



CURRENT ISSUE

HOW WE DEVELOPED GREAT (AND SAFE) AGED EGGNOG

By the editors of *Cook's Illustrated*

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We turned to science to show that alcohol, over time, completely sterilizes the raw eggs.

The usual approach to making eggnog is simple: Mix together eggs, sugar, cream, and hard liquor, and then enjoy. But when we heard of a way to improve on the appeal of this drink—and at the same time dispel any concerns over using raw eggs—we had to give it a try.

The idea? Make a batch of eggnog and let it age for at least three weeks in the refrigerator before drinking. The rest period supposedly drives off eggy taste while giving the other flavors a chance to meld. At the same time, the alcohol has a chance to kill any potential pathogens in the mix.

This latter benefit was conclusively proven by microbiologists Vince Fischetti and Raymond Schuch at New York City's Rockefeller University. They deliberately added salmonella bacteria to a batch of eggnog and analyzed the bacteria content over a three-week period. By the three-week mark, the alcohol had rendered the eggnog completely sterile. When we tried their recipe, we indeed found it smooth and drinkable, though at 14 percent alcohol it packed quite a punch.

Satisfied with the sterility of the drink, we set out to produce an equally safe (but less potent) nog. Our solution? Waiting until serving time to add the dairy. This way, we could use enough alcohol to properly sterilize the eggs during storage and then temper the booze-egg base with dairy for serving. We stirred

together a dozen eggs, 1 1/2 cups of bourbon, 1/2 cup of cognac, and 1/3 cup of dark rum; added 1 1/2 cups of sugar; and refrigerated the 18-percent-alcohol mixture in an airtight container. After three weeks, we poured the base through a sieve to remove any egg solids and then mellowed out the mixture with 6 cups of whole milk and 1/2 cup of cream, bringing it down to about 8 percent alcohol.

THE UNANIMOUS VERDICT: Alongside a fresh batch, which tasted comparatively boozy and harsh, our aged nog went down more smoothly. To age your favorite eggnog recipe, be sure to use 1 1/2 ounces of 80 proof liquor for every egg, and leave out the dairy until serving.