

# COOK'S

ILLUSTRATED

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## SOFT-COOKED EGGS

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Makes 4.

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Traditional methods for making soft-cooked eggs are hit or miss. We wanted one that delivered a set white and a fluid yolk every time. Calling for fridge-cold eggs and boiling water has two advantages: It reduces temperature variables, which makes the recipe more foolproof, and it provides the steepest temperature gradient, which ensures that the yolk at the center stays fluid while the white cooks through. Using only ½ inch of boiling water instead of several cups to cook the eggs means that the recipe takes less time and energy from start to finish. Because of the curved shape of the eggs, they actually have very little contact with the water so they do not lower the temperature when they go into the saucepan. This means that you can use the same timing for anywhere from one to four eggs without altering the consistency of the finished product.

Be sure to use large eggs that have no cracks and are cold from the refrigerator. Because precise timing is vital to the success of this recipe, we strongly recommend using a digital timer. You can use this method for one to six large, extra-large, or jumbo eggs without altering the timing. If you have one, a steamer basket does make lowering the eggs into the boiling water easier. We recommend serving these eggs in eggcups and with buttered toast for dipping, or you may simply use the dull side of a butter knife to crack the egg along the equator, break the egg in half, and scoop out the insides with a teaspoon.

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 large eggs
- Salt and pepper

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring ½ inch water to boil in medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Using tongs, gently place eggs in boiling water (eggs will not be submerged). Cover saucepan and cook eggs for 6½ minutes.
2. Remove cover, transfer saucepan to sink, and place under cold running water for 30 seconds. Remove eggs from pan and serve, seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

### What Does Perfectly Cooked Mean?

The proteins in egg whites and egg yolks solidify at different temperatures, making the perfect soft-cooked egg an exercise in precision. Whites that are firm yet tender must reach 180 degrees, while the yolk must stay below 158 degrees to remain runny. To achieve this temperature differential, it's essential to start cooking your eggs in hot water (versus the cold-water start that we've proven conclusively works best for hard-cooked eggs) so that the whites will be blasted with enough heat to solidify before the heat has time to penetrate to the yolks.



**YOLK:** Less than 158 degrees

**WHITE:** 180 degrees

### The Problem: A Pot of Boiling Water

The biggest problem with the most widely used soft-cooked egg technique—dropping cold eggs into boiling water—is that you can perfect the cook time for a set number of eggs, but every time you add or subtract an egg (or even use a different pan), that timing is thrown off. That's because the number of eggs added to the pot (and how well that pot can hold heat) affects how little—or how much—the water temperature drops from the boiling point of 212 degrees. Even a 1- or 2-degree drop significantly influences the cook time. Here's how much the temperature changed immediately after we added one egg, four eggs, and six eggs to a quart of boiling water.



**STEADY BOILING:** The water temperature (212 degrees) was unchanged by one egg.



**NOT BOILING:** With four eggs, the water (210 degrees) took a full minute to return to a boil.



**NOT BOILING:** With six eggs, the water (202 degrees) took 2 minutes to get back to 212 degrees.

### The Solution: A Pot of Steam

Steaming eggs over 1/2 inch of boiling water cooks them in exactly the same way as a pot of boiling water, allowing us to create tender yet firm whites with luscious runny yolks. It also removes the big problem with the boiling technique: Because steaming involves so little liquid, the water returns to a boil within seconds, no matter how many eggs you add to the pot. By steaming your eggs, you can cook up one, two—even six—perfect soft-cooked eggs every time.



212 degrees



212 degrees



212 degrees

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### Yes, You Can Peel a Soft-Cooked Egg

Though it seemed unlikely to us, soft-cooked eggs are actually easier to peel than are hard-cooked eggs. This is because the soft-cooked white is more yielding. Start by cracking the broad end of the egg against a hard surface and then peel away both the shell and the inner membrane. A quick rinse in warm water removes any remaining wisps of membrane and shards of eggshell. Split the egg in half and serve it over toast, or have it your usual way.



**CRACK THE BROAD END**



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