



Easter Family Fun

Find Some Easter Fun

Easter is a Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It marks the end of Holy Week, the end of Lent and the culmination of the passion of Jesus.

For some, Easter also marks the beginning of spring and a renewal of life. Traditions celebrated on Easter include egg hunts, visiting the Easter bunny and attending religious services. Keep reading for a few fun Easter activities to help your family celebrate the holiday.

DECORATE AN EASTER TREE

While Christmas trees are usually inside the house, Easter trees can be inside or out, and are usually potted, living trees meant to be replanted. Visit a local nursery to find an appropriate inside plant to decorate. Look for one with sturdy branches but also one that fits your space and will be happy indoors for a few weeks. If you're decorating a tree outside, take a trip to the local hobby or crafts store and pick up some decorations that can stand up to spring showers. Look for eggs, bunnies, crosses, flowers and more.

MAKE EASTER CARDS

While you're at the art store, pick up some construction

paper, crayons or markers and stickers and let your kids make Easter cards for family and friends. If they're really industrious, you can contact local hospitals or nursing homes and ask if you can drop off cards for residents.

COMMUNITY EGG HUNTS

Look at local community calendars to find some egg hunts to visit with your family. Many churches, community organizations and parks hold hunts and other Easter celebrations that can be fun for the

whole family and are also often free or low-cost fun. Make a plan to hit several in a day for an all-day Easter celebration.

HOLD AN EGG-AND-SPOON RACE

Get the whole family (and

friends and neighbors) together and hold an egg-and-spoon race. See who can balance an egg — plastic to avoid a mess — on a wooden spoon and get across the finish line first. Prizes can be piles of Easter candy or just bragging rights.



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Decorating Cookies

Easter also means sweet treats. There are lots of traditional recipes to try out this time of year. This kid-friendly recipe from Taste of Home is fun for the whole family to make (and eat). The cutout cookies with a zingy lemon flavor are perfect for decorating by little hands.

LEMON CUTOUT COOKIES

1 cup shortening
1 1/2 cups sugar
2 large eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons lemon extract
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

Frosting

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup shortening
1 teaspoon lemon extract
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups confectioners sugar
Colored sugars for decorating

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar

until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and extracts.

2. In a separate bowl, sift or whisk together flour, baking powder and salt. Add to butter mixture gradually.

3. Divide dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, roll each portion to 1/8-inch thick. Cut with Easter- or spring-themed cookie cutters and place on a greased cookie sheet 1 inch apart.

4. Bake six to eight minutes or until golden. Cool on pans two minutes, then place on wire racks to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting. Beat cream cheese, shortening and extracts in a bowl until blended. Beat in confectioners sugar until smooth. Spread over cookies and decorate with colored sugar. Let stand until set and store in airtight containers.

Plant a Spring Garden

No matter what day it falls on, Easter is a great time to get started on a spring garden.

Gardening is a great family activity that gets everyone outside and moving, and probably more than a little dirty. Keep reading for some tips on putting down some roots this Easter.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The first step to planting a garden is to find out your USDA plant hardiness zone. This is a map widely available online, but your local nursery or plant store can explain it to you in more detail and give you insights into your local climate.

Next, pick a spot in your yard. Note what the light is like, as well as the soil. You can even bring a soil sample to a nursery or to your local agricultural extension for analysis. Tell the experts at your nursery what you observed, and they'll help you pick the perfect plants for your spot.

CARE AND FEEDING

While you're at the nursery, ask the experts there how to best care for your new plants. Do they need fertilizer? How often? What kind? How often do they need to be watered?

Make sure you can commit the time to keep these plants



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alive. For easy keepers, ask nursery workers to point you toward native plants that are already acclimated to your conditions.

PUT IT IN A POT

If you're working with a small yard or no yard at all, put your plants in pots. You can choose pots in decorative

colors and in many different sizes. Make sure to choose plants that thrive in pots; you can even find species of larger plants, like fruit trees, that

do well in pots.

Again, you need to consider location and sunlight, as well as fertilization and watering needs.

Birds' Nests

Full of spring color and fun to make, these birds' nests are a hit at any Easter celebration. Made of melted marshmallows, chow mein noodles and candy eggs, they're also a cinch. Try this recipe from [Allrecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com).

BIRD NESTS

3 cups mini marshmallows
1/4 cup peanut butter
3 tablespoons butter
4 cups crispy chow mein noodles
Cooking spray
40 chocolate candy eggs

1. In a large pot over medium heat, stir together marshmallows, peanut butter and butter until melted.
2. Pour the noodles into a large bowl, then pour over the marshmallow mixture. Stir together to coat.
3. Spray hands with cooking spray. Pick up a handful of noodles and form into a nest. Nestle three or four chocolate eggs into the middle. Place on a wax paper sheet to cool. Store in an airtight container.

Easter Facts

Here are some fun facts about Easter to share with the entire family.

Easter this year is April 21. It is celebrated the first Sunday after the first full moon after the first day of spring.

Easter is thought to have developed from an Old English word *Eastrun* (sometimes *Eastre* or *Eostre*). It may be derived from the name of an Old English goddess.

In Latin and Greek, Easter is called *Pascha*.

Some Christian traditions have dropped the observation of Lent and the days of Holy Week as pagan or too close to the Catholic religion, or they interpret the scriptures differently.

Eggs are an ancient symbol of life and rebirth and, in Christian traditions, became closely associated with Jesus' death and resurrection.

In 1885, the tsar of Russia commissioned the jeweler Fabrege to design an elaborate enameled egg every Easter.

According to CNN, U.S. consumers will spend \$18.2 billion on candy, clothing, decorations and more this Easter.

In Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches, Easter eggs are dyed red to represent the blood of Christ. Cracking open the egg on Easter represents opening Jesus' empty tomb.

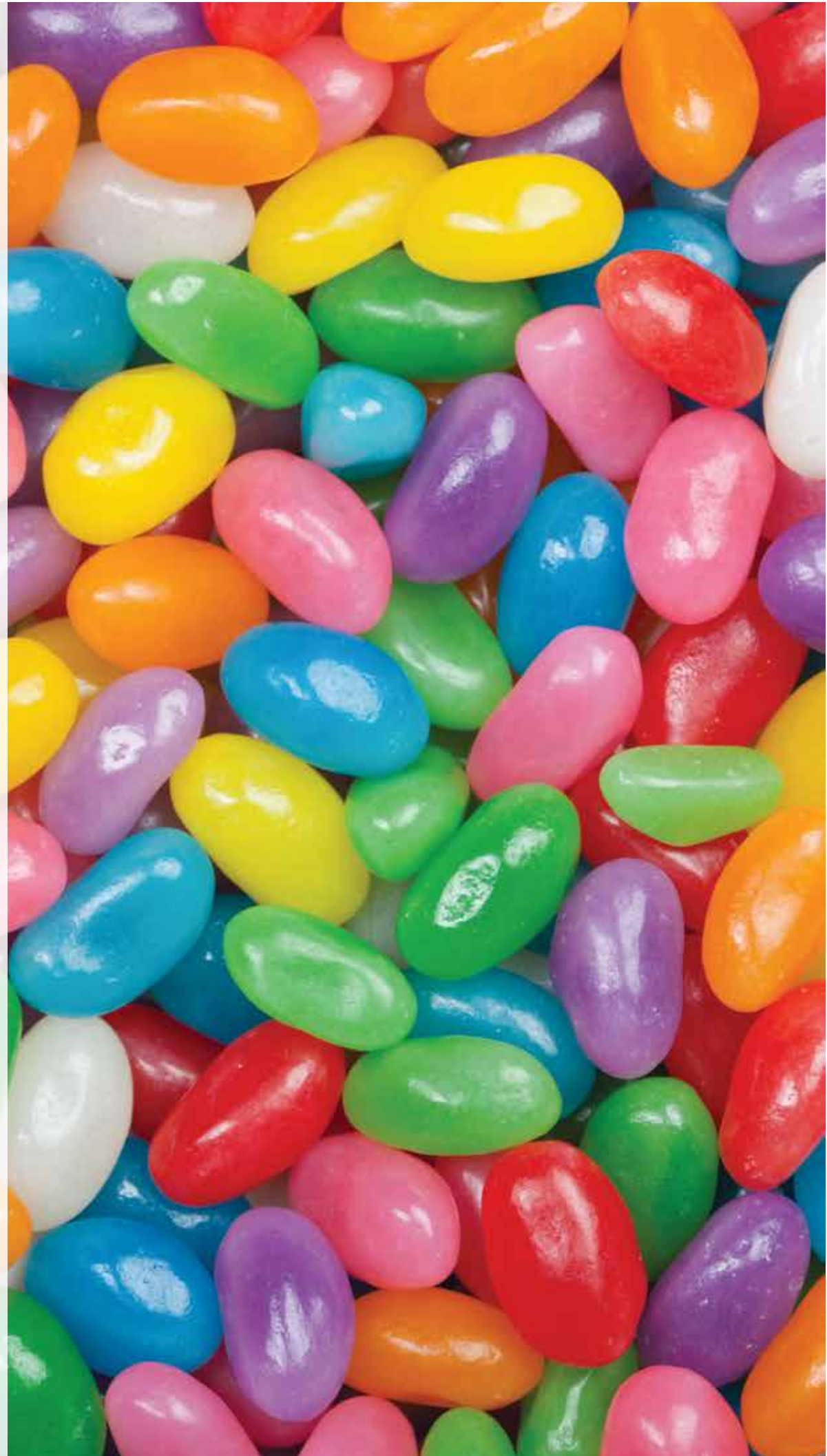
Cascarones are hollowed-out eggs stuffed with confetti or small toys and are common in areas with Latin American traditions.

Egg tapping, egg jarring, egg dumping or pocking eggs are all names for tapping boiled Easter eggs together. The winner is the holder of the last uncracked egg.

In 1873, J.S. Fry & Sons introduced the first chocolate egg in Britain.

In Australia, Easter takes place in autumn and is associated with the harvest rather than with the coming of spring.

The Easter bunny originated among German Lutherans and, similar to Santa Claus, brings toys and candy to children. It was first mentioned in literature in 1682.



Carrot Cake Cookies

Bunnies' favorite treats are carrots, and carrots and towering carrot cakes are popular Easter dishes.

These carrot cake cookies from Land O' Lakes bring the flavor of a giant wedge of cake into a convenient handheld treat.

CARROT CAKE COOKIES

1 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup sugar
3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups grated carrots
1 cup chopped pecans

FROSTING

4 cups powdered sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, combine 1 cup butter, sugar and brown sugar. Beat at medium speed, scraping often, until creamy.
2. Add eggs and vanilla and beat until combined. Add the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt and beat at low speed, scraping often. Stir in carrots and pecans.
3. Drop dough in rounded tablespoonfuls onto greased cookie sheets. Bake 11-13 minutes until lightly browned. Cool completely.
4. In a large mixing bowl, combine powdered sugar, butter, cream cheese and vanilla. Beat at medium speed until smooth and creamy. Frost each cooled cookie.





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Go Natural with Egg Dyes

We're all familiar with the fizzy dying tablets, but there are ways to go natural with your egg dyes. This is a great way to experiment with colors and foods. For best results, Better Homes & Gardens says to leave your eggs to sit overnight in the fridge. As long as they aren't cracked, your eggs shouldn't pick up the taste of blueberries or onions.

Blue-gray: Mix a cup of frozen blueberries and one cup water. Bring to room temperature and remove the blueberries before dipping the eggs.

Blue: Cut a quarter of a head of red cabbage into chunks and add four cups boiling

water. Stir in two tablespoons of vinegar. Let cool to room temperature and remove the cabbage with a slotted spoon.

Jade green: Peel the skin from six red onions and simmer in two cups of water for 15 minutes. Strain and add three

teaspoons of white vinegar.

Orange: Use the skin of six yellow onions and simmer in two cups of water for 15 minutes. Strain and add three teaspoons white vinegar. The longer you soak the eggs, the darker this color is.

Yellow: Simmer four ounces of chopped carrot tops in 1 1/2 cups water for 15 minutes. Strain and add two teaspoons white vinegar.

Pink: Cut a medium beet into chunks and add four cups boiling water. Stir in two

tablespoons of vinegar and let cool to room temperature. Remove beets. The longer the eggs sit, the darker the color will be.

Lavender: Mix a cup of grape juice and a tablespoon of vinegar.