Springtime brings Easter, and coloring Easter eggs is a favorite of my family. I think it came from the stories my Dad would tell of their Easter egg hunts as kids. Which of course were much different from the Easter egg hunts of today. My Dad and his siblings hunted eggs from the chickens, ducks, and geese that would steal their nest away. Dad and his siblings would watch where the hens would go and then sneak and steal their eggs. Always making sure to leave one so the hen would return to her nest the next day. The siblings had a competition of who could find the most eggs, and somehow their dad, my grandfather would always win. On Easter morning, here Grandpa would come with a bucket of eggs and nobody knew where he had found them.

When you are coloring eggs this Easter, there are several things to keep in mind to color and decorate hard-boiled eggs safely.

Eggs are frequently handled at Easter time and each handling occasion is one more chance that the eggs might be exposed to bacteria. To avoid bacterial contamination, wash your hands thoroughly before you handle eggs at every step including cooking, cooling and dyeing. Refrigerate hard-boiled eggs in their cartons if you won’t be coloring them right after cooking and cooling. Refrigerate them again right after you dye them and anytime they are taken from the refrigerator.

Color only uncracked eggs. If you want to eat your dyed eggs later, use food coloring or specially made food-grade egg dyes. If any eggs crack during dyeing, discard them along with any eggs that have been out of refrigeration for more than 2 hours. When figuring the 2 hours include dyeing, and each time they were removed from the refrigerator add up the time and more than 2 hours, discard. If you keep hard-boiled eggs out of refrigeration for many hours or several days for a decoration or for hiding discard as soon as you are finished with them. DO NOT EAT. Cook extra eggs for eating.

If you hide eggs, consider hiding places carefully. Avoid areas where the eggs might be exposed to dirt, pets, wild animals, birds, reptiles, insects or lawn chemicals. Avoid hiding cooked eggs in the house and be sure to count to find all. A lost egg can result in a rotten odor in a few days. Refrigerate the hidden eggs again after they’ve been found. Consider using plastic eggs for hiding and colored eggs for decorations or eating.

Easy 12-Minute Method for Hard-Boiled Eggs: Place eggs in a saucepan large enough to hold them in a single layer. Add cold water to cover the eggs by 1 inch. Heat over high heat just to boiling. Remove from the burner. Cover pan. Let eggs stand in hot water for about 12 minutes for large eggs (9 minutes for medium eggs; 15 minutes for extra large eggs). Drain. Shock the eggs in a bowl of ice water to cool them immediately.

Hard-boiled egg storage time: In the shell, hard-boiled eggs can be refrigerated safely up to one week. Refrigerate in their original carton to prevent odor absorption. Once peeled, eggs should be eaten that day.

The week after Easter is designated as Egg Salad week. It is a great way to use up those decorated eggs. Keep hard-boiled eggs refrigerated and use within one week. Make sure they have not gone over the 2 hours out of refrigerator time. Don’t peel them until ready to use.

Here is an Egg Salad Classic Recipe:
6 hardboiled eggs (sliced)
¼ cup mayonnaise
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1 Tablespoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon mustard
1 Tablespoon minced onion
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ cup finely chopped celery
Lettuce leaves/hamburger buns/bread slices

Directions
Reserve and refrigerate 4 center egg slices for garnish, if desired.
Chop remaining eggs.
Mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, sugar, mustard, onion, salt and pepper in medium bowl.
Add chopped eggs and celery; mix well.
Refrigerate, covered, to blend flavors.
Serve on lettuce leaves, garnished with reserved egg slices.
This creamy egg salad can be layered with crunchy lettuce on whole-wheat toast for a simple sandwich, or stuffed into cherry tomatoes for an impressive appetizer, or put between two pieces of bread on a bun with lettuce and tomato.

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