

## City Chickens

Chef Molly Beverly runs the Crossroads Cafe at Prescott College and serves small flock, cage free eggs for breakfast.

Join the urban chicken movement.

City chickens are entertaining, cute, and educational. They cultivate the soil, shred garden debris, eat pesky bugs and are little composting factories. City chickens are pets that lay fresh, fantastic eggs. Pets that produce breakfast!

City chickens in Prescott, is it legal?

In fact, it is legal to keep a flock of hens in Prescott. Like your dog, they cannot run the streets and must be restricted to your yard. Roosters are not permitted unless they don't crow, which would be a good trick. But, no problem, hens don't need roosters to lay eggs.

Where to get your chicks.

Once you set foot in Olsen's Grain (Prescott, Chino, or Dewey) and see the little chickies, so cute, you will be so ready to invest, only \$2.39 each. (Whoa there, is this the cute baby animal ploy?) Chicks are social, so you need at least three. Six chicks will give you four eggs a day, more or less. Olsen's is ready to take care of the completely clueless urban chicken farmer with generous advice. Besides several varieties of chicks they have everything else you need-- warming lights, feeders, waterers, and organic chick starter. Little chickies can live quite nicely in a cardboard box. Hurry on down, because the last spring order of chicks arrives May first. They sell out in Prescott in a few hours. The Chino Valley store manager assured me they would have chicks for a couple of weeks.

What do I do with them when they grow out of the box?

Consult the experts at [thecitychicken.com](http://thecitychicken.com) and [backyardeggs.com](http://backyardeggs.com). That's where you learn everything, and I mean everything, about chickens. These people are chicken crazy and it is contagious. They say "Even if you can't drive a nail straight," - that would be me - "you can have a coop."

I visited a couple of Prescott city chicken enthusiasts. Thomas Arnold houses his flock in a very simple straw bale coop with a corrugated metal roof. Another chicken fan, Dan Quinn, keeps his happy flock in a storybook

cute hen house, also made from straw bales, featuring a laying box. Open it up: inside are nesting boxes full of speckly brown and green eggs, right out of Mother Goose.

Another kind of coop is a “chicken tractor,” a bottomless, portable cage that can be moved around to any weedy or bug infested site. The chickens are happy because they get to scratch and peck through new ground. You are happy because your chicks can’t run in the road or get into your neighbor’s newly planted flower bed or be eaten by neighborhood dogs (or coyotes). I think Thomas wins the award for “chicken tractor of the year”. It’s a bicycle mounted, mobile chicken coop made from a recycled tent frame. Very elegant.

In five months the real treat comes, happy eggs! They look and taste like they came out of a story book, bright orange yolks, bright clean flavor, like nothing you’ve ever found in an egg carton at the grocery store, and much better for you. Mother Earth News studies have determined that, compared to official USDA nutrient data for commercial eggs, eggs from hens raised on pasture average:

- 1/3 less cholesterol
- 1/4 less saturated fat
- 2/3 more vitamin A
- 2 times more omega-3 fatty acids
- 3 times more vitamin E
- 7 times more beta carotene

WITHOUT the hormone and antibiotic residues.

*[motherearthnews.com/eggs](http://motherearthnews.com/eggs)*

Talk about local food. Nothing is more local than your own back yard. Give chickens a try, you’ll feel like a real urban farmer!

Molly’s Huevos Rancheros

My favorite egg dish. 6 servings

6 corn tortillas cut into thin strips

Vegetable oil

Refried beans

6 backyard eggs

Fresh salsa

Crumbled queso fresco or grated cheddar

Fresh cilantro and green onions, coarsely chopped

Heat up a big cast iron skillet and add a generous film of oil. Throw in the tortilla strips and turn with tongs until crispy. Reduce heat to low. Drop spoonfuls of refried beans on to the tortilla strips in the pan. Squish the beans out to make six little nests for the eggs. Crack the shells so the raw eggs drop into their nests. Top each egg with salsa and cheese. Cover pan tightly and turn heat to low, low, low.. Cook slowly until eggs are set. This takes 10-15 minutes. Garnish with cilantro and green onions