

News Column for week of April 6, 2020

Kathy S. McEwan

Southwind Extension District - Iola

Family and Consumer Sciences

Remember Food Safety When Decorating Easter Egg

The Easter holiday is just around the corner and for many decorating Easter eggs is part of the celebration. There are many options for decorating eggs, including paint, glitter, and markers, but dyeing eggs remains the most popular method. Just make sure to use a food-safe dye if you plan on eating them too.

Commercial egg decorating dyes are food-safe, as is food coloring added to a water-vinegar mix. Organic dyes are another option. Tea or coffee will provide a tan or brownish shade. Beet or cranberry juice will produce red dye. For green, use the water from cooked spinach leaves, or for blue, use blueberry juice.

Egg decorators need to remember food safety too. "The main concern when dealing with eggs is Salmonella," said Karen Blakeslee, coordinator of the food safety Rapid Response Center at Kansas State University. "The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports 40,000 cases of Salmonella each year, and they estimate that up to 20 times that many go unreported."

To decrease the risk of Salmonella, cook eggs properly and keep hands clean so as to not cross-contaminate other foods. Make sure the eggs aren't broken because cracked eggs could be contaminated. People who raise chickens should gather eggs at least once or more each day. Keep eggs refrigerated at all times. If having an Easter egg hunt, only allow eggs to be out of the refrigerator for two hours or less, or better yet, have a separate batch of eggs prepared just for the hunt. Hard-boiled eggs in the shell should be used within a week, or within 2-3 days if the shell has been removed. Uncooked egg contents from hollowed eggs should be used within a day or two.

"By the time you take the eggs out of the refrigerator, they get hidden in a number of possibly contaminated areas, and then kids handle them extensively. They probably should not be eaten," Blakeslee said. "Another option is to use plastic eggs for the Easter egg hunts, and fill them with candy or money for a special treat."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has published guidelines to encourage the safety of preparing hard-boiled, Easter eggs. The guidelines are as follows:

1. Put eggs in a single layer in a saucepan and add enough tap water to come at least one inch above the eggs.
2. Cover.
3. Put on high heat until water boils.
4. Turn off heat. If necessary, remove pan from burner to prevent further boiling.
5. Let stand in the hot water 15 minutes for large eggs. Adjust time up or down by 3 minutes for each size larger or smaller.
6. Cool immediately and thoroughly in cold water.
7. Decorate and refrigerate until ready for use.

For more information about keeping holiday foods safe, contact Kathy by email at kmcewan@ksu.edu. For up to date information about COVID-19, check our website at www.southwind.ksu.edu.