

Ŵyau Ynys Môn (Anglesey Eggs)

The small Isle of Anglesey, located off the northwest coast of Wales in the Irish Sea, has been known for its fertile land and agricultural output. As a dish, Anglesey Eggs is thought to have arisen from this agricultural abundance, using readily available ingredients to create a filling meal that was enjoyed by rich and poor alike.

The first written Welsh recipe for Anglesey eggs is from the 15th century, but some think it can be traced back to similar recipes from the Vikings or even Ancient Rome. The older recipes would have used turnips instead of potatoes, which are a New World vegetable. This dish reflects a time when meat was a scarce luxury and is said to have been a favorite of St. David, who was a vegetarian.

This recipe may be linked to Anglesey's tradition of 'Clapping for Eggs' or 'Clapio Wyau'. Children would go from farm to farm, reciting poems, singing and clapping using wooden clappers, to ask for eggs. Although this centuries-old tradition had largely disappeared by the 1960s, it has recently been revived as an Easter version of trick or treat!

This delicious dish of potatoes, leeks, eggs, and cheese is a quick and easy dish for dinner or a great addition for a brunch. It is just as good served piping hot or cold out of the fridge on a hot summer day.

Note: These tips make the dish so much easier to prepare:

Placing the securely closed carton of eggs on its side the night before cooking centers the yolks.

Salt in the water seals cracks on any egg that may break.

Running cold water over the eggs at the end of cooking cools them quickly to help prevent greening of the yolk surface and makes peeling easier.

Eggs that are about a week to 10 days old peel the easiest. Start by cracking the wide end of the egg.

Ingredients

5 eggs

4 large leeks

Utensils

knife and cutting board

measuring cup

1 ½ lbs. potatoes	measuring spoons
¾ cup butter	2 cookpots
2 cups milk	slotted spoon
2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour	3 bowls
½ teaspoon grated nutmeg	frying pan
6 oz. grated sharp Cheddar cheese	spatula
Salt	cheese grater
Black pepper	colander
Fresh thyme (optional)	potato masher
Water	wooden spoon
	whisk
	deep oven-proof baking dish

This dish is seasoned to taste. Cut the potatoes into chunks. In a cookpot big enough to hold the potatoes, bring water to a boil on the stove. Add a pinch of salt and the potatoes. Boil the potatoes until they are tender, about 10-15 minutes. Strain the potatoes in a colander and place them in a bowl. Using the masher, mash the potatoes well. Add ¼ cup of the butter and season to taste with salt and pepper. Using a wooden spoon, mix well.

In the other cookpot bring water to boil, add salt, and using a slotted spoon, gently lower the eggs into the boiling water. Boil the eggs for 6-8 minutes. You want the eggs to be a bit jammy. While the eggs are cooking, fill a bowl with very cold or ice water. When the eggs are done, use the slotted spoon to transfer them from the cookpot to the bowl of cold water. Run more cold water over them if necessary to stop the cooking process. Peel the eggs and cut them into halves or quarters.

Wash the leeks well to make sure there is no mud or grit on them. Slice the leeks into rounds using all of the white and light green parts. In a frying pan over medium heat melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Add the leeks and sauté for 5-6 minutes. Add them to the mashed potatoes and stir well.

Grate the cheese and bring the milk up to room temperature.

Using butter grease the baking dish. The dish can be prepared up to this point in advance.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Place the mashed potatoes and leek mixture in the bottom of the baking dish. Add the eggs and press them into the leeks and potato mixture. Melt ¼ cup of butter in a cookpot on the stove over low heat. Using a whisk, add the flour and continuously whisk until the flour and butter are well combined. Do not burn. Slowly add the room temperature milk and whisk well. Bring to a boil, and simmer until the sauce is thick and smooth. Add the nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in most of the cheese until it is melted. Pour the sauce over the eggs in the baking dish until the whole dish is covered. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top and add some fresh thyme if using.

Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes, until the cheese is a bit crisp and the sauce is bubbling.