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**DYEING YOUR EASTER EGGS – NATURALLY!**

What would Easter be without “dyeing & hunting” hard-cooked eggs? You probably have fond memories of your family’s traditional customs of coloring, decorating, hiding, hunting and finally eating these symbols of Spring. There is literally no end to the creative possibilities for art on an egg shell.

Eggs to be decorated may be either hard-cooked or blown out of their shells. The hard-cooked variety is a bit sturdier for children to work with, while the blown out shells are best if you’re making an egg tree or want to keep the eggs on display for a considerable amount of time.

If eggs are to be dyed, wash them in a mild detergent to remove some of the natural oil coating, this way too, the colors adhere more evenly.

To dye eggs while hard cooking, simmer them in a covered pan of water for 20 minutes with a teaspoon of vinegar and your choice of the natural materials listed below. You’ll have to use your own judgment about the quantities of natural dyes to use – kind of a trial and error basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>COLOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh oregano or mint</td>
<td>Beige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red cabbage leaves</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong coffee</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnut shells</td>
<td>Buff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>Grayish gold/pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrot tops</td>
<td>Greenish yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow delicious apple peels</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion skins</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange peels or thyme</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you’re planning to eat your hard-cooked Easter eggs, be sure to refrigerate them as much as possible between cooking, decorating and the hunt.

Proper handling of hard cooked eggs is simple. Hard cooked eggs should be kept refrigerated! They can be left at room temperature for no more than 2 hours. So after the Egg Hunt, return the uncracked, unbroken eggs to the refrigerator for future use. Cracked shells and eggs that have been at room temperature all day should be discarded.
Hard cooked eggs can be chopped for egg, chicken or fish salads, ham salad, and potato salad. Chopped eggs can be combined with ham or olives in stuffed hallowed tomatoes and tossed in salads.

Sliced hard cooked eggs can be a nutritious garnish with fresh asparagus salad or cooked asparagus, as well as to garnish meat dishes or fish salads or party sandwiches.

One hard cooked egg is about 80 calories, 6 grams of protein, 6 grams of fat, calcium, phosphorus, iron, potassium, and Vitamin A. Follow the two-hour food safety rule to keep your hard cooked eggs safe so you can make good use of them.

This Easter go “natural” and color your eggs with nature’s own dyes. And after the hunt is over, try one of these recipes.

**LIGHT AND EASY DEVILED EGGS**

8 hard-cooked eggs, peeled
2/3 cup small curd cottage cheese
1 tablespoon skim or nonfat milk
1 tablespoon Italian, thousand island or green goddess salad dressing mix

Cut eggs in half lengthwise. Remove yolks and set whites aside. Mash yolks with fork. Blend in remaining ingredients. Refill whites using one heaping tablespoon yolk mixture for each egg half.

**SUPER EGG SALAD**

1/3 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1/4 cup salad dressing
3/4 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/2 teaspoon dill weed
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
Dash black pepper
9 to 10 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and chopped
1 cup finely chopped raw zucchini
1 cup shredded raw carrot
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup chopped green onion with tops

Blend yogurt, salad dressing and seasonings. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate to blend the flavors. Serve about 1/2 cup for an individual main dish salad. Or use as a sandwich filling. Makes 8 servings.
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