

Easy, Economical Eggs

I think we are all pulling the purse strings tighter and thinking twice about what we spend and how we stretch our budgets. Certainly the newspaper headlines, broadcast news, and conversations among friends are constant reminders of the state of our economy. Luxury items are the first to go...even when it comes to cooking. Or are they? My suggestion is to stretch expensive ingredients by using these items in discreet ways, such as for garnish or to accentuate a dish. Smoked salmon, prosciutto, artisan cheeses, and extra-virgin olive oil deliver big flavor, even in smaller quantities. Use these premium foods to jazz up nutritious and cost-effective meals. Along with the obvious pasta, grain and rice dishes, consider eggs.

I usually don't like to answer a question with a question, but often when I ask myself, "What should I serve for dinner?" the answer is, "What's in the refrigerator?"

Opening the refrigerator and scanning the shelves, I usually find milk, eggs, and an odd selection of leftovers. Often, there aren't enough leftovers for another full meal, but there are enough to consider a frugal meal. And in my cooking universe that means making a frittata. Be it julienned ham with grated Gruyere and fresh thyme, steamed asparagus with sweet onions and farmhouse cheddar, or my new Featured Recipe that utilizes the ingredients remaining from a fresh spinach salad, the flavor combinations are endless. Economical and adaptable, eggs are the perfect base ingredient for creative cooking.

Versatility is what makes a frittata fun to prepare, but they are incredibly easy, too. Unlike an omelet which takes practice to perfectly form and is best when freshly cooked, a frittata is perfect for a special occasion brunch or a casual dinner at home. I consider this a 10-minute-to-make meal. There is almost nothing simpler. For dinner, I'm happy to complement a frittata with a simple green salad and warm crusty bread. When entertaining, frittatas are perfect for a buffet. They are as delicious at room temperature as they are warm; they don't need to take up oven space; and they are one less thing to worry about when the host is juggling last-minute preparations. With Easter just around the corner, a frittata is something to keep in mind.

So, the next time you ask yourself, "What's for dinner?" don't reach for the phone for take-out, reach into the refrig and get creative – there just may be a delicious, inexpensive, and easy meal waiting inside that begins with a carton of eggs.