

Easter Eggs....Enjoy them safely

By: Robert Wolfe, R.S.
Midland County Dept of Public Health
(Source: *Texas A & M University*)



Eggs have been used to celebrate spring festivals for centuries. Since then, Easter egg hunts have been beloved by children. You can make sure your Easter egg hunts are fun and safe. To prevent foodborne illness during springtime celebrations consumers are encouraged to learn the four key messages – Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

- Before buying eggs, inspect them to make sure they are not dirty or cracked. Dangerous bacteria can enter a cracked egg.
- Store the eggs in their original carton on a refrigerator shelf until you are ready to cook them. Keep the eggs away from foods with strong odors (such as fish or onions). Be sure they do not freeze. Always wash your hands in hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, including Easter eggs.
- For best results with hard-cooked eggs, buy the eggs one week in advance and refrigerate them. Eggs can be “too fresh” to peel easily.

Making hard-cooked eggs

Follow these directions for perfect hard-cooked eggs:

- Place the eggs in a single layer in a saucepan; add enough cool tap water to cover at least one inch above eggs.
- Cover the pan and quickly bring the water just to boiling. Turn off the heat and, if needed, prevent further boiling by *removing* the pan from the burner.
- Let covered eggs stand in hot water for water for 15 minutes for large eggs. Adjust the time by about three minutes up or down for each size larger or smaller.
- Immediately run cold water over the eggs or place them in ice water until they are completely cooled.
- Dry and refrigerate the eggs, or decorate them immediately.
- Do not decorate cracked eggs. Instead, refrigerate and use them as ingredients in holiday recipes.

Decorating Easter eggs

Decorate eggs with food coloring or by following the directions on Easter egg-dyeing kits. For the dye bath, use water that is 10 to 15 degrees warmer than the eggs. Write name or holiday messages on the eggs with a wax crayon before coloring them. To create designs, mark out patterns during repeated coloring.

After decorating

Return the eggs to the refrigerator until it is time for the hunt. Do not hide cracked eggs. Do not hide eggs where they may come into contact with pets, wild animals, birds, reptiles or lawn chemicals.

Gather the eggs as soon as possible after they are hidden. Do not allow them to remain hidden overnight.

AFTER THE HUNT

Inspect the eggs; discard the cracked ones. Return them to the refrigerator within two hours. You can store any uneaten eggs in the refrigerator for up to one week. Do not eat eggs that have been used for table decorations. They have been out of the refrigerator for too long.

To make your holiday safe and fun, take care of the eggs from the time of selection until they are eaten.