

## **Six animal-friendly alternatives to eggs**

**By Carina DeVera**

Recently, the San Francisco Chronicle published an article on the availability of eggs in Bay Area grocery stores. The pun-laden piece interviewed customers and shared some of their theories as to why the shelves seemed emptier than usual. It ended with a quote from a customer who, when faced with only Just Egg's plant-based egg scrambles, opted for wine instead.

Yes, the chickens have come home to roost nationwide — if they could roost in a factory farm system that denies them even basic instincts — and consumers are feeling the pinch. Here's why.

A highly infectious and deadly strain of avian influenza virus has infected tens of millions of birds across Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. Outbreaks of avian influenza, also known as bird flu, can lead to significant mortality in infected flocks. It also makes every single bird on a property subject to “depopulation,” which is just a clinical way of describing the mass killing and discarding of the remaining animals.

In the United States alone, the bird flu virus has triggered the deaths of more than 50 million domestic chickens since last February. And sadly, the factory farm system, which values profits and volume over everything else — including the welfare of the individual animals trapped in it — is creating ideal conditions for large-scale outbreaks.

It's common for large egg-producing operations in the U.S. to house hundreds of thousands or even millions of hens. These operations are highly automated and use battery cages or similar types of housing systems to keep the hens confined. These cages are typically small, crowded, and may contain up to 10 hens, with each hen having an amount of space equivalent to less than a sheet of letter-sized paper. The hens are unable to express many of their natural behaviors, such as spreading their wings, nesting, and perching, and they are subjected to various forms of physical and psychological stress.

Thankfully, California voters approved Proposition 12, which sets minimum standards for the confinement of hens and other farm animals, but with almost 80% of U.S. eggs still produced in the “conventional” way, the demand for cage-free eggs far outstrips what farms can supply.

Whether it's part of an intention to make more animal-friendly choices or simply to save

some money, consider reducing your use of eggs this January and beyond. The Just Egg product mentioned as a punchline in the Chronicle article actually happens to be an excellent alternative and makes a delicious scramble or omelet. But if commercially available, ready-made substitutions aren't your thing, there are many alternatives to eggs that can be used in cooking and baking. Some popular options include:

- Banana. Mashed bananas can be used as a binding agent in recipes, such as cookies and quick breads.
- Applesauce. Like bananas, applesauce can be used as a binding agent and can add moisture to baked goods.
- Flax or chia seeds. Ground flax or chia seeds mixed with water can be used as an egg replacer in recipes.
- Silken tofu. Tofu can be used as a substitute for eggs in recipes like quiches and omelets.
- Aquafaba. The liquid from a can of chickpeas can be whipped and used as an egg replacer in recipes like meringues and mousses.

Keep in mind that egg substitutes may affect the texture and taste of the finished product, so it may be necessary to adjust the recipe or expect a slightly different result.

January is a great month to try new things, so why not make this small change that can help animals every day of the year?

Carina DeVera is the digital marketing manager for Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin articles and welcomes animal-related questions and stories about the people and animals in our community. Go to [marinhumane.org](http://marinhumane.org), find us on social media @marinhumane, or email [lbloch@marinhumane.org](mailto:lbloch@marinhumane.org).