



NEW YORK POST

LATE CITY FINAL

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

www.nypost.com

pulsefood



EGG-STRA!

Read all about it:
Yolk-gilded duck and meatballs
are all the rage on NYC menus.
But is this trend half-baked?

By TRICIA ROMANO

PHOTOGRAPHER Sarah Forbes Keough, 32, recalls a meal she had recently at Greenpoint restaurant Five Leaves. "They have this insane burger that has beet, pineapple and a fried egg. You read the description, and you're like, 'I don't know, man.' And then you eat it, and it's fantastic."

She should know: She runs a food zine called "Put a Egg on It." It's an apt name considering these days, everywhere you go in the city's restaurants, menus are rife with lunch and dinner entrees oozing with eggs.

Over at new Nordic hot spot Acme in NoHo, there's the signature Chicken & Eggs dish

served in a clay pot and crowned with lightly poached, then fried eggs; at the Meatball Shop on Stanton Street, the Family Jewels meatball sandwich is topped with a fried egg; at King, the new Greenwich Village restaurant headed by chef Francis Derby, a poached egg is paired with octopus and frisée salad; and, if the duck entree at Williamsburg restaurant Masten Lake wasn't opulent enough, don't worry: It's added a quivering poached duck egg to the mix.

In fact, restaurants are so egg-strate that Danny Meyer's new spot in the Financial District, North End Grill — headed by chef Floyd Cardoz — is going full bore: There's an entire section on the menu dedicated only to eggs, pairing them with peppy crab, tuna tartare and caviar.

But has the egg trend gone too far?

"It's become the Ugg boots of food," says Andrew Knowlton, restaurant editor of Bon Appetit.

"It's a trend that's long past its welcome."

A favorite twist at David Chang's influential Momofuku restaurants, the egg has since become the garnish of choice nearly everywhere; indeed, Bon Appetit declared it the "dish of the year" way back in 2009. But now, says Knowlton, "It's become a crutch for some chefs."

"When they don't know what to do with a dish, they'll — just to add that certain extra gilding-the-lily lusciousness — put an egg on it."

But that hasn't stopped high-caliber chefs from flipping for eggs — and customers from greedily gobbling them up.

For both Cardoz and Derby, the egg presents a challenge: making something familiar more exciting.

During his stint at wd-50, Derby learned from Wylie Dufresne, who is famous for his decon-

structed eggs benedict.

"There's a way to cook eggs that a lot of people have never seen before," says Derby, whose octopus dish features an egg that looks hard-boiled but is in fact three-minute poached.

"That's maybe what keeps people's interest."

For foodies like Keough, the attraction is visceral. "There's the moment when you take the first bite of fried egg on a hamburger or a sandwich — and it kind of makes the yolk run over," she says. "It becomes like a sauce. And taking the first bite finishes the preparation."

And as Cardoz and Knowlton point out, the egg is a cheap source of protein: "Eggs have played an important part in Third World countries where people can't afford expensive protein," says Cardoz, the North End Grill chef, noting that eggs are often incorporated in traditional Indian and Asian foods.

"Let's not forget there is this recession, and it is one of the most economical ways to add protein and richness to any dish," says Bon Appetit's Knowlton. "Before you might have added something more expensive, but an egg is something that everybody will eat. It's low-cost for the restaurant and they can charge \$2.50 to add an egg to your burger or pizza or sandwich or whatever."

Registered dietitian Mary Barbour says that while eggs are tremendous sources of protein, they come with a downside: a high level of cholesterol. The trendy duck egg is particularly dangerous: Fatter than chicken eggs, duck eggs have 619 milligrams of cholesterol compared to the chicken egg's 186 milligrams. "You really should only be eating one egg a day, and, especially if you have cholesterol issues, you shouldn't be eating the yolk."

And, she adds, "If you are eating it with pork and sauces, you are just going to gain weight." (A chicken egg

has 70 calories while a duck egg has 130 calories.)

Just don't tell that to the slender throngs packing into Scamus Mul-len's Greenwich Village hot spot Tortulia to nibble on tapas such as suckling pig cheek topped with a fried quail egg — or Alex Stupak's nearby Empellon for sopas (fried masa tortillas) filled with refried beans and a poached quail egg.

Not surprisingly, there are few egg frontiers that have yet to be crossed: "I've not played with an ostrich egg," muses Derby. "It seems like a lot of egg to me. It's a little intimidating."

Cardoz is also stumped: "I haven't seen a dessert made with a whole egg," he says, pausing. "Maybe I should challenge my pastry chef to do something with that."

At the MEATBALL SHOP you can add a fried egg to meatballs smashed on a bruschetta bun.

