



Bestiary

rock, paper, scissors

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How to Hard-Boil Embarrassment in the Morning

ANDREW BIRKESTRAND

Ingredients:

One cook. One kitchen.
Twelve eggs. Two tablespoons of salt.
Water. One lb. of stupidity.
Three cups of panic. Thirty minutes to boil.
Several years to cool. And of course, someone to share it with.

Directions:

1. Wake after a bad night's sleep and in your Fruit of the Looms lurch up from the basement you rent, to the kitchen you share with your landlord/roommate. He is gone. This is ideal because it's never good to have too many cooks in the kitchen, especially when one is in their underwear.
2. Grab the carton of eggs from the fridge. Put them in a pot with water and salt. Set it on the stove and crank the dial to high.
3. Stagger back to the basement and turn on the idiot box. Sit on the couch and fail to concentrate on the morning news until, in minute degrees, you fall back asleep.

Note: This nap at this time is essential for the meal to have that special Habanero-faced bite.

4. Approximately thirty minutes later, wake up to an aria of smoke alarms and the scent of something burning. Spring from the couch like a terror-stricken Pop-Tart from a demented toaster. Sprint up the stairs following the aroma of how not to start the day.
5. Look at what you've created. Marvel at the stomach-plunging sight of breakfast boiled dry. Note the shell-cracked case and quality of egg uncontained.

6. Wave away the smoke. Hell! Open a window and a door or two to clear the air. Don't worry about what you look like if a neighbor were to wander by. Modesty is for cooks who have no trouble boiling eggs.

7. Snatch pot holders from a drawer and rescue the pot on the stove. Then yelp like a dog. Preferably the kind that fits in a purse because this undignified moment and the sounds made at this time should be compared only to other poor creatures suffering indignities. If that's not reason enough, then do so because even with the potholders your fingers burn.

8. With the composure of a coyote having run off a cliff, but before they have realized the earth has disappeared below, throw the faucet on, because cooling off a hot situation seems like a good idea at the time.

9. Discover what happens when something extremely hot—like still smoking, boiled eggs—comes into contact with something cold like tap water.

Answer: A culinary IED, smelling of shame and having the greenish-gray tint of despair, blasted all over the kitchen.

10. Note how preparation of a meal can transform the room in which it's born.

11. The burning you feel isn't just your self-respect turning to ash, because people joke about not being able to boil an egg, but few ever paint the walls with the failure. It comes from the egg white, yolk, and shell as well. You discover this as you slap and pull off the stinging remains now sticking to your chest. Red scorch marks bear witness to your culinary efforts.

12. Now, scour, scrape, mop, sweep, Febreze and repeat. But first get that bit hanging from the ceiling, the glob between the stove and the fridge. Spit the bits of shell shrapnel that have found their way into your mouth out, and remember to pry free that green yolk up from between your toes.

13. Once this is done, close all the windows and doors and allow your accomplishment to simmer, let it breathe and mature; time is necessary before some meals can be enjoyed.

14. Later, when the landlord calls and asks, "Hey, when you left for work today, was there a funny smell?" Repeat the steps herein to him or whoever your audience is and enjoy the sweetmeats of hard-boiled embarrassment in the morning.



