

Easter
Family
Fun





Better-for-You Easter Baskets

Whether you're avoiding sugar for health reasons or just don't want to make Easter morning a sugar-fueled three-ring circus, it can be difficult avoiding heaps of candy in kids' Easter baskets. Here are a few ideas for keeping the candy to a minimum.

BOOKS

Got a bookworm in the house? Stack their basket with new reads from their favorite authors. You can also include bookmarks, a reading light, a lap desk and other reading accessories. For younger kids, look at activity books and throw in a new pack of colored pencils or crayons.

GARDENING

Get them outside with gardening-themed baskets full of pint-sized yard tools, seeds, flower pots, a sun hat or apron, and potting soil. You can also include books on gardening and, if you hit up your local

nursery, a few plants to get them started.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Load them up on crayons, colored pencils, markers, craft paper and more to keep little hands busy. Younger kids might enjoy coloring and activity books while older children may love craft kits that allow them to make finished projects, like LEGO or jewelry.

GAMES

Load up baskets with a variety of games and let the competition begin. Look for smaller card games

and pocket-sized games to round out the basket and keep it to a manageable size.

A FEW OF THEIR FAVORITE THINGS

Combine these ideas, but make it on a theme. If your kid loves dinosaurs, grab some dinosaur books, mini dinosaur toys, and so on. Repeat as needed with your little ones' favorite things. Trucks, Star Wars and more.

RELAX

For teens or even adults, schedule some relaxation time and load

them up with bath bombs, bubble bath, skin care, cosmetics and more. This can work with guys, too, just look for things like soap, beard oil and brushes, shave soap, and toiletry kits.

COUPONS

Another one for older members of your family is to fill up plastic Easter eggs with coupons they can redeem. For teens, consider tickets for a later curfew, extra screen time or a night out on your dime. For adults, a coupon for a nap, for taking over one or more chores, or picking a Saturday activity.

Easter Brunch Recipes

Easter brunch is a great way to bring family and friends together after Sunday services.

Make-ahead recipes make this festive occasion even better, as you can spend more time with your loved ones. Keep reading for some great ideas that will save you time.

HAM AND CHEESE CROISSANT CASSEROLE

Recipe is from Betty Crocker.

- 3 large croissants
- 1 8-ounce chopped cooked ham
- 1 1/4 cups, or 5 ounces, shredded Swiss cheese
- 6 eggs
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoons ground mustard
- 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoons pepper
- 1/4 teaspoons ground nutmeg

1. Spray a 10-inch glass deep-dish pie plate with cooking spray. Cut the croissants in half lengthwise, then cut in half into five pieces. Place the pieces in the pie plate and sprinkle with ham and cheese.

2. Beat the eggs, half-and-half, honey, mustard and spices. Then pour the eggs over the ingredients in the pie plate. Press the croissant pieces into the egg mixture to moisten completely. Cover the plate tightly with foil and refrigerate at least eight hours but no more than 24.

3. Heat oven to 325 degrees. Bake the casserole, covered, for 35 minutes. Uncover, then bake for 25-30 more min-



© ADOBE STOCK

utes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

APPLE DUMPLING FRENCH TOAST BAKE

Recipe is from Betty Crocker.

- 2 Granny Smith apples, diced

- 2/3 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 5 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup baking mix, such as Bisquick

6 small croissants, torn in bite-sized pieces

1. In a 10-inch skillet, sauté apples and sugars until the apples are tender and the sugar is caramelized. Add vanilla and stir to combine.

2. While the apples are cooking, mix butter, cinnamon and ginger in a small bowl.

3. In a large bowl, beat eggs and milk, then add baking mix and butter and beat more. Add in pieces of croissant and soak.

4. Add the apple mixture to the soaking croissants. Stir to combine and pour into a 13x9-inch baking dish. Refrigerate overnight.

5. Heat oven to 350 degrees and bake for 45 minutes. Serve hot.

Easter Trivia

While your family is sitting around digesting delicious Easter dinner (more on that in a minute), chew on these facts.

- A medieval Easter game was to pass a boiled egg from child to child. When the clock struck midnight, whoever was holding the egg got to eat it.

- Easter is named for the Anglo-Saxon goddess, Eostre. Her symbols were thought to be the hare and the egg and she was the goddess of the spring and fertility.

- Good Friday, the holiday before Easter commemorating Jesus Christ's crucifixion, isn't a federal holiday and is a state holiday in just 12 states.

- The candy-loving Easter bunny is thought to be a German invention that dates to the Middle Ages.

- Americans eat about 600 million marshmallow Peeps during the Easter season.

- Cadbury can make more than 1.5 million Cadbury Crème Eggs in a day.

- More than half of people eat a chocolate bunny's ears first.

- The White House Easter Egg Roll started in 1878, when a group of children approached President Rutherford B. Hayes and asked him to host one.

- One of the largest chocolate Easter eggs ever created was made in Tosca, Italy. It

weighed 15,873 pounds and was 64 feet around at its widest point.

- Easter is the second-biggest candy shopping holiday after Halloween.

- Buying a new Easter outfit stems from a superstition that Easter clothes were good luck.

- Florida held one of the

largest Easter egg hunts ever, which featured 9,753 children hunting more than half a million eggs.

- Americans spend nearly \$15 billion on Easter every year.

- The tradition of egg painting, called pysanka, originated in Ukraine.

- Early egg dyes were made from natural materials like onion skins, flower petals and tree bark.

- When Peeps came out in 1953, making just one marshmallow chick would take 27 hours. Now, it takes just six minutes.

- In the Christian calendar,

Easter follows 40 days of Lent (not counting Sundays).

- Easter eggs symbolize the Resurrection and are also a symbol of spring's new life and fertility.

- Enough Jelly Belly jelly-beans are eaten in a year to circle the Earth more than five times.



Easter Around the World

Easter is celebrated around the Christian world. Here in the U.S., it means bunnies and chicks and baskets of goodies. Other countries, however, have their own traditions. Celebrate a different culture with your family this year by trying out some of these traditions.

AUSTRALIA

In the land down under, bunnies are considered pests. So instead, they have the Easter bilby, or rabbit-eared bandicoot. Companies now make chocolate bilbies with the proceeds benefiting the endangered critters.

CZECH REPUBLIC

On Easter Monday, men playfully spank women with whips made of willow and decorated with ribbons. According to legend, the willow is the first tree to bloom in the spring and the branches symbolize fertility.

FINLAND

Children dress up as witches and beg for chocolate eggs in the streets while carrying willow twigs decorated with feathers. In some parts of Finland, people also burn



Prague,
Czech Republic

© ADOBE STOCK

bonfires to ward off witches who fly around on brooms between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

FRANCE

Haux, France, cooks up a gigantic omelet on Easter Monday. The dish uses up 4,500 eggs and feeds up to 1,000 people. The story goes that Napoleon and his army marched through the town

and the emperor liked the omelets there so much that he ordered up a huge one to feed the troops.

GREECE

The town of Corfu hurls pots, pans and earthenware out of their windows on Holy Saturday, smashing their household goods in the street. The custom may come from Venice, Italy, where people

used to toss their old items on New Year's Day. It may also serve to welcome spring, symbolizing new crops that will be gathered in new pots.

HUNGARY

Watch out on Easter Monday, ladies. Boys sprinkle perfume or water on girls, then ask for a kiss. It was believed water had a cleaning, healing and fertility-

inducing effect.

NORWAY

Norwegian publishers come out with special crime novels called Paaskekrimmen, or Easter thrillers. The tradition started in 1923 when a publisher promoted its new crime novel on the front pages of newspaper. The ads so closely resembled the news that people didn't know it was a stunt.

Easter Dinner Recipes

Easter dinner is another great time to gather with friends and family. These seasonal recipes are sure to wow.

PIMIENTO CHEESE DEVILED EGGS

Recipe is from Good Housekeeping.

12 hard-cooked large eggs, peeled and cut lengthwise in half

1/3 cup mayonnaise

2 teaspoons hot sauce

1/2 cup shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese

1 4-ounce jar pimientos, drained and finely chopped

1 green onion, finely chopped

Paprika, for garnish

1. In a medium bowl, mash egg yolks. Then add mayonnaise and hot sauce and mix until almost smooth. Fold in the cheese and green onion.

2. Spoon the filling into the egg whites and garnish with paprika. Serve immediately or refrigerate overnight, covered in plastic, for up to a day.

BROILED LAMB CHOPS

Recipe is from Southern Living.

3/4 cup dry red wine

1/3 cup orange juice

4 garlic cloves, chopped

4 shallots, chopped

2 tablespoons rosemary, minced

1 1/2 tablespoons oregano, minced

3 tablespoons olive oil

18 2-3-ounce lamb rib chops or 12 loin chops



© ADOBE STOCK

1 teaspoon salt

6 teaspoons honey

1. Whisk together dry red wine, orange juice, garlic, rosemary, oregano and olive oil in small bowl. Pour the mixture into a heavy-duty zip-top bag, reserving 1/4 cup. Add the lamb chops, seal bag and chill two hours.

2. Remove the chops from the marinade, discarding the marinade from the bag. Sprinkle the chops with salt and pepper, then place on a lightly greased rack in a broiler pan.

3. Stir together the reserved 1/4 cup wine mixture and honey.

4. Broil the chops three inches from heat (if you have an electric oven, leave the door partially open) for five minutes on each side or to the desired degree of oneness, basting with honey mixture after three minutes. If using loin chops instead of rib chops, broil the loin chops for three more minutes on each side.

LEMON PARMESAN ROASTED POTATOES

Recipe is from the Food Network.

1 1/2 pounds baby Yukon gold potatoes, halved

1 1/2 pounds baby red-skinned potatoes, halved

Kosher salt

4 cups day-old sourdough bread, crusts removed

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, grated

2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest

Freshly ground pepper

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Put the potatoes in a large pot and cover with cold water by an inch. Season with salt, then bring to a boil

and cook over medium high heat until just tender, or about seven minutes. Drain.

2. Pulse the bread in a food processor to make coarse crumbs. Combine with the olive oil, garlic, lemon zest, a teaspoon of salt and a few grinds of pepper in a large bowl. Add the potatoes and toss.

3. Arrange the potatoes cut-side down on a baking sheet. Roast until golden and tender, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley and Parmesan, then continue roasting until golden brown, or about five more minutes. Serve.

Easter Decor

Easter is a time to celebrate spring and renewal. To get your house in order for the season, set aside a weekend to do your spring cleaning and Easter decorating. Don't have any Easter decor or in the mood for some new decorations? We've got you covered.

THROW PILLOWS

An easy way to decorate for the season is to change out your throw pillows around your home. This is a great time to send off your regular ones to be professionally cleaned and, in the meantime, sub out some festive spring- and Easter-themed pillows. If you're shopping on a budget, you can also get pillow covers to go over your regular pillows.

YARD DECOR

Inflatables, once the sole property of Christmas decor, is spreading. Now you can get inflatable bunnies by the score to liven up your yard. Also look for the ever popular garden flags — just in time for you to start getting your garden back into shape after winter — and festive wreaths for the front door.

TABLEWARE

Since Easter meals with family are an important part of the holiday, keep an eye out for tableware to adorn your Easter table. Choose versatile pieces in shades that complement your year-round decor for use at multiple holidays. White is always a solid choice. You can get smaller, less expensive

pieces, like egg plates, in a more festive color and style.

ACCENT PIECES

Get out vases and celebrate spring by gracing your table and mantles with fresh, seasonal flowers. Think tulips, daffodils and force-bloomed paperwhites. Look for Easter-themed decorative accent

pieces, such as bunny figurines, garlands and more, in pieces that accentuate your full-time style. You can find farmhouse, rustic and even modern pieces in your local home store.

DECORATE AN EASTER TREE

With the pandemic plaguing

America and other unprecedented events, many people are really looking to push the boat out for holidays. This year, get out the Christmas tree — or buy one on clearance — and decorate it for Easter with egg ornaments, bunnies and flowers for spring. Sit the kids down and have them make a slew of Easter crafts to put on it.





Bring the Outside In

Easter is April 4 this year — a little early for those May flowers, but you can still find a bevy of blooms to decorate your home.

© ADOBE STOCK

Look for traditional favorites like Easter lilies, tulips and daisies. Let's learn more about Easter blooms and what they mean.

EASTER LILIES

These nodding, white lilies are the quintessential Easter flower. Their pristine color symbolizes purity, virtue, hope and life, and their downturned, trumpet shaped blooms are said to be bowing in prayer in honor of Jesus' sacrifice. But be careful if you have cats in the home, these fragrant lilies are toxic to felines.

TULIPS

These traditional spring bulbs wake up from the dead, symbolizing Christ's resurrection. Also, the spherical, egg-shaped blooms resemble Easter eggs. Tulips come in a variety of colors and textures

with more than 3,000 varieties with a huge amount of petal varieties, including double blooms and fringed petals and those resembling lilies.

DAISIES

Daisies are small white or yellow flowers that are often the first flower children learn to draw. They symbolize purity, innocence and loyalty. Daisies work best in cut flower displays, along with other spring favorites like lilies and sprays of greenery.

OTHER BULBS

Other spring bulbs that are popular around Easter are daffodils, ranunculus, hyacinths, lily of the valley and paperwhites. If you live in colder climates, you can force these bulbs to bloom indoors. To force your bulbs, first buy from a reputable source. Look for terms like pre-chilled, which will

mean a shorter time to bloom. Local nurseries may also offer a variety of pre-made kits, where the bulb is already planted and ready to bloom.

If your bulbs haven't been chilled, you'll need to do this yourself. Put them in the vegetable drawer of your fridge. The time you'll need depends on the type of bulb; ask your local garden center how long your chosen bulbs need to sit.

An easy and attractive way to force blooms is using just water and a forcing vase to keep the bulb out of the water and away from rot. Fill the bottom of the vase with water and a few pebbles to keep it stable, then nestle your bulb in the top part of the vase. Place it in direct sunlight until the bulbs begin to root and refill when the water level gets less than an inch.

Once your bulb roots, you can move it to any bright, sunny spot in your home.