

Colored eggs brighten the Easter celebration

BY SALLY BAIR
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Brightly colored eggs have been associated with the Christian celebration of Easter for centuries, adopted as the symbol of the new life Christians found in their Savior. It became the custom to give gifts of eggs on the morning of the Resurrection to express a renewal of life through the Resurrection and, for many, a renewal of faith and love.

Today painted eggs are firmly rooted in tradition in most homes, and can be found in all forms - from free form painting by carefree youngsters to the intricate designs in the Ukrainian custom of pysanky.

Whatever the form in your family, it is a long tradition which has evolved into an interesting craft for many. In the Middle Ages it was a practice to put a colored egg in a representation of the tomb of Jesus Christ during the Easter Liturgy and some of these were decorated with silver, gold and jewels. In the household of England's King Edward I, who died in 1307, eggs were stained and decorated with gold leaf. Perhaps these were the forerunners of the beautifully beaded and be-ribboned eggs which have elevated egg decorating to an exacting craft.

Mrs. Lloyd H. Herr, 1113 Colonial Road, Lancaster, has decorated eggs in impressive numbers so that her home is now graced with two lovely egg trees, hanging full and surrounded by many more.

Darlene relates that she became interested in egg decorating after a program was presented in her Farm Women Society 22. After that she attended a workshop with friends and learned some of the intricacies of the craft.

The workshop was a turning point, and she soon assembled materials and set up a card table in her kitchen where she worked whenever she could find the time.

She eventually became so proficient at the art that she gave some workshops at her church and for fire company auxiliaries, and she has valuable advice on how to create decorated eggs successfully.

Darlene points out, "You can use any kind of egg. I like to have small ones to fill in among the bigger ones."

Bantam eggs, pheasant eggs, South American chicken eggs and "luck eggs," the first ones a hen starts to lay, are some of the smaller variety she uses among her regular chicken eggs, duck and goose eggs.

Where do you find all these eggs? She says with a laugh, "You have to have good friends. Sometimes farmers will give them to you."

Actually, when she first began decorating eggs, Darlene lived on a farm, but it was a dairy and

broiler operation which doesn't produce many eggs. Nonetheless, her husband could be counted on to provide pheasant nests as he mowed in the spring.

Before beginning to work on the eggs, Darlene says your hands should be completely clean and free from oil. While most eggs are clean, duck and goose eggs sometime require a lot of work to make them spotless. Darlene says, "You want them white, but don't use chlorine bleach or it will make the egg brown." She advises that Brillo pads work well. When clean, then thoroughly dry the egg and prepare to blow out the contents.

To blow out the eggs, a hole must be made at each end with a nut pick or something with a point. Darlene cautions, "The hole should be smaller than the braid or trim which will cover it." Eggs should be at room temperature.

Darlene adds, "It's good if you can get something in to break the yolk, something long and thin. It's really hard to blow out duck and goose eggs, smaller eggs are easier." Darlene remembers that she had her children do the actual blowing, which worked fine for her, but the children weren't especially happy about it.

If you're planning to undertake this project in a big way, you may be wondering what to do with all those broken eggs once they are blown out of the shell. On the farm, Darlene's husband kept up with her supply by feeding them to calves. Now she says, "I just try to use them up."

Once emptied, the eggshells should be rinsed out with cold water. Darlene says using warm water might pop the shell.

She points out, "The shell gets stronger once you begin working on it. The shells seem to be pretty strong. Farmers feed poultry well so they develop strong shells."

Now comes the fun part. Your imagination can guide you, and you can use up all that old ribbon, lace and jewelry you've been saving. Darlene says she purchases some supplies at craft stores, but finds garage sales and friends an excellent source of old jewelry.

Darlene often uses a picture cut from an old greeting card as the basis for her decorated eggs. She says, "I use greeting cards with thin paper and sometimes a picture from the church bulletin." She cuts around the picture using manicure scissors, and makes slits into the design to make the picture lie flat on the rounded surface of the egg. She considers cutting the picture the hardest part, "It takes the longest time."

Once the picture is cut, Darlene says, "Lay the picture on a piece of waxed paper, add the glue and then put it on the egg. I use Elmer's glue because it dries



Darlene Herr begins work on an egg which will become a highly decorated masterpiece. She has all her tools and equipment neatly arranged in a cosmetic case for easy access.

white. Have a wet cloth handy to use up the excess glue."

From there the trim is added, usually a ribbon adorned by beads, or whatever suits your fancy.

To hang the egg, Darlene uses silver or gold elastic thread which she attaches through a bead or on a special ornament which has a hanger. The thread can be adjusted to any length. Eggs should be hung with the pointed side down.

Decorating the outside of an egg sounds fairly easy, but perhaps you've seen those which have a hole cut in one side and a lovely picture or figure in the opening. Those are easy too, according to Darlene. Eggs for this purpose should be cleaned as described before, but not blown. She puts transparent tape on the area of the egg which is to be cut and begins by cutting a small hole with manicure scissors. From that small hole just keep enlarging it until it is the size you desire. The tape keeps the shell from breaking. If you are cutting more than one hole in an egg, Darlene advises to be sure the space between the holes doesn't get too thin or the shell will shatter.

Braid with an uneven edge can be glued around the opening to cover the cut edge.

The contents can be poured out as the hole is enlarged and once the inside is cleaned a picture can be glued inside the egg or a figure placed there. The outside can be appropriately decorated.

If you're ready to tackle something a little more complicated, Darlene also gives easy directions for those lovely jewel box eggs, with shells hinged and the inside lined with velvet. Again clean the egg, but don't blow the contents out if you are planning to use a saw for cutting because the shell is stronger with the liquid inside it.

Make sure the egg is dry and mark it where you plan to cut. A flat rubber band is good for this

purpose because it can be put in place and a line traced beside it.

Darlene purchased a "Dremel moto-tool," a precision tool with a tiny saw blade just perfect for eggs. She says it is possible to do this fine cutting with a heavy razor blade, but a saw does the work faster and easier.

Cut the egg in half, then wash out with cold water. This time Darlene suggests loosening the membrane on the inside and removing it.

Now pour paraffin wax in the bottom half of the egg, just enough to make a level base. Then line the bottom half with velvet. Darlene says the fabric should be eased in, not pleated, and after it is glued in place it is trimmed very close to the shell. Now a trim with a flat edge, either braid or lace, should be glued around the inside edge. The top is lined with velvet, and edged with braid or trim.

Next a very lightweight hinge, available at craft stores, is added. Darlene notes that one must be very careful not to get glue in the hinge or it will not function. After the glue is set, she says, work the hinge until it opens and closes easily. A cloth moistened with warm water can be used to wipe the hinge and loosen it.

After the hinge, add flat braid around the outside edge, then continue to decorate with pictures and beads. A base is formed out of old pins or fancy buttons and glued to the bottom so the jewel box sits firmly.

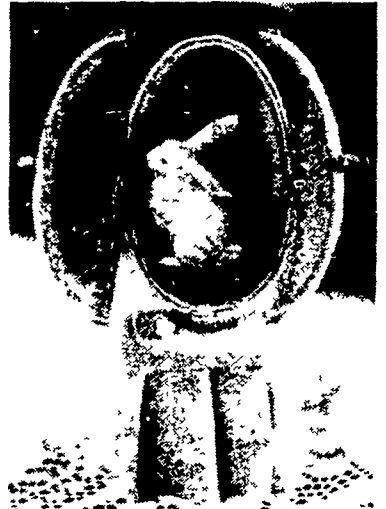
Darlene keeps all her materials together in a train case, so she can

easily get to work when she has the desire.

Darlene's eggs are hung on decorative "tree" limbs, one of which came with a floral arrangement, and one of which was plastic and was painted by Darlene. She says a Dogwood branch makes a lovely tree for eggs.

Easter egg trees have long been a part of the folk life of Germany and Switzerland where the eggs were decorated in honor of the arrival of spring and were made by impaling eggshells on twiggy bushes growing out of doors.

In the 1890's very elaborate egg trees were popular in Germany, (Turn to Page C4)



Using a tiny music box for a base, Darlene fashioned an egg which features a ceramic Easter bunny.



Darlene uses a fine saw to cut the eggs in half as a first step in creating an egg jewel box.



This egg tree, filled with home decorated eggs, enhances Darlene's dining room. Her egg collection was assembled over a period of five or six years and has a wide variety of intricately decorated eggs.

Homestead Notes