

creative ideas for celebrating Easter

Easter Baskets

Children all over the world look forward to the Easter Bunny's annual delivery of a basket filled with candy, cookies, and eggs, plush rabbits, chicks, and lambs. Of course, there's no reason why a grown-up shouldn't be the recipient of Easter delights. The key to the right packaging is finding a theme that unites contents, package, and beneficiary. Your gifts should radiate your affection for friends and loved ones, so tailor your baskets to suit their tastes. Gather ribbons & straw, jellybeans & chocolate eggs, fire up your glue gun & your imagination. Spring is here. Get hopping!

Bunnies and Bows

Spray-paint a straw basket pale pink (what color matches your child's room?). Make bows from narrow ribbons; fix them around the basket's edge with a glue gun. Fill with stuffed bunnies, a fabric pig, jellybeans and candy-coated eggs. Crayons, colored pencils and small books provide lasting pleasure after the candy is gone.

Spa in a Basket

Fill a basket with everything necessary for several good, long soaks. Paint a rectangular straw basket a pastel color and line it with pretty hand towels. Indulge the recipient with a bowlful of egg-shaped soaps, a scented votive candle, luxurious bath towels, a wood-handled hairbrush, and extravagant lotions and potions. Include a bouquet of grape hyacinth & a sweet or two to pass the time while the tub is filling.

Gardener's Gift

For your favorite horticulturist, choose a sturdy basket that can have a long life of service in the garden. Use a palette of yellows & oranges, inspired by daffodils. After painting the basket, tie a bow to the base of the handle, then line the bottom with a bed of Easter straw & tissue paper. Add a pair of garden clogs, canvas gloves & aprons, pruning snips & shears, seed packets, and plant labels. Finish with a small pot of daffodils, a bag of lemon jellybeans, and a few deco-

Welcoming Spring!

Eighteen simple ways to celebrate the Spring season

1. **Go fly a kite** on an open, treeless hillside. A kite can be anything from a simple, diamond-shaped piece of nylon to a high-tech stunt kite. For tips and the latest styles, go to www.intothewind.com.
 2. **Display spring flowers** in a different way by filling a simple glass vase with the unexpected.
 3. **Watch skydivers go for it.** It's a vicarious thrill to watch sky divers and hang gliders take off and land. Take a picnic lunch, and make an afternoon of it.
 4. **Spring clean with a mission.** Give each child a cardboard carton to decorate, then have them fill the box with stuff they don't need. Donate it all to a homeless shelter or other worthy cause. Reward kids with a movie.
 5. **Savor maple syrup.** Spring's warm days and cold nights create dynamite maple syrup, which is harvested this time of year. Splurge on a bottle of genuine maple syrup at the supermarket, cook up some flapjacks, and read *At Grandpa's Sugar Bush*, by Margaret Garney, for a kid's-eye view of the sugaring process.
 6. **Scrounge up bargains at a flea market.** Get out in the sun and find something inexpensive and different. Give kids a set amount of money (say, five dollars), and tell them they can use it to buy whatever catches their fancy—a comic book, an old coin, a tea cup or a small plant.
 7. **Dry your laundry outdoors.** It may dry a little stiffer, and you risk the occasional runaway bra, but there's nothing quite like the scent of spring air on your sleeves.
 8. **Catch opening day—at the minors.** You don't have to spend major-league money to participate in America's favorite pastime. Minor-league baseball offers plenty of thrills, at prices cheaper than those to see teams with a shot at the World Series. Smaller arenas let kids get close to the action, too.
- Visit www.minorleaguebaseball.com.
9. **Plant some can't-fail seeds.** Radishes come up in less than a week and can be harvested in less than a month. Pole beans sprout in 1-2 weeks and can be picked in 2-3 months. For a free children's gardening activities kit, go to www.jmgkids.com.
 10. **Eye the sky!** This spring, in particular, is prime planet-spotting season. Jupiter and Saturn are visible to the naked eye. If you look in the western sky at dusk, about 45 degrees above the horizon, you will see Jupiter, which will appear before any of the stars. At Jupiter's lower right will be the smaller Saturn. Another way to pick out the planets: Saturn will be very close to the moon at dusk on April 25; Jupiter will be similarly positioned on April 26. For more specifics, check out www.skypub.com.
 11. **Visit a blooming landscape.** The famous Cherry Blossom Festival in DC, which runs from March 25 through April 8 (www.washington.org), is packed with fragrant white and pink flowers. Enjoy a similar event in Macon, GA, from March 16 to 25 (www.cherryblossom.com), or visit the Brooklyn Botanic Garden the their Japanese-themed Cherry Blossom Festival on April 28 and 29 (www.bbg.org). Just logging on to these events' websites offers a delightful look at fields full of the season's beautiful blossoms.
 12. **Eat your asparagus.** Blanch asparagus by placing it in boiling water for 1 minute, then dip it in melted butter or lemon vinaigrette (1/3 cup olive oil, freshly squeezed lemon to taste, and salt and pepper). Finger food even kids will love!
 13. **Shoot your own time-lapse photos.** Buy a disposable camera and shoot one photo each day of a particular bush or flower bed. Kids will love the resulting visual chart of emerging daffodils, lilacs, or tulips.
 14. **Dry your garden's bounty.** You can preserve your tulips well past

Easter Garden

As a thoughtful Easter gift, present that special someone with a living Easter garden. Choose colorful spring flowers such as tulips, crocuses, daffodils & violets. They can be already in bloom, or if he or she enjoys gardening, you can simply give them the bulbs in a decorative basket, wrapped in pastel-colored cellophane.

Make it Meaningful

For an unusual Easter egg hunt, use plastic eggs and fill some with candies, other with coins and special ones with verses from the Scriptures, which you read aloud together after the hunt. The activity becomes meaningful as well as fun for all the family members.

There is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. — Mosiah 16:8

Easter Tree

Make a special Easter tree for children who come to visit. Put a wrapped piece of gum or candy in a small plastic bag and place the bag inside a colorful plastic egg. Double over a piece of yarn and tape the loop to the egg. Hang the egg on a branch of an indoor tree or on a leafless branch stuck into a bucket of sand or a pot. Each child gets to select a surprise as he or she comes in the door.

Surprise Packages

Instead of a basket, choose a useful goodie holder: backpacks, tackle boxes, bicycle baskets, lunch boxes, a Superhero helmet or a doll case. These fun containers, bought at a discount store, are often less expensive than baskets and your children will feel that the Easter Bunny considers them extra special.

Fingerprint Eggs

With careful printing, you can make an egg that looks like it's covered with jellybeans.

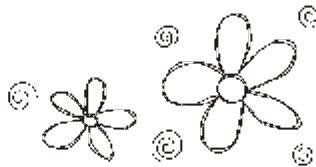
- To start, blow out your egg

Preparing Eggs for Decorating

Use only fresh, clean, unbroken eggs.

To hard-cook eggs: Place the eggs in a single layer in a saucepan; add cool tap water to cover the eggs by one inch. Heat to almost boiling and simmer, without boiling, for 10 minutes. Remove the eggs with a slotted spoon to a bowl of cold water for five minutes. Refrigerate the eggs *immediately* and use within one week. Hard-cooked eggs can be removed from the fridge and left at room temperature for up to two hours.

To empty eggshells (for “blown-out” eggs): Pierce the pointed end of an egg with a large, sterilized needle. Then make a bigger hole



Botanical Eggs

Eggs adorned with the delicate shapes of greenery & herbs announce the arrival of spring. The theme is centuries old—even in the Middle Ages, when Easter eggs were often embellished with gold, those who couldn't afford such extravagance made do with leaves & flowers.

For this Martha Stewart project, blown-out eggs work best, though hard-boiled can be used.

1. With a tiny paintbrush, apply egg white to the back of a leaf or sprig; use tweezers to center it on the egg, and press down gently with fingers.
2. Cut a nylon-stocking into 5-inch tubes. Stretch open one side of a tube, carefully wrapping it over the leaf to hold it in place, then pull remainder around the egg (to the side opposite the leaf). Tie with string.
3. For dye, mix 1/2 cup water, 2 tablespoons vinegar, and 1 teaspoon liquid food coloring, depending on the desired color. Holding the string, dunk the egg into the dye; press down with a spoon to immerse it completely. Let the egg sit for 5 minutes, periodically turning and spooning dye over it.

Deviled-Egg Fillings

These modern deviled eggs—served on a bed of daikon sprouts—offer tasty alternatives to the old mayonnaise-and-paprika standby. Start with a dozen freshly boiled eggs, and dress up the fillings with spicy curry powder (dark yellow), fresh basil pesto, and crème fraîche—a lighter tasting choice than plain mayonnaise.

12 hard-boiled eggs
Salt and freshly ground pepper

For curried deviled eggs:

3 1/2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 teaspoon curry powder

For basil deviled eggs:

1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, roughly chopped
3 tablespoons mayonnaise

For crème fraîche deviled eggs:

3 tablespoons crème fraîche
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
4 cornichons, minced (about 1 tablespoon)

1. Peel and cut hard-boiled eggs lengthwise. Carefully remove yolks; place 4 yolks in each of three bowls. Set white aside. Mash each bowl of yolks with a fork.
2. Add mayonnaise and curry powder to one bowl; mix. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Place basil and mayonnaise in bowl of a food processor; blend

Egg Ornaments

In Europe, Easter eggs are often hung on tree branches and bushes. Bring this custom into your home with these charming ornaments embellished with ribbon and trimmings.

Materials: eggs; food coloring; ribbons or rickrack; clear-drying craft glue; pearl-tipped pins

- Begin by dyeing and blowing out eggs.
- Attach a band of ribbon or rickrack around the shell with glue.
- Cover a hole at one end of the egg with a silk flower or small bow; glue in place.
- Put a pearl-tipped pin through a ribbon loop, then insert pin into other hole; glue in place.

Cupcake Nests

To make cupcake “nests,” cover cupcakes with lemon frosting. Let the kids roll them in coconut and set jellybean “eggs” on top.