

All About EGGS



by Rachel Khong
and the editors of

LUCKY PEACH

Accoutrements

Karen Leibowitz

Encooned in their shells, eggs are perfectly packaged and self-contained. Yet something about human nature compels us to dress our eggs up with all manner of tools and trimmings—perhaps because we feel a bit inadequate, as mammals, in the presence of an eggshell, and that spurs us to overcompensate with everything from specialized cooking tools to ostentatious tableware.

Whatever the reason, eggs activate our urge to accessorize, and every age has its own favored egg accoutrements, which reflect each era's particular cultural anxiety. Whereas egg appurtenances once testified to the class status of those who could afford to pay others to serve them from the proper dish, the twentieth century gave rise to egg-related tools meant to demonstrate culinary mastery and streamline cooking techniques. As food historian Dr. Megan Elias pointed out, when domestic help became less and less common during the period between the Depression and the Second World War, our treatment of eggs began to reflect a new focus on cooking as a form of socializing. "When the food is on display as a finished product, those things are more likely to be from the early-twentieth century, when

middle-class people were more likely to have servants," Elias said. "Things that show off your cooking are late-twentieth century, when people started to go into each other's kitchens, and cooking became more of the entertainment."

So what can we deduce from the appearance of newfangled egg objects of the twenty-first century, like bento egg shapers and in-the-shell-scramblers? Maybe that egg eaters of the twenty-first century want to have it all, to be our own servants and our own domestic goddesses at once. We want to make our eggs cute, novel, and likeable. In that sense, the archetypal contemporary egg accessory is Instagram ("cough" @all_about_eggs).

Eggcups are the original ovoid accessories, designed to mimic and bolster an eggshell while its boiled contents are spooned out. Archaeologists have found evidence of stone eggcups from Crete that date back to the eighteenth century BCE, and silver eggcups were discovered among the ruins of Pompeii. Eggcups became a standard part of many European banquets in the fifteenth century, but really gained traction in the nineteenth