inside of the egg is the same.



Do you let your chickens free range?

Yes, with some supervision. We keep our dogs inside while the chickens roam the yard. Since we have birds of prey (hawks, owls, etc.) we let them stay outside but for a shorter period of time.



Do you eat your chickens?

No, we do not. Once the children named the hens, it was hard to think about eating Fluffy or Spotty.



Elisabeth with her favorite chicken, Eggbert. Oil painting by Virginia Cook.

What do chickens eat?



We provide them with scratch and crumble. With scratch, they use their toes to mix up litter or scrape the ground in search of various seeds, greens, grit, or insects to eat. Spreading scratch grains (cracked, rolled, or whole grains such as corn, barley, oats, or wheat) encourages this behavior. Crumble is their actual food that provides the nutrients they need.

Do you give your chickens treats?

Yes, they get fresh greens from the garden, any healthy kitchen scraps and I spoil them with dried black soldier fly larvae~~they LOVE this!



I also add fresh herbs and flowers to their nesting boxes. Not only does it look pretty and smell nice, while keeping the bugs out. Who wouldn't want to lay an egg in a nest of rose petals?



I hope you enjoyed this information on chickens and eggs!

Mary