

Play It Safe With Easter Eggs!

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Egg decorating is a spring tradition that dates back to the earliest civilizations. This year try going “back to nature” with Easter eggs dyed naturally. Remember to use only edible ingredients that are food safe. Also, dyeing eggs with these ingredients is an art and not an exact science. Have fun experimenting with Mother Nature’s palate of beautiful colors!

To dye eggs naturally:

Begin with hard-cooked eggs or blown out eggshells.

Choose a dye ingredient. Place in pan large enough for water to be one inch above the dye ingredient. Bring the water to a boil. Reduce the heat. Simmer for about 15 minutes or until the desired color has been achieved (eggs will not get as dark as the color of the water).

Remove the pan from the heat. Using a fine strainer or cheesecloth, strain the dye mixture into a liquid measuring cup. Add 2-3 teaspoons of white vinegar for each cup of strained dye liquid.

Pour the mixture into a container that is deep enough to completely cover the eggs, such as a tall glass. Place the eggs into the dye water until the desired color is achieved. Stir to allow the color to reach all shell parts evenly.

Remove eggs from dye, allow to dry. Naturally dyed eggs will have a dull finish. Rub with vegetable oil for a more shiny appearance. Refrigerate immediately.

Some sources for natural dye ingredients are listed below. The amounts in the chart are only estimated amounts. The amount of each dye ingredient will affect the depth of color.

Dye sources:	Estimated Amount	Color
Fresh beets	4 Cups, shredded per qt. of water	Pinkish red
Yellow onion skins	4 Cups dry outer skins	Orange
Spinach leaves	4 Cups per quart of water	Pale green
Red cabbage leaves	4 Cups, shredded per qt. of water	Blue
Strong brewed coffee	Use in place of water	Beige to brown
Grape, cranberry, pomegranate, or beet juice	Use in place of water	Grey/Purple/Red

If Easter egg decorating is on your list of activities this spring, play it safe when handling fresh and hard cooked eggs! Even eggs with clean, shells with no cracks may contain bacteria called *Salmonella* that can cause intestinal infection. Once eggs have been cooked, food safety rules apply for proper handling, serving and storing.

If you plan to eat the dyed eggs later:

- Wash hands during each step before handling eggs.
- Hard-cook, dye, and refrigerate within two hours.
- Use only food safe natural or commercial dyes.
- Easter eggs that are used as decorations and not refrigerated should not be eaten.
- Hunt eggs for 2 hours or less, 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is 90 degrees or higher.
- Hunt only eggs that have been refrigerated with non-cracked shells.
- Hide eggs in areas that are clean and not highly susceptible to bacteria.
- Refrigerate eggs once they have been found in the egg hunt.
- Eggs must be eaten within seven days of cooking.

For more information on topics related to your family or home, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office behind the Oconee County Courthouse.