



## THE OMELET EVENT

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For years the egg omelet has been considered a gourmet meal and has even been referred to as "a little bit of heaven" by some. Many enterprising 4-H clubs and other organizations are using the omelet in fund raising events.

### Omelet Event is Versatile

A successful omelet event is easy to conduct and is a good way to raise money for other 4-H activities. These events have been received with enthusiasm when served as a breakfast, brunch, luncheon or supper. Some 4-H groups have called them omelet rodeos.

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Almost any size group can be served. The size of the group determines the amount of equipment, supplies and the number of people needed to do the work. Most of the omelet events have been conducted for 100 to 200 people, but successful events have been held for smaller and larger groups.

Omelet events have been held all over Texas. In many counties the omelet event has become an annual affair. Some counties have one event per year that involves all the clubs in the county, while other counties have omelet events in each community. Many counties have purchased omelet equipment for use with omelet events and for omelet, crepe or broiler workshops.

Many favorable comments have been received from those participating in the omelet events. They include such comments as: "Overall, this is the best family 4-H event we've ever had." "We've received a variety of compliments such as 'Do it again', 'You served too much food', 'We couldn't believe an assembly line would work so well', etc." "We were very pleased with our success and so were our 4-H families."

### Organization Assures Smooth Operation

An assembly line system is used to make omelets so the customers are on one side of a long table observing their individual omelets being made. Five butane burners with omelet pans, spatulas and cooks are set-up for each omelet line.

One serving line of five stoves (and one extra stove for rotation or emergency) can service a 100- to 200-customer omelet supper. If more people are expected, more lines should be provided to speed up serving. Once pans are hot, two omelets can be completed each minute - a little over 100 per hour.

Seven people are needed to work as a team on each line. This allows for one "runner" and one person to be on break at all times. Each of the seven team members can rotate to spend ten minutes at each of the five cooking positions, as a runner and on break. This works especially well for large events that extend for several hours. However, some cooks

prefer to stay in one position for the entire event. Three more workers are needed to service the lines with eggs and other ingredients. Cooks should be trained in omelet making before the event.

## Everybody Helps

The first cook puts a little fat in the pan using a squeeze bottle of liquid margarine, measures the egg mixture into the pan and places it on the first burner. When the first bubble appears, the pan is passed to the second cook who moves the cooked egg toward the handle portion of the pan with the spatula and allows the uncooked egg to run to the cleared portion of the pan. The second cook watches for more bubbles and then moves the pan to the third cook. The third cook moves more of the cooked portion back toward the handle of the pan so that the uncooked egg moves to the pan surface.

The fourth cook usually finishes cooking the mixture so it will not run but is still a little moist on top. The secret of a good omelet is not to overcook it. If not moved, the bottom portion would overcook before the top portion was cooked. Moving the cooked portion assures rapid cooking of the liquid egg and prevents drying out and toughening of the omelet. The fifth cook puts in the desired fillings, folds the omelet and turns it out of the pan onto a plate.

The empty pan is returned to the first cook by placing it back on the burner so the runner can pick it up. The runner picks the pan up by the handle being careful not to burn his or her hand on the hot pan. The key to pan movement is to move pans to the empty burner next to you as soon as it is open. If disposable plates are used, the stiff paper variety works best so the plates will not bend and the omelet fall to the floor. The plastic type is not recommended because the hot pan can stick to the plastic as the finished omelet is turned out onto the plate.

The fifth cook is the key to the entire operation. As this cook turns out the finished omelet, each pan moves down one cook. This way all omelets turn out at the same place, pans stay hot, five omelets are going at the same time and only one set of ingredients and one pan of egg mixture is needed for each line.

The best cook should be placed at the fifth stove to start the process. After things are underway, the cooks can rotate if they wish so that everyone gets a chance to do all of the jobs. A new cook is always started at the first stove.

Pan handles are held in the left hand if the cook is right-handed. As the mixture begins to cook, a spatula held in the right hand is used to move the cooked portion toward the handle. The pan is tilted so the mixture will flow down to the hot front of the pan. The egg mixture will coagulate on the spatula if it remains in the egg mixture too long.

Because cooks two, three and four are not kept busy all the time, it is easy for them to mix the omelet too much (to combat boredom). Try to keep the omelet round and fairly flat but don't be overly concerned. Leave the omelet on the burner so that it will cook. Move the cooked portion only when necessary. Remember this is an omelet not scrambled eggs.

The customer moves along the front of the table and watches the omelets being cooked. The fillings and plates are put near the fifth stove. Each customer selects fillings from the choices available. After the omelet is turned out onto a plate, the customer adds salad, toast, etc., to the plate from another table, obtains a drink and moves on. After actively watching the entire process, the customer should be able to prepare an omelet at home.

## Many Variations Possible

Each customer should have a choice of available fillings to tailor the omelet to individual tastes; however, too many choices at an omelet event increases the cost and leads to indecision.

Cheese is always a good filling. Ham or smoked turkey can be used and some of the new turkey luncheon meats (pastrami, salami, ham, etc.) work well when chopped. Ham, cheese and jalapeno pepper are a popular combination. Picante sauce is usually provided as a condiment.

Filling suggestions:

1. Grated cheddar cheese - the colder, sharper cheese grates easiest and stays apart best.
2. Cubed ham (turkey ham works fine). It is better to make 1/8th inch cubes with a knife than to use a food processor. The shredded ham does not have the mouth-feel, nor impart the flavor of cubed ham, even though it goes further and may be easier to prepare.
3. Other ingredients:
  - canned mushrooms
  - fresh mushrooms (sautéed)
  - green pepper (sautéed)
  - shallots

## Ingredients

A three-egg omelet usually is served to each customer. The egg mixture is made by mixing eggs and water in the proportion of one flat of eggs (30 eggs) and two cups of water (32 tablespoons) and beating with a wire whisk. A rotary beater (manual or electric) usually beats the mixture too much, causing foam on the top. It is necessary to incorporate air *into* the egg mixture not foam on top. Seasoning is not added to the egg mixture. People

desiring seasonings (salt, pepper, picante sauce, etc.) may place them on the finished omelet.

The egg mixture is ladled into the omelet pan by the first cook with an appropriate ladle. Use an eight-ounce ladle for a three-egg omelet and a six-ounce ladle for a two-egg omelet. The egg mixture is always the same ratio: one egg to one tablespoon of water. Plan to use about seven and one half pounds of meat and/or four pounds of cheese per 100 customers. About one bottle of liquid margarine is needed to make 100 omelets. More will be needed for toast.

### Equipment Readily Available

Arrangements have been made to purchase individual stoves directly from the company for 4-H clubs, county Extension offices or district Extension centers. Arrangements also have been made to purchase eight-inch saute pans with non-stick surfaces directly from the manufacturer. Omelet equipment (burners, pans and spatulas) is available from all district Extension centers, Extension poultry science in College Station and at the 4-H Center in Brownwood. Enterprising clubs may use some of their profits to buy their own omelet equipment to use and to rent to other clubs in their area.

Base the number of sets necessary for an omelet event on the number of people expected to be served and the amount of time to be used for feeding. One set of five burners will feed about 100 people per hour.

## Omelet Event with Serving Line

The best source of information about an omelet event is an agent or leader who has conducted one. The following five basic steps are useful in planning the event:

1. Advance sale of tickets is a must. Advance sales help in determining numbers, advertise the event and reap extra income because not everyone shows up.
2. Secure a suitable location. The ideal location has a large room for serving and eating, entrance on one side and exit on the other, kitchen facilities (for cooking ingredients and toast, preparing salad and drinks, and for cleanup), parking facilities and is easily accessible.
3. Advance publicity. Think of all the things you can do. Pictures of your 4-H'ers in omelet training is a good way. (Pictures of 4-H'ers are available, but your own 4-H'ers are best.)
4. Secure people to do the work. Seven people for cooking are needed for each line. People are also

needed to break eggs, continually prepare and replace used ingredients, prepare toast, drinks, salad, etc., as well as clean tables.

### 5. Arrange for:

stoves	grater for cheese
omelet pans	knife
spatulas	cutting board
ladles	wire whisk
napkins	forks
paper towels	measuring cup
bowls & spoons for ingredients	fuel for burners
bowls for egg mixture	plates
foodstuffs	jam
toast (French or nut bread)	butter
picante sauce	liquid margarine
eggs	drinks (sugar, etc.)
ingredients (cheese, ham, etc.)	

## Do-It-Yourself Omelet Event

A "Do-it-Yourself" omelet event is fun and can be used as the entertainment for a club event or as a meal prior to the main activities. A Do-it-Yourselfer permits guests to make their own omelets. It is a simple operation that works incredibly well regardless of the number of participants. Usually the ones who have the most fun and really do a good job are the first-time omelet makers and first-time cooks.

For 100 people, two 6-foot covered tables will be required for 12 omelet making stations. Each station consists of a burner, skillet and spatula. Estimate 5 to 10 people per station, depending on time available. It takes about three to four minutes for each person to cook a three-egg omelet. Five minutes per omelet will allow for transfer time.

Here is how it works: The guests go to a station, put a little margarine in the hot pan (the pans are seasoned and have a non-stick surface so they don't need much) and place a ladle full of egg mixture in the pan to begin the omelet.

The omelet needs to cook rapidly, about 3 minutes for a three-egg omelet. Omelets are spoiled by allowing them to cook too long which makes them dry and rubbery. Remind participants that it is necessary to move the cooked portion from the bottom of the pan to allow the liquid egg portion to flow to the pan surface and cook. A demonstration prior to beginning should get everyone off to a good start.

When they are ready to fill, each guest spoons in to the omelet their desired fillings, folds the omelet and, with a flip of the wrist, turns it out onto the

plate. The pan is now ready for the next guest. (The pan may be wiped with a paper towel between each guest.) It is really that simple.

It is always nice to provide a variety of ingredients for a Do-it-Yourselfer; however, this increases cost and requires more equipment to hold the ingredients. When people spoon in their own ingredients, it is always best to prepare enough so that everyone can have their choice.

In addition to the omelet, drinks, salad and bread are usually provided. Texas toast, hot French bread and even date, nut or banana breads have been used. Napkins, tableware and a place to sit and eat their creation will usually complete the arrangements. Jelly, dessert, etc. are optional.

### **Filling Suggestions**

- Sliced avocado and tomato
- Flaked tuna, dairy sour cream and sliced black olives
- Drained, crushed pineapple, cubed cream cheese and crisp bacon
- Fried onions seasoned with salt and other herbs
- Shredded, sharp Cheddar cheese and broken corn chips
- Diced, cooked chicken livers and mushrooms
- Cooked rice seasoned with chopped herbs
- Sliced or diced pepperoni and diced Cheddar cheese
- Diced ham, sliced mushrooms and green onion
- Diced salami and cheese and chopped chives
- Cooked, chopped broccoli and diced cheese
- Cooked mixed vegetables
- Diced, cooked shrimp and water chestnuts
- Cooked, cut asparagus, diced ham and grated Swiss cheese

A quantity of each ingredient has to be put in separate bowls and placed on cooking table within reach of people at each station. A minimum of one bowl of each ingredient (with serving spoon) should be used for every four stoves. More bowls would be better, but it depends on the distance between stoves. These bowls will have to be refilled during the event as needed.

In addition to the fillings, one squeeze bottle of liquid margarine and one container of pre-beaten, fresh egg mixture will be needed for each table. A ladle is necessary for each container of egg mixture. Plates for the omelet makers' creations need to be within easy reach.

### **Try an Omelet Event**

The omelet event offers an opportunity for 4-H clubs to earn money, learn by doing, provide a community service and have fun. Getting ready for and conducting such an event requires good organization and cooperation. County Extension agents who have held omelet events are enthusiastic about helping other counties plan and set up an event. Omelet events seem to be made-to-order for fairs, trail rides, breakfasts, catered events and many other activities.

Note: If burners are used outdoors, it is best to use a small shield around the burner to protect the flame. When used outdoors, the heat is decreased considerably even if air movement is minimal.

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