

# Balut

## Description

Balut is a popular food commonly sold by street vendors in the Philippines and Vietnam (where it is called *hot vit lon*). It consists of a fertilized duck egg that has been incubated for approximately 18 days; a period of time which results in the formation of a partially developed embryo within the shell. Balut is eaten directly from the shell after being hard-boiled or steamed. It is also common in other Southeast Asian countries such as China, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Balut is a relatively inexpensive source of protein and calcium, and is considered by some to be an aphrodisiac for men. Locally, balut is sold uncooked at many Asian grocery stores.



Embryo and yolk of a cooked balut

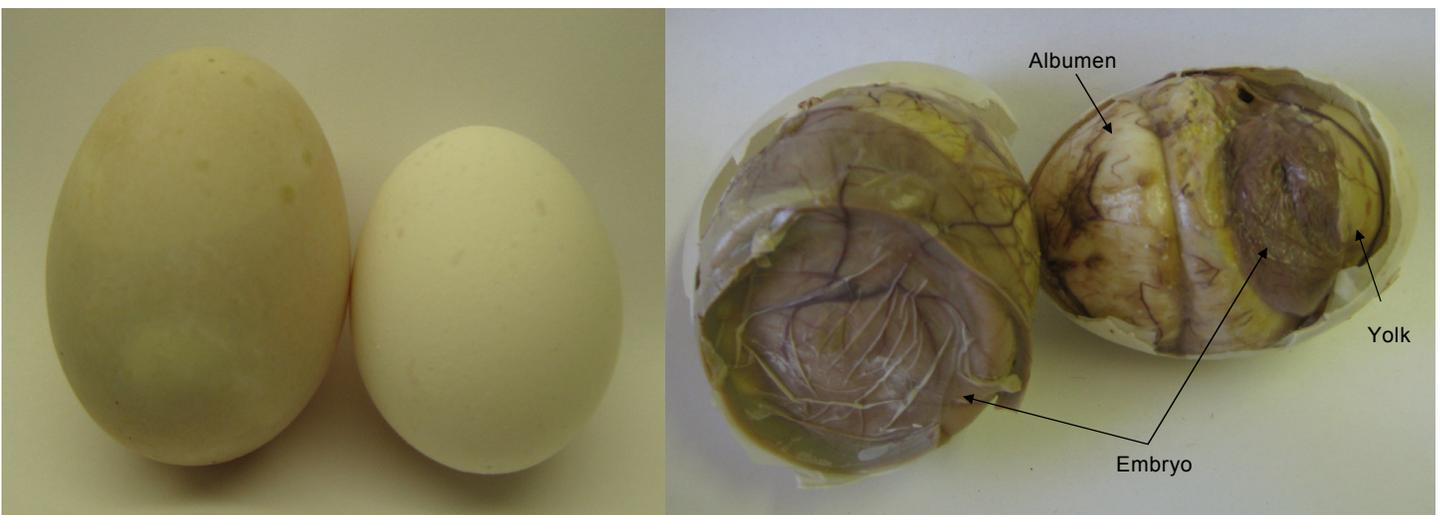
## How balut is produced

To produce balut, fertilized duck eggs are incubated at 40-42.5°C in incubators with a relatively high humidity. These conditions allow for the development of the embryo until the eggs are removed at 18 days; a period of time which results in the formation of a partially developed embryo. Complete development and hatching of duck eggs typically occur at 28 days. Throughout the incubation period, the eggs are candled to monitor the growth and development of the embryos; infertile eggs or those containing a non-viable embryo are removed.

Although balut is typically made from duck eggs, chicken eggs can also be used. Where chicken eggs are used, fertile eggs are incubated at 37°C for approximately 14 days. Complete development and hatching of chicken eggs typically occur at 21 days.

## Appearance

Duck eggs sold as balut are off-white in colour and larger than chicken eggs. Duck balut has four parts: the liquid (or soup), the embryo, the yolk, and the albumen (egg white). The embryo may be recognizable as a chick with a head, eyes, beak, and feathers.



Left photo: Side-by-side comparison of a balut egg (left) and a large-size chicken egg (right).  
Right photo: Interior of two cooked baluts.