



FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

Decorating Egg Customs

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In the United States we associate dyeing eggs with Easter, but there are many other decorated egg customs around the world. Some of these are:

- In China, parents might give family members and friends a red-dyed egg to announce the birth of a child.
- Germans use green eggs as a symbol of mourning on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter.



- During the Renaissance in Italy, romantic young men tossed empty eggshells filled with perfume or cologne at young woman.
- For a special celebration, Japanese parents give their children eggs that are decorated to look just like the children. If you are not planning on eating your decorative eggs, food safety is not an issue. For all other times the following information will be very useful.

Decorative Eggs That Will Be Eaten

Before you decorate your eggs decide if they will be eaten. If so, follow these food safety rules:

- * Wash your hands between all the steps of cooking, cooling, dyeing and decorating.
- * Be sure that all the decorating materials used are food safe.
- * Keep the eggs refrigerated when not decorating.
- * Dye the eggs in water warmer than the eggs so they don't absorb the dye water.

- * When hiding the eggs, put them where they won't come into contact with pets, other animals, birds or lawn chemicals.
- * After you've found all the hidden eggs, throw out any that have cracked or have been out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.



- * Refrigerate eggs and eat within one week of cooking.

How Safe are Eggs?

The risk of getting a foodborne illness from eggs is very low. However, eggs are high in protein, a good growth medium for bacteria. Bacteria also need moisture,

warm temperature, and time in order to multiply and increase the risk of illness. If an egg contains bacteria, you can reduce the risk

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How Safe are Eggs? *Continued from page one*

by proper chilling and eliminate it by proper cooking. Keep eggs refrigerated and do not leave out at room temperature for more than two hours. When cooking eggs make sure that the yolks are cooked through and no longer runny. Taking these precautions will ensure they pose no greater food safety risk than any other perishable food.

In recent years, the bacterium *Salmonella enteritidis* has been found



inside a small number of eggs. Scientists estimate that, on average across the U.S., only 1 of every 20,000 eggs might contain the bacteria.

Other types of microorganisms could be deposited along with dirt on the outside of an egg. In the U.S., eggshells are washed and sanitized to remove possible hazards.

For further protection, discard eggs that are unclean, cracked, broken or leaking.

Salmonella Bacteria - In The White or Yolk?



If bacteria are present at all, they will most likely be found in the white and will be unable to grow, mostly due to lack of nutrients. As the egg ages, however, the white thins and the yolk membrane weakens.

This makes it possible for the bacteria to reach the yolk. Because the yolk is nutrient dense, if the egg is kept at warm temperatures bacteria will multiply over time. In clean, uncracked, fresh shell egg, internal contamination occurs only rarely.

Eating Eggs Containing Salmonella

There should be no problem eating an egg containing *Salmonella* if it has:

- been kept refrigerated
- cooked to proper temperature
- cooked by someone who follows good food safety procedures (proper handwashing, avoiding cross contamination, etc.)
- served immediately

If the egg has been improperly handled, you might experience the foodborne illness called salmonellosis. You could have abdominal cramps, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, chills, fever and/or headache within 6 to 72 hours

after eating. The symptoms usually last only a day or two in healthy people. In high risk populations (very young, pregnant women, the elderly, the ill and those

with immune system disorders) eating eggs containing salmonella can lead to serious complications. Anyone who has had salmonellosis may pass along the bacteria for several weeks after recovering, but salmonellosis is seldom fatal. Don't take chances; proper cooking kills *Salmonella*.

- **Clean**
- **Separate**
- **Cook**
- **Chill**