

# Chicken and Egg

## A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading with 125 Recipes

*This book really captured my attention, filled with humorous anecdotes of the author's chicken-raising experiences, wrapped around tons of delicious recipes—it's like getting two books in one. —Ed.*

I have succumbed to chickens. I admit it. My interest in chickens began for culinary reasons, namely, as a source for ultra-fresh unadulterated free-range eggs. Little did I know that I would soon be carried away by the personalities and antics of my backyard hens and end up writing a memoir cookbook about my experiences and sharing the recipes I had come to love in *Chicken and Egg; A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading with 125 Recipes*. It all started with three tiny chicks, Cleo, Lulu and Roxanne.

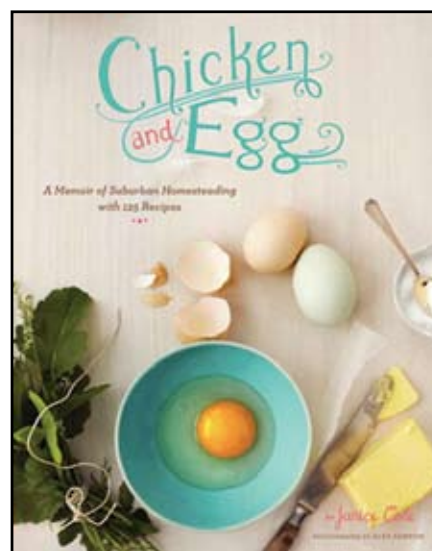
Three days after the chicken class, I drove to a local feed store to get my chicks. Tom, the owner, greeted me heartily and asked what I was looking for. I reminded him that we had spoken the day before about the chicks he was getting in, and I wanted two. "These

round washtubs are the day-olds," he said. I watched the little peeps as they tottered, fell, pecked at each other, climbed on top of each other, ate and drank, and did it all again. Some slept in the midst of the chaos.

As I bent down to look more closely, Tom asked again, "Are you sure you want only two? Chickens are social creatures; they like a crowd." Never ask a woman if she wants more baby chicks while she's looking at a tub full of bobbing fluff balls. "Well...maybe I could take three." If my coop had been bigger, I might have walked out with the entire washtub of fuzzy orbs that morning.

I knew I wanted a chicken that lays colorful green, blue, or pink eggs. Beyond that I was clueless. "The brown and black ones will lay colored eggs," Tom explained. "The gold ones are Buff Orpingtons, and they're a good hen," he added.

Now that I was getting three, I wanted three different breeds. "Well, I don't have any other day-olds but these over here are just a few weeks old." They looked huge



next to the baby chicks. I decided to stay with the day-olds. As I peered into the fuzzy, swarming tubs, I recalled an old *Star Trek* episode about Tribbles. It was disconcerting.

Was there some trick to choosing baby chicks, like examining a mare's teeth and hooves when you buy a horse? If so, the feed store owner wasn't going to let me in on the secret. So I developed my own criteria: (1) Let sleeping chicks lie. Any chicks that could sleep in that cacophony must be comatose; (2) If you can grab it, take it. The fluff balls never stopped moving. By the time your hand shot out to grab the one you wanted, it had moved three times and you had no idea where it went; (3) Take the one at the top. Nature is always guided by survival of the fittest. Those chicks that reached

## Chicken Crazy

*Wondering why so many people across the nation are going crazy for chickens? Here are some of the answers:*

**Eggs:** Nothing beats the flavor of a freshly laid egg, still warm from the nest. Chickens that run through the backyard, feed on vegetable scraps, and dig in the soil produce intensely-flavored eggs and vibrantly colored egg yolks.

**Meat:** A small group of backyard chicken enthusiasts not only raise chickens for eggs, but also for their meat. Many cities ban the slaughter of backyard birds, but there are areas where it's legal. The meat from home-ranged chickens is more succulent and flavorful because of the exercise it's had. Studies have shown that it's also healthier, with less fat, fewer calories, and more vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids. Although most urban chicken owners wouldn't dream of eating their own birds, some enthusiasts like controlling all aspects of their food production.

**Companionship:** One of the unexpected pleasures of raising chickens is the pleasure and entertainment they provide, just like more conventional pets. Chickens are highly intelligent creatures with distinct personalities. They're social animals and most of them love human companionship. Chickens will readily cuddle on your lap, beg to be petted, jump on your shoulder, and follow you around. They respond to your voice and get to know various members of the family. Chickens, like other pets, will cheer you up or offer a shoulder for you to cry on.

**Better gardens:** People who garden appreciate chickens for the compost they provide and the pests they eat. Composted chicken waste contributes highly valuable nutrients to plants and soil. Gardeners also find chickens useful for turning over the garden soil in the spring and fall. Just remember that chickens need boundaries to keep them out of growing gardens. These clever birds will help themselves to anything that looks tasty.



**Author Janice Cole got so carried away by the personalities and antics of backyard hens that she wrote a memoir cookbook. It all started with these three tiny chicks, Cleo, Lulu and Roxanne.**

the summit must be stronger than the ones squashed at the bottom.

My chosen three were unceremoniously put into a tiny box with air holes. “Now, they’re all females, right?” I wanted reassurance from Tom that I didn’t have a rooster hidden in the group. “Well, they should be,” Tom fudged.

“What do you mean they should be,” I shot back with a small note of panic. “We can’t guarantee it. But don’t worry; we’ll take back any roosters,” he replied. Oh, great, now I have to worry about crowing, I thought as I paid \$3.95 per chick and headed to the car. Marty will really love that.

I arrived home from the feed store frazzled and slightly deaf in one ear from the chicks’ high-pitched peeping. I’d only been with them for 40 minutes, and they were already driving me nuts. If the next two months are going to be like this, I thought as I walked into the house, God help us all. You see, these chicks had to bunk with us inside the house until they feathered out and the weather warmed up. Marty had no idea what he was in for. I’ll admit I may have left out a few of the specifics before rushing off to the feed store, figuring he’d find out soon enough. I really thought the cute baby chicks would win him over. I was wrong.

*Janice Cole is a food editor, recipe developer and food writer. For recipes and more information about her birds visit her blog at [ThreeSwinginChicks.com](http://ThreeSwinginChicks.com).*

Excerpt from Janice Cole, *Chicken and Egg: A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading with 125 Recipes*, used with permission from Chronicle Books.

The *Chicken and Egg: A Memoir of Suburban Homesteading with 125 Recipes* is available from the Backyard Poultry bookstore at [www.backyardpoultrymag.com](http://www.backyardpoultrymag.com).—Ed. 🐔



## Lemon-Tarragon Deviled Eggs

Soft, fresh goat cheese is the surprise ingredient in these ultra-creamy deviled eggs. The first sprigs of tarragon that emerge in the spring have a light, delicate flavor that pairs perfectly with the bright yellow yolks of spring eggs. Fresh grass and other greens in a hen’s spring diet enhance the flavor of these eggs.

- 6 hard-cooked eggs, peeled**
- 1/3 cup fresh goat cheese, softened**
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh tarragon, plus sprigs for garnish**
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced green onion (green part only)**
- Scant 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest, plus slivered zest for garnish**
- 1/8 teaspoon salt**
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper**

Cut the hard-cooked eggs in half lengthwise. Scoop out the egg yolks with a small spoon and put them in a medium bowl. Blend with a pastry blender or a fork until crumbly, about the consistency of coarse sand. Stir in the goat cheese until well blended, add the mayonnaise, and stir until smooth and creamy. Stir in the green onion, grated lemon zest, salt, and pepper.

Spoon the egg yolk filling into a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2-inch star tip and pipe the mixture into the egg whites. Or, spoon the filling into the egg whites. Garnish with tarragon sprigs and slivered lemon zest before serving.

Serves 6.