

Kid's Korner

Marvelously Colored Easter Eggs

The egg's perfect shape always has inspired artists. It has been the palette for one of the most intriguing of folk arts in many cultures.

There is 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. Decorating eggs is fun for kids and grown-ups.

Faux, a fancy way to say "fake," marble eggs are easy to make and can lend a luscious touch to your Easter table. You can use hard-cooked eggs or blow the contents from the eggshells for a longer-lasting work of art.

When the eggs are ready, line a cookie sheet with waxed paper or foil. Place several inexpensive sponges on the cookie sheet and pour one to two tablespoons food coloring over the center portion of each sponge to create a stamp pad. Use a separate sponge for each color. Let the coloring stand on the sponge until it's absorbed, about 5 minutes. (Keep a good stock of paper towels nearby).

Holding an egg at its top and bottom between your thumb and forefinger, gently roll the egg over the sponge to create marble shadings, swirls, and striplings. Shift your holding position to turn the egg and roll again and again until the entire



Use pencil-top erasers or the edges of block-style erasers and dye-soaked sponges to give your egg "new wave" designs.

shell surface is covered. As each egg is finished, set it back into the egg carton to dry.

If you'd prefer "new wave" designs of dots, dashes, and trian-

gles, dab pencil-top erasers or the edges of block-style erasers onto the dye-soaked sponges and press onto the eggs. Vary the pressure and eraser angle for different

effects.

Refrigerate your decorated hard-cooked eggs as soon as you're done and, if you'd like to eat them later, refrigerate them again after

displaying or hiding them. Discard any hard-cooked eggs that have been at room temperature for more than 2 hours and use the rest within one week.

The History Of Egg Coloring

Eggs have played a part in springtime celebrations as far back as 5,000 B.C. The ancient Chinese, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans exchanged colored eggs as tokens of good will to proclaim the season of renewed life.

Some believe that the custom found its way into Europe with the Crusaders. Medieval English families placed huge platters of decorated eggs, specially blessed by the local priest, in the center of their Easter tables to be offered to each visitor during Easter week. The Dutch settlers in Pennsylvania and New York are credited with bringing their native custom of coloring eggs at Easter to this country.

Before the advent of food coloring, eggs were dyed by boiling them with flowers, leaves, roots, seed, logwood chips or cochineal (a dye made from a dried cactus-eating insect). This natural coloring process is yet popular among creative modern craftspersons. For instance, yellow onion skins as a dyestuff produce orange-shaded eggs, while red cabbage leaves color them various shades of blue. Another historic decorating method still being practiced today is that of the beautiful Ukraina "pysankas." Wax is applied to form traditional geometric designs while a series of dye baths produce the color. A thin coat of varnish preserves and hardens the egg shell so it can be expected to last for years.

The egg's common association with hope and resurrection, as well as its fragility, probably accounts for its popularity in Eastertime fun and games around the world.

"Pace egging" is an old English tradition similar to Halloween trick or treating. (The term "pace" derives from the word "Pasch," which means "Easter" in most European countries). Costumed children (years ago wearing animal skins) went from house to house singing or performing skits to collect colored, hard-cooked "pace eggs." The eggs were then used to play games such as egg shackling, an age-old ritual popular in many countries. Shacklers hold eggs in their right hands, trying to protect the eggs as much as possible with their fingers. They tap them against their opponents' eggs — trying to smash the others while keeping their own intact. Children also rolled their pace eggs at each other on a field, with the egg remaining unbroken declared the "victor egg." Dolly Madison initiated the White House Easter Egg Roll in Washington in the early 1800s and the custom continues to this day.

In Switzerland, children are supposed to receive their eggs from the Easter cuckoo, but children in most countries believe that the Easter rabbit lays and hides the eggs they hunt for on Easter morning.

Celebrate this happy season with your family's favorite traditions. Many are made possible by the incredible edible egg!



Color Me

