

# EXTENSION UPDATE

Author: Sarah Purcell, Extension Educator

Phone: 402-269-2301

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## **Food Safety with Easter Eggs**

It's the season of Easter eggs. Easter eggs and food safety need to go hand in hand! One of my most memorable gatherings was a surprise 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party for a friend, which was two weeks after Easter.

The night before my friend's surprise party, his wife made deviled eggs for their family. My friend never made his own birthday party. He and his entire family were gravely ill from a food borne illness, which was attributed to the two-week-old leftover hard-cooked Easter eggs.

Follow these recommendations on food safety and Easter eggs to keep you and your family safe.

- Because Easter eggs are handled so frequently, wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before handling eggs at every step, including cooking, cooling, and dyeing. Take advantage of this occasion to teach youngsters about cleanliness and safe food handling.
- Make sure the eggs you color aren't cracked. If any eggs crack during dyeing or while on display, discard them.

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- When fresh eggs are hard cooked, the protective coating is washed away so hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and eaten within a week.
- Always refrigerate eggs, both fresh and hard-cooked, in their cartons in the coldest part of the refrigerator. The door is not the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- Discard any hard-cooked eggs that have been out of the refrigerator for more than two hours, whether by accident, for a centerpiece, or for hiding. Consider the discarded eggs as an inexpensive craft project or game. Make extra eggs for eating.
- Use food coloring or specially made food-grade egg dyes. Dissolve the dyes in water that is warmer than the eggs. Be sure the label says nontoxic on any crayons, pens, paints, or other art materials you use.
- If your Easter plans call for egg shells only, use the edible contents emptied from eggshells within four days in recipes which call for thorough cooking, such as casseroles, custards, quiches, cakes, or breads.
- You can freeze eggs for longer storage. When freezing whole eggs, beat the yolks and whites together. Egg whites and yolks can also be frozen by themselves. Use frozen eggs within a year.

If you have any questions regarding food safety, contact the Nebraska Extension in Otoe County Office at 402-269-2301.

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