

# Breakfast Foods

**B**REAKFAST helps people by fueling their bodies. Breakfast may be cold cereal with milk and fruit, a pastry and coffee, or a full American-style breakfast of eggs, bacon, toast, and hash browns. Some classic breakfast entrées are Eggs Benedict and Quiche Lorraine. Meanwhile, buffet-inspired foods include frittata and strada. Breakfast foods are varied, but your choices should provide your body with nutrients.



## Objective:



Identify common breakfast foods.

## Key Terms:



breakfast meats

Canadian bacon

cereals

continental breakfasts

cottage-fried potatoes

crêpes

eggs Benedict

French toast

frittata

hash

hash brown potatoes

home fries

hominy grits

lox

omelets (omelettes)

pasteurized

perishable

quiche

quick breads

sausage gravy

shell eggs

skillet breakfasts

smoked fish

strada

Texas toast

## Common Breakfast Foods

Common breakfast foods include cereal, beverages, breads, pastries, potatoes, quick breads, eggs, meat, and fruit. The type and amount of food consumed varies. Items consumed at restaurants and for special occasions may be much more complex than the foods prepared for breakfast on normal weekdays.

## CEREALS

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**Cereals** are cultivated grasses and their seeds or grain; prepared foods made from grains. Cereal grains are usually starchy. The most common breakfast cereal grains are rice, corn, wheat, and oats. Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals were first manufactured in the United States and gradually spread across Europe. Cereal is America's most common breakfast food at home and can be served hot or cold. Cold cereals are processed to varying degrees. Many are loaded with sugar and artificial colors. Others more naturally reflect their whole grain origins. Hot cereals are produced from whole grains but are cooked with hot water or milk. They thicken during cooking. Typically, hot cereals are less refined and include little, if any, sugar, coloring, or flavoring. Typical hot cereal choices are oatmeal, steel-cut oats, Cream of Wheat®, and hominy grits.

### Hominy Grits

**Hominy grits** (ground corn or oats in which the germ and bran are sifted out) are an important part of many breakfasts. They can be served as a main course or a side dish or may be formed into cakes or muffins, especially in the southern United States. Hominy is maize (corn) ground to a coarse consistency. It is used in much the same way as rice for sweet puddings and is often a hot offering at breakfast (hot mush). However, it can be boiled, cooled, sliced, and fried.



**FIGURE 1.** Grits are usually served hot with a pat of butter or sliced and fried as a side dish.

## BEVERAGES

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Beverages are an essential breakfast element, with choices such as coffee and tea (regular or decaffeinated), milk, and fruit juices.

## BREADS

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Breads options at breakfast are numerous and include toast slices, **Texas toast** (double-thick, sliced white bread often used to prepare French toast), English muffins, bagels, sweet breads, rolls, buns, and croissants.

## PASTRIES

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Pastries are often part of breakfast fare as a quick alternative for those on the run or as part of a breakfast buffet. Full buffet breakfasts will likely include pastries. In contrast, **continental breakfasts** are light meals that usually consist of coffee or tea and a roll, pastry, or

another baked good. Some continental breakfast menus offer cold sweet breads, cereals, and fruits. Typical breakfast pastries are muffins, coffeecake or another quick bread, Danish pastries, cinnamon rolls or other yeast-raised pastries, and doughnuts.

## POTATOES

Potatoes are a typical side dish with hot breakfasts. **Home fries (cottage-fried potatoes)** are sliced or diced raw or boiled potatoes, sometimes with diced onions (Lyonnaise style) and/or green peppers that are pan-fried until brown. **Hash brown potatoes** are shredded, julienned, diced, or sliced raw or boiled potatoes that are pan-fried until very crisp and well browned.

## QUICK BREADS

**Quick breads** are a group of specialty breads made with a leavening agent (e.g., baking soda, baking powder, or steam) that expands during baking. They are usually in a batter form and rise quickly when baked (hence the name). Their ease and speed of production make them common and loved at breakfast. Quick breads include pancakes, waffles, popovers, muffins, biscuits, quick breads, and crêpes. **Crêpes** (the French word for pancakes) are thin, filled, and rolled items. They are included in this category, but technically they are not quick breads because crêpes do not rise when they are cooked, and they do not contain a leavening agent.



**FIGURE 2.** These are strawberry and banana crêpes with chocolate sauce. Main dish crêpes are filled with meats and cheeses.

## EGGS

Eggs are the centerpieces of hot breakfasts. High in protein and exceptionally versatile, they can be cooked quickly in endless ways as an individual food or as an integral part of a specific breakfast recipe. Chicken eggs are the eggs of choice, and they come in various sizes. Two-ounce large eggs are the standard breakfast size. Eggs are available as fresh or **shell eggs**, frozen eggs, egg substitutes, and powdered eggs.

### Frozen Eggs

Frozen eggs are removed from their shell and are sold in a liquid form in bulk cartons. Common types are whole eggs, whites only, and yolks only. They are **pasteurized** (heated to

a specific temperature for a specific amount of time to kill harmful microorganisms, especially *Salmonella enteritidis* bacteria). Pasteurized eggs are now available in cartons at the local grocery store. They may be in a liquid or a frozen state. Frozen eggs are also available precooked in various forms, such as fried and scrambled.

## Egg Substitutes

Egg substitutes come in liquid forms (e.g., Egg Beaters®, which contains 99 percent egg whites) that may be fresh or frozen. They are also available in a powdered form that contains primarily egg whites. They are good tools in the fight against high cholesterol and fat in the diet. They look like whole scrambled eggs and are available for commercial as well as home use.

## Powdered Eggs

Powdered eggs are fully dehydrated eggs that are lower in price than shell or frozen eggs. When properly stored, they have a shelf life of 5 to 10 years. However, the taste and texture of powdered eggs is poor compared to fresh shell or frozen eggs. Their primary use in the food industry is in cake, doughnut, and bread mixes, as opposed to scrambling for a quiche mixture.



## DIGGING DEEPER...

### UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL FACTS: The Birth of Cold Cereals

Until the late 1800s, American breakfasts were heavy. Pork was the primary dish. With little fiber in their diets, people commonly suffered from bowel problems. Doctors began to experiment with the use of different grains as an alternative to meat, but they were tough and bland. A patient at a New York sanitarium was exposed to these new options. She didn't like them, but she was intrigued. She came home and discussed what she had seen with a member of her church; the man was named John Kellogg.

As it turned out, Dr. Kellogg ran his own sanitarium in Michigan and had been preoccupied with finding healthy food alternatives for his patients who also suffered from bowel problems. John and his brother, Will Kellogg, experimented with grinding and toasting grains, trying to come up with options people would like. Their motivation was not profit but improved health for the patients at the sanitarium. The results were interesting, but people didn't respond well to the mealy mixtures being developed.

An error in processing the toasted grain resulted in a wheat "flake" rather than the powdery meal they had been producing. Flaked breakfast cereal was born, and the process was patented. Two years later, the same technique was used to develop corn flakes, but John Kellogg remained only interested in providing options for his patients. Will Kellogg wanted to market their invention in local grocery stores based on former patients wanting more of the product. In 1906, Will bought his brother's interest in the patents, and the Kellogg Company was created. Other companies jumped on the bandwagon as the popularity of cold cereal for breakfast swept the country, and they all owe their success to a doctor, an accident, and constipation!

Eggs and egg products are typically found in the dairy section of groceries. However, eggs are not a dairy product; eggs are poultry.

## MEATS

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Meat is commonly served at breakfast—on its own or as a side dish to eggs or a quick bread. Pork is the most common. **Breakfast meats** are bacon, sausage, ham, **Canadian bacon** (salted, cured, and smoked slices of boned and rolled pork loin), breakfast-cut pork chops, and breakfast-cut beefsteaks. Other meats served at breakfast may be culturally oriented, including gyro meat, chorizo sausage, taco-style ground beef, chunks of chicken, and virtually any meat. **Hash** is a crisply cooked mixture of meat or fish and diced potatoes often topped with seasoned bread crumbs.

Seafood is also served at breakfast, usually focusing on highly flavored or specialty seafood that is served cold. **Smoked fish** is an oily freshwater fish that has been soaked in brine and then placed into a smoker box until it is cooked and golden with a mild, smoky flavor. Chub, sturgeon, whitefish, and salmon are common choices. Shellfish (e.g., shrimp, crab, and lobster) are luxurious additions to breakfast choices and are sometimes incorporated in omelets. **Lox** is salmon that has been smoked or cured with salt and spices and then thinly sliced. It has a rich taste and is typically served on a bagel with cream cheese.



**FIGURE 3.** Lox is often served on a bagel with cream cheese, onions, and capers.

## FRUIT

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Fruit, usually served fresh, is part of many breakfast side dishes and may be incorporated as a garnish for prepared breakfasts.

## BREAKFAST FOOD PREPARATION

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The manner in which an item is prepared depends on the number of people being served, the amount of time available to prepare and serve the food, and the establishment serving the items.

### Cereals

Ready-to-eat cold cereals are usually served with milk or cream and sometimes with fruit. Sweeteners are often added to non-sweetened cereal varieties. Hot cereals typically start with

dry grain added to boiling water, sometimes with salt added. Cereals may be served plain or with milk or cream, fruit, raisins, butter, and/or sugar.

## Juices

Juices may be purchased ready to serve or in concentrated forms. To reconstitute a juice concentrate, the thickened concentrate is mixed with the appropriate proportion of water to bring it to a suitable consistency. Coffee and tea are typically served hot for breakfast, with options of adding milk, cream, flavorings, and/or sweeteners. Even milk can be garnished with the addition of chocolate for those who want something sweeter.

## Breads

Breads can be served cold, warmed, or toasted. They are commonly garnished with butter, margarine, cream cheese, jams and jellies, or other spreads.

## Pastries

Pastries are typically ready to eat and require no further preparation. Sometimes pastries are sliced or cut into smaller pieces on a buffet. They may be warmed before service, and some may be purchased as pre-made dough or batter that requires minimal preparation to bake on site. Pastry batter or dough baked on site commonly includes a finishing glaze or topping to apply after baking.

## Potatoes

Potatoes offer a number of options for breakfast side dishes. Home fries and hash browns may be purchased processed and frozen, requiring final heating or frying prior to service, or they can be made fresh from raw potatoes. Starchy russet or Idaho potatoes are good choices for these side dishes. They require little more than a hot skillet or pan with hot oil to be fried until golden brown and crispy. Salt is usually added.

**Skillet breakfasts** are all of the elements of an American breakfast in a one-pan presentation: meat, potatoes, vegetables, and eggs. Hash brown potatoes often line the bottom of a small skillet-shaped pan. Then the cooked meat, cheese, and/or vegetables are placed atop the potatoes. An egg (i.e., poached or fried) is placed on top of the fillings. The meal is served in the skillet-shaped pan as a one-dish approach to the meal rather than each element being presented separately on a plate.

## Quick Breads

Quick breads may be purchased ready to eat or frozen. Another option is to prepare it fresh. As the name implies, quick breads are easy and quick to prepare. They are based on thin- to medium-thick batters of flour, baking powder, milk, eggs, oil, and sometimes sugar and flavorings. Pancakes are cooked quickly on a hot flattop grill. Waffles are cooked in special irons (devices that heat up, close, and have an internal grid to form the waffle shape). Popovers are baked in special heavy, cup-shaped tins or muffin tins. Muffins and biscuits use the same basic

ingredients as all quick breads, but they are formed differently; both are baked in the oven. Muffins can incorporate any flavor, and the heavy batter is usually scooped into muffin tins and baked. Biscuits are heavier. They must be rolled out and cut into shapes before baking.

Biscuits and **sausage gravy** (a thick, white cream sauce enriched with cooked sausage pieces) is a popular breakfast offering. Biscuits are sturdy enough to stand up under the weight of the sausage gravy.



**FIGURE 4.** Waffles are prepared in special “irons.” Notice the typically thin batter runs into each crevice and crisps when heated.

## Eggs

Eggs are the most versatile breakfast food. They may be cooked to order or as a main dish. Eggs cooked to order may be fried, scrambled, poached, hard-cooked or soft-cooked, coddled, baked, etc. When cooked in bulk for service on a buffet, eggs are susceptible to overcooking and can turn greenish if held at too high a temperature due to a reaction between the hydrogen sulfide in the egg whites and the iron in the yolks. The coloring is harmless, but it is unappetizing. It is the same reaction that occurs when shell eggs are boiled instead of hard-cooked. To prevent the greenish cast, chefs and cooks often include an acid (e.g., vinegar or sour cream) in eggs that will be held hot for long periods.

## Omelets

**Omelets** (omelettes) are beaten eggs cooked in a hot pan (often without stirring) until done and are then filled and folded or rolled. Fillings are added just prior to folding or rolling and include cheese, meat, and vegetables. Omelets can be started on the stovetop and finished by baking in the oven. The first omelet recipes were very simple: eggs, butter, salt, and pepper.

## Frittatas

**Frittatas** are open-faced Italian omelets that are fried in a hot skillet with eggs, onions, potatoes, bacon or sausage before being topped with cheese and finished in the oven.



**FIGURE 5.** This slice of vegetable frittata has no crust. If it had a crust, it would be a quiche.

## French Toast

**French toast** is bread (often a thick slice) dipped into a milk and beaten egg mixture and then fried. It should be crisp and brown on the outside and soft in the center. Syrup and/or fruit often accompany it.

## Strada

**Strada** is a type of egg entrée or breakfast casserole similar to a baked pudding in which bread is layered in a baking dish and topped with layers of cheese, meat, vegetables, and tomato sauce or white sauce. Then the entire dish is topped with a mixture of beaten eggs and cream and is baked. The finished dish is puffy and lightly browned.

## Eggs Benedict

**Eggs Benedict** is a classic breakfast egg entrée composed of half a toasted English muffin and a slice of ham or Canadian bacon topped with a poached egg and covered with hollandaise sauce (a rich egg and butter sauce with a hint of lemon). Side dishes include home fries or roasted potatoes. A simple way to make this dish vegetarian is to substitute spinach for the meat, making it Eggs Benedict Florentine.

## Quiche

**Quiche** (an open-faced flan or tart; an egg pie mixture baked in pastry crust) is a mixture of beaten eggs, milk or cream, and various ingredients, including cheese, meat, and/or vegetables. The mixture is poured into a pastry-lined pie plate or quiche mold and is baked. Quiche is served on breakfast buffets and as a breakfast or lunch entrée.



**FIGURE 6.** Quiche is an egg-based pie baked in a pastry shell. This is Quiche Lorraine: a classic bacon and onion tart.

## Crepes

Crêpe batter is primarily eggs, but it also contains flour, milk, water, salt, and butter. This thin batter creates a paper-thin pancake that is cooked over medium heat in an oiled crêpe or fry pan. It cooks for a very short time (about 2 minutes) and is then filled with fruit, meat, vegetables, cheese, and/or dessert mousse before being rolled. Main dish crêpes may be served with rich cheese, mushrooms, and/or



**FIGURE 7.** Crêpe Suzette is a famous French dessert prepared with butter, oranges, and sugar. It is then flamed at the tableside.

meat sauces. Dessert crêpes may be dusted with powdered sugar or topped with a chocolate or fruit sauce. One of the most famous crêpe recipes is Crêpe Suzette, which is a flaming dessert.

## Meats

Most breakfast foods are **perishable** (items that are likely to decay), especially meats. Even fresh eggs have a longer shelf life than raw breakfast meats. Yet breakfast meats freeze easily for extended storage and generally cook quickly and easily. Bacon, sausage, Canadian bacon, pork chops, and breakfast steaks are all quickly pan fried or cooked on a hot flat grill. Most ham served at breakfast can be heated on a flat top for service in the same manner. All (though less common for pork chops and steaks) may be cooked or heated in the oven with fine results. Restaurants with large volume generally cook breakfast meats in bulk through oven heating. Breakfast meats are consistently used as ingredients in recipes or as side dishes to other foods, but seldom are they used as breakfast entrées.

Seafood is typically prepared ahead of time and is served cold with minimal preparation required for service. Whole poached or smoked salmon might be served on a tray garnished with lettuce, onions, capers, tomatoes, and special dipping sauces. Fish may be served as an entrée. Most often, seafood is offered on high-priced buffets. This is true for lox, though many restaurants and delicatessens serve lox as a sandwich on a toasted bagel with cream cheese, onions, and tomatoes. Seafood is also added to egg dishes (e.g., quiche, strada, and omelets) or may be served as a side dish to eggs.

## Fruit

Fruit is a major part of breakfast for many people, and fresh fruit is always preferred. Sometimes fresh fruit is used as a garnish, but it is common as a side dish or as a buffet offering. Preparing fresh fruit requires some preparation time since virtually all skins, rinds, seeds, and pits are removed prior to service. Fruit served in this way should be easy to eat and should include nothing inedible. Fruit is often served as a mixed fruit salad or may be sliced and laid out on platters.

Fruit considered single serve (e.g., bananas, apples, oranges, and peaches) would never be served whole as part of a plated breakfast in a restaurant, but single-serve fruits may be included on some buffets. It is more likely that these fruits would be served peeled and cut in a fruit salad. To prevent browning of fruits once they are peeled, seeded, and cut, chefs and cooks treat the cut edges with an acid (e.g., lemon juice).

## Summary:



Breakfast offers varieties of foods from light options, such as cereals and fruit, to hearty fare (e.g., omelets and meats). Breads, pastries, and potatoes are all commonly served, but eggs offer the most versatility. Eggs are prepared in numerous ways, may be cooked to order, and are a key ingredient in other breakfast entrées.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is special about the way an omelet is formed?
2. How is hash made?
3. What is lox?
4. List six ways to cook an egg.
5. What are quick breads, and why are they common for breakfast?

## Expanding Your Knowledge:



Much of this lesson was focused on typical American breakfasts, but breakfast in other countries look very different. Research breakfasts in countries such as Egypt, Russia, China, Iraq, and Ethiopia. Find out what foods make up their typical breakfasts. Can you explain why the foods are so different from our breakfasts?

## Web Links:



### Russian Breakfast Foods

[http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6362706\\_russian-breakfast-foods.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6362706_russian-breakfast-foods.html)

### Dishes at Ethiopian Restaurants

<http://www.ethiopianrestaurant.com/dishes/breakfast.html>

### Chinese Breakfast

<http://chinesefood.about.com/od/breakfastcongee/a/Chinese-Breakfast.htm>

### Eggs 101

<http://www.incredibleegg.org/recipes-and-more/cooking-school>

### All Breakfast

<http://www.mrbreakfast.com/>

### Breakfast and Brunch Recipes

[http://www.recipe.com/recipes/breakfast-brunch/popular/?ordersrc=msn1\\_brunch&s\\_kwcid=TC-16888-6358997329-e-826377454](http://www.recipe.com/recipes/breakfast-brunch/popular/?ordersrc=msn1_brunch&s_kwcid=TC-16888-6358997329-e-826377454)

### How to Cook Eggs: Basic Recipes

<http://whatscookingamerica.net/eggs.htm>

### What Are Some Different Ways to Cook Eggs?

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-some-different-ways-to-cook-eggs.htm>