



Easter

EMPTYING EGGSHELLS

To empty an eggshell, first wash the egg using water warmer than the egg, then dry it. With a sterilized needle or small, sharp skewer, prick a small hole in the small end of the egg and a large hole in the large end, carefully chipping away bits of shell around the large hole until it is big enough to accommodate the tip of a baster. Stick the needle or skewer into the yolk to break it.

Either shake the egg large-end down over a cup or bowl until the contents come out or use a baster to push out the contents. Press the bulb of the baster to push air into the egg, letting the contents fall into the cup. If the contents do not come out easily, insert the needle again and move it around to be sure both the shell membranes and yolk are broken. Rinse the empty shell under cool running water and stand it on end to drain and dry.



Be careful when decorating emptied shells - they are quite fragile. Before decorating, the holes left in the ends can be covered with wax or with tissue paper and glue. Once completed, hang decorated emptied eggshells using ribbon, yarn, string or wire or make stands from small bottle caps, napkin rings, empty film canisters or sections of cardboard tubes.

Use the contents of emptied eggshells immediately in a recipe which includes mixed yolks and whites and calls for thorough cooking, or freeze them, labeling the storage container with the date and number of eggs it contains. Most baked dishes, such as casseroles, custards, quiches, cakes or breads, are good uses for eggs emptied from their shells.

EGG GAMES

EGG HUNT

Hiding colored or decorated eggs around the house or garden for youngsters to find has long been an Easter morning tradition.

EGG TOSS

Whenever groups gather for picnic games, an egg toss is as predictable as a sack race. Partners line up in two rows facing each other. Every member on one side tosses a raw egg across. After each successful catch, the players take one step backward, adding to the difficulty of the next catch. This is repeated until all but one egg is broken and most of the players have egg on their faces! The couple with the last unbroken egg wins.

EGG ROLLING

Many variations of egg rolling contests and games can be played. The egg rolling that takes place each year on the lawn of the White House has become an American tradition, having been started, according to the legend, by Dolly Madison in the early 1800's. The American Egg Board provides the specially decorated eggs for the occasion. A similar event is held in New York's Central Park.

PACE EGGING

In English villages, until modern times, children have carried on an old sport called "pace egging." The name comes from Pasch, the word that means Easter in most European countries. This derives from Pesach, the Hebrew Passover, which falls at the same time of the year. Pace-eggers are much like Halloween trick or treaters. They go from house to house in costume, or with a paper streamers and bright ribbons attached to their clothing. Faces blackened or masked, they sign or perform skits and demand pace eggs, which can be either hard-cooked, colored eggs or substitutes like candy or small coins.

EASTER EGG CARE & HANDLING

- Wash hands thoroughly before handling eggs at every stage in the process - cooking, cooling, dyeing, and hiding.
- If eggs cannot be colored right away, store them in their cartons in the refrigerator.
- Do not color or hide cracked eggs.
- When coloring eggs, use water warmer than the eggs.
- Store the colored eggs in their cartons in the refrigerator until hiding time.
- After eggs have been hidden and found, keep them refrigerated. Do not eat cracked eggs.
- Do not eat eggs which have been out of refrigeration more than 2 hours.
- If you are planning to use colored eggs as decorations, (for centerpieces) where the eggs will be out of refrigeration for many hours or several days, we suggest you prepare extra eggs and simply discard them after they have served their decorative purpose.

DECORATING EGGS

The egg's shape has often inspired artists. It has been the palette for one of the most intriguing of folk arts in many cultures. There is literally no end to the creative possibilities for individual expression on an egg shell. Eggs can be painted or colored with crayons or felt-tipped pens, turned into funny faces, topped with fantastic hats, trimmed with feathers or sequins or simply dyed in an endless variety of hues. However you decide to do it, decoration eggs is fun for grown-ups as well as for kids.

Eggs to be decorated may be either hard-cooked eggs or empty eggshells. The hard-cooked variety is a bit sturdier for children to use, while empty shells are best if you're making an egg tree or want to keep the eggs on display for a considerable time.

If eggs are to be dyed, washing in a mild detergent solution helps to remove the oil coating so that the color adheres more evenly.

Commercial egg dyes are available especially at the Easter season. Food coloring works too, but some craftsmen prefer to experiment with their own colors from nature. Eggs simmered in water to cover for 15 minutes with 1 tablespoon of white vinegar for each cup of water and your choice of one of the materials below will produce a shade of the color shown. You'll have to use your own judgment about quantities. This is an art - not a science!

MATERIAL

COLOR

Fresh beets, cranberries or radishes or frozen raspberries	Pinkish red
Yellow onion skins	Orange
Orange or lemon peels, carrot tops, or celery seed	Delicate yellow
Ground tumeric	Yellow
Spinach leaves	Page green
Yellow delicious apple peels	Green-gold
Canned blueberries or red cabbage leaves	Blue
Strong brewed coffee	Beige to brown
Dill seeds	Brown-gold
Chili powder	Brown-orange
Purple or red grape juice or beet juice	Grey

Modified from American Egg Board, Eggyclopedia

EASTER TIPS

Every family loves Easter, and when the time comes to hard-cook and decorate those eggs, the following tips will be just what you need.

DECORATING TIPS

For a personal touch on decorating this year, use wax crayons, magic markers or paints on your egg shell to create your own design; then coat it with clear nail polish to prevent smearing. To make the shell glisten, use pearl-colored nail polish. For a porcelain finish, apply several coats of diluted school glue.

If you are going for the natural theme this Easter, try organic coloring. By using strong tea, cranberry juice, apple juice, grape juice, etc. you can create beautifully colored eggs. For this idea, set up large containers full of the desired juices and add a teaspoon of vinegar to each juice (this helps set the color). Drop the hard-cooked egg into the juice, making sure to cover only the part of the shell you want colored, and allow to set over night or longer in the refrigerator. When you remove the egg from the water, you will have an elegant, organically decorated egg.

HARD-COOKED EGGS

Keep in mind that the fresher the egg, the harder it is to peel. Try to buy your Easter eggs a week or two in advance.

Put eggs in a single layer saucepan. Add enough tap water to cover the egg by at least 1-inch. Cover and quickly bring to a boil. Remove pan from heat and let stand 17 minutes. Immediately run cold water over the eggs until cool.

When eggs are cool, thoroughly crack the shell and roll egg between hands to loosen shell. Start at the large end and peel.

EGG SAFETY

After decorating your eggs this Easter, refrigerate them as soon as possible. Refrigeration is an absolute must for eggs, since cold temperatures maintain quality and retard spoilage. Keep those eggs in the refrigerator until the Easter egg hunt. As long as the eggs are not out of refrigeration over 2 hours and did not crack during the hunt, they will be safe for consumption. Following the hunt, if the eggs are not consumed, it is all right to refrigerate them again.

When left in their shells, hard-cooked eggs will remain edible for one week; however, if you prefer to peel the egg, put it in a tightly closed container or wrap them with moisture proof material and use within 2-3 days.

If you are considering freezing your hard-cooked Easter eggs, keep in mind the yolk will freeze well for toppings and garnishes, but the whites become tough. Eggs should be thawed in the refrigerator overnight and used within 24 hours.

Modified from American Egg Board

WHY WE PAINT EGGS AT EASTER TIME

The decorating of Easter eggs is a diverse practice among many cultures. Eggs were painted with bright colors to represent spring and were used in egg-rolling contests as well as given as gifts before the advent of Christianity.

Because eggs were a forbidden food during Lent, Easter was a time to celebrate with eggs. Centuries ago, people gave eggs as gifts to friend and servants. Over time the tradition of painting and decorating eggs has continued, particularly with eastern Europeans known for their ornate and beautiful designs.

The "extreme of egg decorating" is the "Easter Egg" created for a member of Russian royalty by artist Peter Carl Fabergè in the late 1880s in St. Petersburg, Russia. The egg is a gold, enamel, pearl, diamond and ruby creation that features a hinged, enameled yolk that conceals a royal crown. This hinged crown then opens to reveal a ruby egg. A Fabergè Egg once sold for \$5.6 million.

THE HISTORY OF EASTER EGGS

Eggs were colored, blessed, exchanged and eaten as part of the rites of spring long before Christian times. Even the earliest civilizations held springtime festivals to welcome the sun's rising from its long winter sleep. They thought of the sun's return from darkness as an annual miracle and regarded the egg as a natural wonder and a proof of the renewal of life. As Christianity spread, the egg was adopted as a symbol for Christ's Resurrection from the tomb.

For centuries, eggs were among the foods forbidden by the church during Lent, so it was a special treat to have them again at Easter. In Slavic countries, baskets of food including eggs are traditionally taken to church to be blessed on Holy Saturday or before the Easter midnight Mass, then taken home for a part of Easter breakfast.

People in central European countries have a long tradition of elaborately decorated Easter eggs. Polish, Slavic and Ukrainian people create amazingly intricate designs on the eggs. They drew lines with a wax pencil or stylus, dip the egg in color and repeat the process many times to make true works of art. Every dot and line in the pattern has a meaning. Yugoslavian Easter eggs bear the initials "XV" for "Christ is Risen," a traditional Easter greeting.

The Russians, during the reign of the tsars, celebrated Easter much more elaborately than Christmas, with Easter breads and other special foods and quantities of decorated eggs given as gifts. The Russian royal family carried the custom to great lengths, giving exquisitely detailed jeweled eggs made by goldsmith Carl Faberge from the 1880's until 1917.

In Germany and other countries of central Europe, eggs that go into Easter foods are not broken, but emptied out. The empty shells are painted and decorated with bits of lace, cloth or ribbon, then hung with ribbons on an evergreen or small leafless tree. On the third Sunday before Easter, Moravian village girls used to carry a tree decorated with eggshells and flowers from house to house for good luck. The egg shell tree is one of several Easter traditions carried to America by German settlers especially those who became known as Pennsylvania Dutch. They also brought the fable that the Easter bunny delivered colored eggs for good children.

Easter is an especially happy time for children and many Easter customs are for their enjoyment. Hunting Easter eggs hidden around the house or yard is a universal custom and so are egg-rolling contests.

Modified from American Egg Board, Eggcyclopedia