



Food Safety & Nutrition

SPRING IS PRIME TIME FOR EGG SAFETY



Sandra Brown

Food Safety and Nutrition Faculty

Spring is prime time for eggs! Colored Easter eggs are popular, economical and nutritious. However, they are not what they are cracked up to be if mishandled.

At Easter, eggs are handled a great deal more than usual. Every year approximately 40,000 cases of Salmonella infection are reported in the United States. However because many milder cases are not reported or diagnosed the actual number is estimated to be 20-75% times higher. An estimated 500 deaths related to reported cases occur annually.

Whether decorated for fun, hidden and hunted for play or enjoyed in springtime decorations they need to be handled with care. Below are some safety tips for the season.

- Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before every step of handling process – including cooking, cooling, dyeing and hiding.
- Hard cooked eggs are very perishable and cannot be left out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours. After cooking cool them quickly under cool running water. Refrigerate hard cooked eggs in their cartons if you won't be coloring them right after cooking.
- Make sure the eggs you color and/or hide are not cracked. When dyeing the eggs, use food coloring or specially made food grade egg dyes dissolved in water that is warmer than the eggs. Wash eggs in a mild detergent solution to help remove the oil coating so that color will adhere more evenly. Refrigerate eggs right after dyeing.
- If using eggs for Easter egg hunts, leave them in the refrigerator up until the hunt and put back after the hunt.
- When hiding eggs, consider hiding places carefully. Avoid areas where the eggs might come into contact with dirt, pets, wild animals, birds, insects or lawn chemicals.
- Don't eat an egg in which egg dyed has colored the egg white. If the dyes have seeped inside, so can food spoilage bacteria.
- Never decorate cracked eggs. If the eggshells cracked during cooking put them in the refrigerator and eat them within 1-2 days.
- Hard cooked eggs will keep up to 7 days in the refrigerator. This is assuming that after cooking them they were cooled quickly and then stored into refrigerator.
- Hard cooked eggs with a green ring around the yolk are safe to eat. The green color is a result of overcooking. The sulfur and iron compounds in the egg react on the yolk's surface.

-
-
- If you plan to use hard-cooked eggs as a centerpiece or other decoration and they will be out of refrigeration for many hours or several days, cook extra eggs for eating and discard the eggs used for decorations.
 - Be cautious when blowing the contents of an egg from the shell. Contact with the eggshell and raw egg could cause illness from Salmonella.
 - The edible contents blown out of eggshells can be used in any recipe where yolks and whites are mixed and thoroughly cooked. Use the contents immediately after they have been blown out, or freeze them.
 - A new idea has sprouted up this year, dying the shelled eggs. The dyes color the white of the egg beautifully for decorations. I would suggest to be sure to check the coloring kit for precautions about consuming too much of the dye. Think about how much color you want children or others in your family consuming. You may want to stick with dying the shell of the eggs!

Spring events can be egg-citing if done safely. Enjoy the season!
