

# Kids' KOrner

## Scratch Egg Art

BETH MILLER  
Cumberland Co. Correspondent

— When Nickolina Jacoby sees an egg, she thinks of scratching it instead of scrambling it.

YORK SPRINGS (Adams Co.)

The York Springs woman is a



Everyone gets help from mom, Nickolina Jacoby, as they decorate their eggs for the holiday.



Sarah, Luther and Bethany Jacoby try their hands at scratching eggs.

self-taught expert in the craft of making ornate scratch egg art out of common, everyday hardboiled eggs.

Jacoby said she began to teach herself the craft 12 years ago while she was living with a farm family near York Springs.

She became interested in the craft after she ran across a reference to scratch eggs when she was looking up information on Ukrainian egg decorating.

It looked like just the thing for her, she said, so she found out all that she could about the technique. Then, she began to experiment.

Jacoby remembered that one time when she took some of her eggs to the nearby Brethren Home, some of the senior citizens who live there recalled how their fathers or grandfathers used to scratch out designs, like bunnies, on eggs.

In the years that she has been practicing her art, Jacoby has given presentations about the craft to homemaker's groups and church functions. She said she also has displayed her eggs alongside the handmade furniture her husband makes at various craft shows.

Jacoby said she has also done an egg on a paid commission. "It was a dragon," she said.

Another time, she sold an egg tree during an auction to raise money for a public television station, she said.

To make the eggy art, Jacoby said you must start with unblemished and uncracked eggs. She says she likes to use eggs from free-running chickens better than commercial eggs. The eggs from the store have a much thinner shell and break much easier, she explained.

Although she works with hard-boiled eggs, Jacoby said scratch art can be done on blown eggs, but when you are working with kids it is a much better idea to use hard-boiled eggs.

Once you have selected your eggs, Jacoby said you should layer them in a kettle with onion skins — put a layer of onion skins in the kettle, then a layer of eggs, then another layer of onion skins.

Cover the skins and eggs with water, bring to a boil and simmer for about two hours. That will help the eggs to keep, she said. The

oldest egg she has is seven years old.

After simmering, you should remove the eggs while they are still hot and dry them on towels. Check for cracks and throw away those that are cracked. Jacoby said you can wait a day or so if you want to see if more cracks appear.

To make your designs, you should use a sharp implement that is comfortable to hold, like an X-acto knife. She uses an X-acto knife for her scratching, but for children she has discovered that a drywall screw works well because it has a sharp point and it stays sharp because it is made of hardened steel.

Jacoby said she has been told and read that people used to use jack knives and darning needles to do the scratching.

Choose designs that appeal to you. You can find designs from fraktur art, books and magazines.

The designs can be as elaborate or as simple as you want.

"The craft can be very interesting to children," she said. She knows because her four children, Emmanuel, Bethany, Luther, and Sarah, all are interested in the craft.

"Older children have better eye-hand coordination and can handle the egg and the scratching tool easier, but the young kids seem to just have fun trying to decorate their eggs with a few scratches here and there," Jacoby said.

She said that, the longer you work on an egg, the more detail and charm it will have. You should experiment with your tool and use its point for fine lines and the edge for shading.

Jacoby said you also can experiment with natural dyes, like those made from beets and red cabbage.

You should't worry if your egg starts to rattle when it gets older. The eggs will start to do that because they will dry up on the inside, but there will be no smell as long as the shell of the egg remains whole.



Emmanuel Jacoby uses a screw to start his scratching.

You Ask ? ? ?  
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? ? ? You Answer

Questions and answers for this column should be addressed to You Ask — You Answer, Lou Ann Good, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522.

**QUESTION** — A. Nolt of New Holland would like to know the complete poem that was recited in the 1920s when her father-in-law went to school. The poem contains these lines: The carpenter's house is falling down. The preacher's kids are the worse in town....

**ANSWER** — Bill Stock, Plymouth, wanted to know where to buy an incubator to hatch about a dozen eggs for a school project. Thanks to Audrey Coleman who suggests he contact the Central Tractor Farm and Family Center in his territory. They are in the Central Tractor Store at 1215 N. High St., Millville, N.J. Thanks also to Bessie Hutschenreuter, Airville, who suggests he call 1-800-558-9595.

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