

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Would you believe frozen eggs? Believe it. It's a bit of good news for inflation-embattled cooks that in the spring of the year hens produce more and egg prices drop. Freezing eggs now can save a few pennies later on when prices rise seasonally.

No, you can't freeze eggs in their shells; like most other liquids, eggs expand as they freeze. No one wants the job of cleaning broken eggs out of the freezing compartment. Nature didn't anticipate modern refrigeration techniques, so freeze eggs in a container stronger than the one Nature provided. A glass jar with a screw top or a plastic container with a tight-fitting cover make excellent substitute shells.

For best results, freeze eggs in small quantities. You can make a reasonable guesstimate, based on previous experience, how many eggs your family will use at one time. If your usual serving is four eggs for two people, the medium-sized peanut butter jar is good.

Break the eggs into a bowl; beat gently with a fork, enough to combine the whites and yolks; add a sprinkle of salt and pour into the jar. Cap firmly and freeze. When you're ready for scrambled eggs for Sunday brunch, defrost an hour or so and proceed as with fresh eggs. Jars large enough for only two eggs can be used for cake recipes calling for a couple of hen fruit.

These small jars take up little room and will tuck into corners, freezer space often wasted. The most efficient freezer is kept fully stocked. It takes less electricity to keep your frozen foods at the lowest temperature if there's no unused space in the compartment.

That's but one idea, new to me, that I've run across in recent weeks. In these days of almost frightening price rises, it seems everyone's searching for ways to stretch their dwindling dollars; to help us all, any new ideas for savings ought to be passed around so others can benefit as well. This column can be your forum, once a month, if you've found a way to put new life into the buck. To see your money-saving and energy-saving ideas in print, just drop a line to Village View giving the details.

Did you ever hear of cheese pie? It makes a good lunch. And is it ever easy to make. All you need is a shallow casserole or baking pan, a couple of slices of bread for each person, grated cheddar cheese, some of those defrosted eggs (or fresh ones) and some milk. Butter one side of each slice of bread; place butter-side-down in your pan. Sprinkle each bread slice

with a quarter teaspoon of Coleman's dry mustard. Beat one egg for each two slices of bread and add one cup of milk for each egg; toss in a little salt and pepper, mix well and pour over the bread.

Now sprinkle on top one cup of grated cheese and bake 30 minutes at 350°. Serve at once. You'll like it.

If you happen to have a few slices of ham, you may decide to top each slice of bread with one of ham; if you've a bit of green pepper in the vegetable bin, dice it and toss it in. Should you be fortunate enough to have picked up a bunch of asparagus, steam it for ten minutes while your cheese pie is baking; then lay four or five stalks per person atop each serving, sprinkle on a little more cheese, and pop it back into the oven for another ten minutes.

That's not lunch; it's dinner.

How many of us living here in every-starved New England are aware that the second most expensive-to-operate appliance in the average home is the hot water heater? There it sits in the cellar, keeping 25 to 50 gallons of water at 140° twenty-four hours a day. There are solutions. Available are little hot water heaters, powered by gas or electricity, that run only when the hot water tap is turned on. They provide instant hot water for as long as the tap is open. Attached to the plumbing under the sink these could save forty to sixty per cent of our energy dollars.

Solar water heaters are proven dollar savers; except for prolonged spells of cloudy weather (when the conventional fuel can supplement, if needed) solar water heaters use no fuel at all. While the initial outlay may loom large, the payback can be accomplished in a relatively short time; furthermore, HUD grants for this equipment are available and 30% of the installation cost can be deducted from your federal income taxes.

With water heaters using more energy than refrigeration, illumination and drying clothes, combined, wouldn't it make sense to at least investigate solar water heaters? Think of the number of times, every day and every night, the electricity or oil burner switches on to bring that tankful of hot water up to the thermostatic setting, whether or not any hot water has been drawn.

Another energy-saver you might like is a wok. The wok, a hemispherical pan, cooks food quickly. It can hold a large quantity, fits over a small flame or burner, and delivers mighty good eating. The secret is in the shape of the pan; all surfaces get hot and food laying against the sloping surfaces cooks rapidly.

Whether cooking meats or vegetables in a wok, no water is used. Food is cooked in a small quantity of oil heated in the bottom of the pan. As the food cooks it is pushed up the sides of the pan and more is added to the bottom. The thin coating of oil keeps things from burning as they continue to crisp and tenderize.

Quick cooking helps vegetables retain both flavor and vitamins. Before starting, everything you plan to cook should be shredded, sliced or diced to bite-sized pieces. The cooking process is so fast there's no time to prepare ingredients once the cooking process begins.

If you have a beef chuck, for example, try cooking it in a wok. Sprinkle with tenderizer; then shred with a sharp knife into narrow strips. Mix shredded meat with 2½ tablespoons of soy sauce, a tablespoon of sherry or other red wine, and a teaspoon of sugar. Let stand while you slice a few stalks of celery diagonally, cut an onion into eight or twelve sections and make inch-wide strips of green pepper.

You can also use peeled and sliced potatoes and carrots if desired. Separate broccoli or cauliflower into flowerette and slice then stem parts quite thin. If you prefer peas, they can be added last, just before removing from heat.

Have a bottle of soy sauce on hand, some cooking oil, and you're ready to begin cooking. Heat a tablespoon of oil in the wok (or a large frying pan if you don't have a wok). Toss in potatoes and carrots, stir for a couple of minutes, then add celery, onions and green pepper; push potatoes and carrots up sides of pan, stir newly added vegetables a few minutes more, add more vegetables, repeating until all are done. Remove to a bowl. Add another tablespoon of oil and bring up to heat; add meat and juices; stir another two minutes. Return all vegetables to pan, salt and pepper to taste, or pour in a few tablespoons of soy sauce. Add peas now, if using them. Permit to cook about 30 seconds. If you didn't use potatoes, serve with steamed rice.

In less than ten minutes cooking time, you're finished. Acupuncture isn't the only thing we can learn from the Chinese.