



Not eggsactly true

You know when Christmas is over when you see Easter eggs in the shops, and the size of the packaging belies the size of the contents. What you think is a good buy turns out to be anything but.

The same may also be true of real eggs. Their size, labelling and packaging may also mislead the customer into thinking that they have bought well. Let's look at some eggsamples:

- All eggs produced in the EU must by law indicate the country and farm of origin. This information is encoded and stamped on each egg. Eggs are designated: 0 = organic;

1 = free range; 2 = barn eggs; and, 3 = cage eggs. So an egg stamped 2 UK followed by a figure indicates that it was laid in the UK by hens in a barn, and the following figures are the reference number for a particular registered farm.

- Egg sizes are important and the sizing system changed in the late 1990s for unity of measurement in the EU: small (old size [os] 5-7), less than 53g; medium (os 3-5) 53-63g; large (os 3-1), 63-73g; and, very large (os 1-0), over 73g.
- The packaging of any of these eggs may be labelled 'class A' eggs. This is not an official

designation informing of the special merit of a producer since *all* eggs for direct sale to consumers must be class A. It just affirms that the eggs are clean, fresh, and have no visible cracks. All eggs have to be naturally clean and unwashed – the washing of eggs is not permitted as it passes any infection present to the rest of the eggs.

- Eggs other than class A are broken, emptied and used commercially.
- The word 'fresh' is also a redundant term as all eggs must be fit for sale. From laying to sale to consumers must not exceed 21 days, and allowing for use the 'best before date' increases that time to 28 days.

There is of course a psychology of labelling which leads consumers to believe that they have made a good purchase. Words that conjure up pictures of picturesque idyllic surroundings, and words like healthier are all used to tempt the buyer. Eggs packaged as 10 or 18 to a pack may all confuse the shopper.

To be eggsact in your calculations, examine the eggs in your fridge, look for the information code, and work out the weight per price for the eggs. Once you know what to do you can eggsperiment with other brands to see if you are getting value for your money.