

Eggs deliver an Oscar-worthy performance

By SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

Deviled eggs for Oscars night? Sure they're a staple at picnics and backyard barbecues, but when it comes to a special occasion, they are so Cinderella before the ball.

But let's say you want to play fairy godmother and dress them up for an Oscar night viewing party. You can do it in two simple strokes. First, take care to boil the eggs properly (which can be a revelation for anyone who's never tasted a properly boiled egg). Second, sparkle up the usual filling with some creme fraiche, Parmesan and good quality truffle oil.

Shazam! You're looking at a truly dazzling appetizer. And it couldn't be easier to prepare. And despite the name, they don't need to be deviled (meaning spicy). For my Oscars treat, I went with indulgent over spicy.

But let's start with the boiling. It's only because most of us have never tasted a properly boiled egg that we believe the whites should be chewy. The problem is that protein always becomes tough when it is boiled. My solution is to boil an egg by not boiling it. Really.

The trick is to start the eggs in cold water, then pull them off the heat just as soon as the water reaches the boiling point, cover the pot and let them cook in the residual heat of the water. You'll be amazed at the wonderful tenderness of the finished product.

And by the way, I "cook" the eggs for just 10 minutes, which leaves the centers of the yolks translucent. If you'd prefer a more solid center, let the eggs stay in the hot water for 12 minutes.

How do you avoid one of those famously ugly green lines between the yolk and the white? By chilling the egg in a bowl of ice water as soon as it is finished cooking. Once it is cooled completely, peel and cut the egg in half, then marvel at a flawless yellow yolk, tender white and no green line.

And by the way, this is one of those recipes for which an older egg is better. Eggs that are too fresh are just about impossible



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

Stuffed eggs with truffle oil.

to peel.

Now just dress up the eggs with those designer ingredients and it's ready for the red carpet.

Sara Moulton was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years, and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows. She currently stars in public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals" and has written three cookbooks, including "Sara Moulton's Everyday Family Dinners."



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

The making of stuffed eggs with truffle oil.

STUFFED EGGS WITH TRUFFLE OIL

Want to make these even fancier? Use a pastry bag fitted with a star tip instead of a plastic bag to pipe the yolk filling into the egg whites.

Start to finish: 35 minutes, plus chilling
Servings: 12

- 6 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons creme fraiche
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons truffle oil
- Salt and ground black pepper
- Fresh chives, finely chopped
- Fill a medium bowl with ice and water.

Place the eggs in a small saucepan and add enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Set the pan over high heat and bring the water to a boil. As soon as the water boils, remove the pan from the heat, cover the pan and set aside for exactly 10 minutes (use a timer). Use a slotted spoon to transfer the eggs to the ice water and let them cool completely.

When the eggs are cool, crack them all over and, starting at the wide end of each egg and making sure to get under the membrane (which makes it easier to get the shell off), peel the eggs while holding them under cold running water. Cut each egg in half lengthwise. Gently remove the yolks and set aside the whites.

Place the egg yolks in a mesh strainer and use a rubber spatula or the back of a spoon to press the yolks through and into a medium bowl. Add the mayonnaise, creme fraiche, mustard, cheese and truffle oil. Mix well, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Spoon the mixture into a zip-close plastic bag.

Cut off one of the lower corners of the bag, then gently squeeze the bag to pipe the yolk mixture evenly into the hollow of each egg white until nicely mounded. Arrange the filled eggs on a platter, then garnish each with chives.

Nutrition information per serving: 70 calories; 50 calories from fat (71 percent of total calories); 6 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 115 mg cholesterol; 1 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 0 g sugar; 3 g protein; 110 mg sodium.

Golden dip worthy of dunking into while watching the Oscars

By AARTI SEQUEIRA
Associated Press

Ask any Indian person why we love turmeric so much, and you just might want to cancel your appointments for the rest of the day.

In its raw form, it's not much to look at. Much like its cousin, ginger, turmeric is grown for its nubby brown roots. So if you happen to find it in the produce section, it often is covered in soil and isn't all that attractive. But scratch its thin skin with your fingernail and this root will reveal an inner beauty: flesh as vibrant as a summer sunset, and a scent redolent of earth, pepper and mustard.

In fact, while turmeric is used widely in Asian and African cuisines, you've probably been eating it all your life here in the U.S. without even realizing it. Turmeric is what gives ballpark mustard that distinctive yellow hue. And back in the day in Europe it was used to dye food, cloth and fingers (!) a gorgeous golden orange (for a fraction of the price of saffron).

Ground turmeric turns up in most any Indian recipe, where it adds a pep-

pery-loamy flavor that provides a warm backbone to our cooking. Sauté a little with onions, cumin seeds and garlic, and that's the beginning of many a great dish. Add a little to your morning eggs. Make a marinade with oil and garlic and rub it onto a piece of fish.

Or, if you and your friends are gathering in front of the television to watch the Oscars, consider trying this golden dip made with tahini (sesame paste) and honey. Set it up on a platter of fancy crudite: blanched haricot verts, florets of neon green romanesco cauliflower, wedges of persimmon and kohlrabi, and paper-thin slices of watermelon radish.

It's an appetizer plate worthy of Hollywood's most glamorous (and judging by what I've read about how the starlets avoid food all day in order to fit into their gowns, Hollywood's hungriest). Just be careful not to spill any on your white blouse, or else people will be asking you, "What are YOU wearing?"

Food Network star Aarti Sequeira is the author of "Aarti Paarti: An American Kitchen with an Indian Soul." She blogs at <http://www.AartiPaarti.com>.

GOLDEN TURMERIC DIP

Tahini can vary in thickness by brand. Prepare the recipe as described below. If your dip is too thick, blend in additional water, a couple tablespoons at a time, to get desired consistency.

Start to finish: 15 minutes
Servings: 8

- 1/2 cup tahini, whisked smooth
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon honey or agave syrup
- 2 1/2 teaspoons turmeric
- 2 cloves garlic
- Salt and ground black pepper

- Toasted sesame seeds, to garnish
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, to garnish

In a blender, combine the tahini, water, lemon juice, honey, turmeric and garlic. Blend until smooth. Taste and season with salt and pepper. If desired, add tahini, lemon juice and honey to suit your taste. Transfer to a bowl and sprinkle with sesame seeds and cilantro. Serve with vegetables for dunking.

Nutrition information per serving: 100 calories; 70 calories from fat (70 percent of total calories); 8 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 7 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 3 g protein; 65 mg sodium.



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

Golden turmeric dip with crudite.

Five easy ways to make your kitchen more germ-free

By KATHERINE ROTH
Associated Press

Even the tidiest kitchens might be harboring harmful bacteria, and often where they're least expected. Paying more attention to a few often-overlooked places can help keep your household safer, experts say.

For starters, home cooks should have four watchwords, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: clean, separate, cook and chill. Watch for cross-contamination, particularly with meats and vegetables; cook everything thoroughly; and keep both raw and cooked foods sufficiently cold when needed.

Then, cleaning a few often-overlooked areas in the kitchen could offer additional protection from E. coli, Salmonella, Listeria, yeast and mold, according to NSF International, a non-profit organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, that has been promoting proper cleaning of kitchen tools and appliances since the 1940s. NSF International has put out recommendations on kitchen hot spots based on studies done in 2011 and again in 2013.

1. Scary Sponges. "You can either get away from sponges altogether and use

dish cloths or rags, which can be sanitized, or, if you do use sponges, put a wet sponge in the microwave for 2 minutes to kill most of the harmful bacteria," said Lisa Yakas, a microbiologist with NSF. Betsy Goldberg, home director for Real Simple magazine, said, "Many people mistakenly think that rinsing a sponge with water is enough, but sponges really need to be washed in the top rack of the dishwasher or wet and then microwaved for 2 minutes," and "obviously, if it smells or has loose pieces, it's time to throw it away."

2. Ghastly gaskets: Dangerous beasts can lurk in the hard-to-reach areas under the thin, removable plastic gaskets found around the lids of some food storage containers, and also around blender gaskets and blades, according to Yakas. "This one people really find surprising. But think about how many times people make smoothies and just put the blender in the dishwasher or rinse it then use it again. In our studies, we found Salmonella, E. coli, yeast and mold around blender blades and gaskets." She recommends unplugging blenders, flipping them over and unscrewing the blade assembly, then washing all the parts and drying them thoroughly after every use. For food storage containers, any unattached gaskets should be removed, cleaned and dried after every use, Yakas said.

3. Creepy fridge compartments: "Meat and vegetable compartments are another place few people think about, but it's where you are storing raw meat and vegetables that may still have some soil residue," Yakas said. "Keep everything raw and cooked separately, and remove the compartments and wash them with warm soapy water about every two or four weeks, depending on your household needs." Goldberg suggests removing them every so often and soaking them in the sink in hot, soapy water for 15 minutes. "While they are soaking, you can douse the inside of the fridge with a disinfecting spray," she said. "Wipe down the walls and then each shelf, and use a toothbrush spritzed with cleaner to get in the crevices. After 15 minutes, drain the water and sprinkle the compartments in baking soda, then wipe them clean with a wet sponge."

4. Separate the spatulas and clean the can opener. Can openers should be washed in the dishwasher or at least hand-washed after every use, paying attention to removing any food residue on the blade, Yakas said. "And a lot of people



AP Photo/NSF International

This photo provided by NSF International shows a blender and its blades in the gasket. In a 2013 household germ study, NSF International found Salmonella, E. coli, yeast and mold hidden in blender gaskets.

are surprised to find that a lot of spatulas and scrapers are actually composed of two pieces that pull apart, and that the inside part can harbor Salmonella, E. coli and yeast," she said. "Just pull it apart, clean with soapy water, rinse and thoroughly dry." Goldberg said, "Ideally, if you have time, it's a good idea to go beyond the can opener and spatula parts, take all the tools out of your drawer and wipe the inside of the drawer and the utensil holders with a disinfecting wipe, then dry it all thoroughly."

5. Wash water dispensers and coffee reservoirs: "Our studies found yeast and mold in refrigerator water dispensers, which might be an issue for people with allergies," said Yakas. Most systems can be cleaned with a vinegar solution, she said. "Coffee machine reservoirs are also dark and damp and are great places for mold and mildew to grow," she said. "It's a good idea to pour about 4 cups of white vinegar in the reservoir and run the vinegar through the unit, followed by two to three wash cycles of water. This should really be done every 40 to 80 brew cycles, or at least monthly," she said.

Online:
<http://www.NSF.org>
<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>
www.realsimple.com

Solo tourists banned in New Orleans' oldest cemetery

By JANET MCCONNAUGHEY
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A historic cemetery that may have begun the New Orleans tradition of above-ground crypts will soon be off-limits to tourists wandering about on their own because of tomb vandalism, the Catholic archdiocese that owns the property announced.

Starting in March, entry to St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 and its labyrinth of mausoleums will be restricted to relatives of the dead buried there, visiting scholars and only those with a tour guide registered with the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

The new policy is necessary to protect the tombs, archdiocese spokeswoman Sarah McDonald said. "We've had unlicensed tour guides and others handing out markers and instructions on how to mark up various tombs," she said in releasing the new policy Monday.

One of the most famous tombs is believed to hold the remains of 19th Century voodoo priestess Marie Laveau. In 2013, Laveau's tomb was covered from one end to the other with pink latex paint. But the problems extend beyond her tomb.

"We also have people leaving trash in the cemetery, littering, setting up camp," McDonald said in an interview.

Established in 1789, the cemetery surrounded by 6 1/2-foot-high brick walls, is the oldest remaining graveyard in this city beside the Mississippi River. A Deep South tourist destination, New Orleans is renowned for Mardi Gras, jazz, Cajun cuisine and the sometimes elaborate mausoleums that give its cemeteries the phrase "cities of the dead."

Early burials in St. Louis No. 1 are thought to have been below ground or in low tombs, according to the website for a nonprofit group, Save Our Cemeteries. Concrete and marble burial vaults, experts believe, were built atop those earlier graves to accommodate later burials.

St. Louis No. 1 covers an entire city block with "a maze of tombs and aisles," the organization notes, including "oven vaults" for those unable to afford the stand-alone mausoleums for affluent members of various societies.

Among the thousands bur-



AP Photo/The Times-Picayune, Ted Jackson

A tour group led by Jill Kaplan work their way through the tombs, stories, myths and legends of St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, Jan. 26 in New Orleans. Vandalism encouraged by unlicensed guides is prompting a new rule for New Orleans' oldest standing cemetery. Beginning in March, visitors to the cemetery will be restricted to occupants' relatives and people accompanied by a tour guide registered with the Archdiocese of New Orleans.



AP Photo/The Times-Picayune, Ted Jackson

In this Oct. 2014, photo, tour guide Nathan Scott tells the tale of Marie Laveau while guiding tourists past her re-tomb in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, in New Orleans.

ied in St. Louis No. 1 are Homer Plessy, the plaintiff in Plessy vs. Ferguson in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation laws were constitutional; and world chess champion Paul Morphy.

Sherri Peppo, director of the archdiocesan cemeteries office, said in a news release Monday that several tombs have been broken into and vandalized in the past year. Even security cameras have been stolen.

"We needed to take some steps to protect both the sacred nature of the cemetery and preserve the history that is there as well," Peppo said.

Complicating matters, a local legend has it that Laveau will grant a wish for someone who makes three Xs on the tomb believed to be hers, knocks on the tomb and shouts

the wish.

"I can tell you what it is in three words: graffiti, vandalism and desecration," guide Renee Dodge of Dozened History Tours told a dozen people with a tour group visiting Tuesday afternoon.

Emily Ford, a restoration consultant for Save Our Cemeteries, used cotton swabs and assorted liquids Tuesday to carefully wipe Xs off the lowest of the tomb's three marble name plates. Some were made with eye shadow, others in crayon, waxy lip balm and ink.

Pointing to a set of Xs scraped on the marble, she said: "I can't do anything about that."

Registration for tour guides will begin in February, the archdiocese said. Tour companies and independent guides must show insurance and a city

license. Guides who occasionally bring tours to the cemetery can pay \$40 for a one-time pass; those giving regular tours must pay \$4,500 to \$5,400 a year.

Both the new policy and fees are reasonable, said Amanda Walker, director of Save Our Cemeteries, which gives tours of St. Louis cemeteries 1 and 2 and Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 to raise money for restoration.

She noted that most cemetery tours are being conducted by guides for "pure profit."

"None of the money goes to the cemetery," she added.

McDonald said relatives of those buried in the cemetery must contact the archdiocese to make arrangements — likewise for scholars and those conducting genealogical research.

Though the new fees are expected to pay to staff the cemetery during business hours and take unspecified security measures, some lament the change. Jasmine Schumaker, a recent transplant from Santa Cruz, California, to suburban New Orleans, visited Tuesday with an offering of fruit and rum for Laveau's tomb.

She said Laveau's tomb was completely covered in Xs when she visited the city 10 years ago, but the new restrictions will be a shame.

"I'm really sorry about the vandalism, but this is such an essential part of New Orleans culture," she said. Perhaps, she suggested, people could be told to make Xs on pieces of paper and leave those in front of the tomb.

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