

SPRING CHICKEN

5 EASY RECIPES TO START THE SEASON

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Smooth Like Custard

We've had four-star meals that don't compare to the pleasure of sopping up a poached egg's golden, oozy yolk with a piece of buttered toast. There's magic in that shell—and all you need to unlock it are a few basic techniques.

Here, the best chefs in the country show how to make towering soufflés, velvety scrambles, creamy carbonaras, and more.

So get cracking.

The Softest Scramble

by JEAN-GEORGES VONGERICHTEN



These scrambled eggs bear little resemblance to the rubbery ones dished up by short-order cooks. Jean-Georges Vongerichten makes his practically pourable, with tiny, fluffy curds, all without using excess butter or doctoring them with heavy cream. Instead, he does as his mother taught him: **He whisks eggs continuously in a saucepan over medium-low heat** until they achieve a texture like soft polenta. At Jean Georges in New York, he serves them in eggshells topped with whipped cream and caviar. Re-create his four-star version (watch a video at bonappetit.com/go/eggcup), or skip the embellishments for a simply excellent scramble.

4 SERVINGS

EGGS

- 4 large eggs
- 2 Tbsp. chilled unsalted butter, divided
- Cayenne pepper
- Kosher salt

GARNISH (OPTIONAL)

- ¼ cup heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks
- 2–4 tsp. caviar

Combine eggs and 1½ Tbsp. butter in a small room-temperature saucepan and season lightly with cayenne and salt. Place over medium-low heat and cook, whisking gently and constantly while scraping bottom and sides of pan, until eggs are just thickened, creamy, and small curds begin to form, 3–4 minutes total. (If mixture begins to stick to pan while cooking, remove from heat; whisk gently for 30 seconds, then continue cooking over heat.) Remove from heat.

Add ½ Tbsp. butter; whisk until melted. Season with salt; divide among small bowls. Top with whipped cream and caviar, if desired.

WHISK, WHISK, WHISK

Constant whisking keeps the eggs from forming big curds and promotes even cooking. It also aerates them, which makes them fluffy.



A poached egg is how we get weekday dinners done. Here are five ways to elevate this simple preparation into a meal.

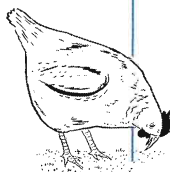
Use **leftover rice** to make fried rice with vegetables. Drizzle with sesame oil and top with an egg for an easy *bibimbap*.

Toss **spaghetti** with olive oil, herbs, and Parmesan, then add a runny egg; the yolk will create a delicious, creamy sauce.

Start with **quick grits**, add grated cheddar and chopped scallions, and stir the poached egg through. Hearty and savory.

Dress **a sturdy green** like kale or escarole in a mustardy vinaigrette. It's the ideal foil for a warm egg, especially with **crispy crumbled bacon** on top.

Reheat **leftover tomato sauce**. Nestle a warm egg in the bowl; serve with crusty bread.



The Perfect Poach

by THOMAS KELLER

Crack an egg, drop it into boiling water, and you'll get a poached egg, right? If it were that simple, there wouldn't be a million egg-poaching gadgets on the market. For clarity, we consulted the perfectionists at Thomas Keller's Per Se in New York, where chef de cuisine Eli Kaimeh gave us his number-one piece of advice: **Start with a fresh egg.** As an egg ages, the white deteriorates, which is why some poached eggs go floppy, surrounded by jellyfish-like tendrils of whites. (To find out if yours are fresh, see right.) At Per Se they **put the raw egg in vinegar before cooking**, which tightens the white so it's less likely to spread out. Instead of dropping the egg into simmering water, they **stir the boiling liquid until it forms a whirlpool. The egg is placed in the vortex, creating the compact shape you see at restaurants that can be hard to achieve at home. Then they simmer it for exactly two minutes.** That's the magic number to yield a cooked-through yet tender white and a thickened but runny yolk. You want "a lava-like flow of the yolk," says Kaimeh. And lots of buttered toast to go with it.

MAKES 2

- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- 2 large eggs
- Coarse sea salt (such as Maldon) and freshly ground black pepper

Pour ½ cup vinegar into each of 2 small bowls. Crack 1 egg into each bowl, taking care not to break yolk; let stand for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil over medium-high heat. Using a whisk, vigorously swirl water until a vortex forms in the center. Slip 1 egg with vinegar into vortex and continue to swirl water with whisk around edges of pan until it returns to a boil. The egg white should wrap tightly around the yolk, forming an oval shape. As soon as water returns to a boil, reduce heat to medium and gently simmer egg, frequently swirling water, for 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, lift egg from water and use kitchen shears to trim any stray pieces of egg white. Place egg on paper towels and gently blot; transfer egg to a bowl or plate. Repeat with remaining egg. (If poaching more than 2 eggs, repeat using fresh water.) Season with salt and pepper. **DO AHEAD:** Can be made 1 day ahead. Immediately transfer to a bowl of ice water and let cool. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a plate. Cover; chill. Rewarm in a saucepan of simmering water for 1 minute.