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## Egg Dyeing

### Natural Egg Dyeing with Celestial Seasonings Teas

*"Probably one of the most private things in the world is an egg until it is broken."*

-- M.F.K Fisher, food editor, Star Tribune

From the kitchen of Lisa Berryment, contributing writer and occasional egg dyer for Celestial Seasonings. (Inspired by the original article "[Au Naturel—Color your eggs the old fashioned way](#)" by Lee Svitak Dean, Taste Editor for *Star Tribune* Newspaper of the Twin Cities [Minneapolis/St. Paul])

Create a variety of different colored eggs using Celestial Seasonings teas. The unique combination of herbs and spices in each tea will create a slightly different color. Experiment and have fun!

#### Instructions



1. Wash eggs in warm, soapy water to remove any oily residue that may keep the color from adhering to the eggs.
2. Use cooled hard-boiled eggs or egg shells with the egg removed. Note that dyeing just shells is more difficult because they break more easily and they float, making it difficult to keep them submerged in the coloring solution and attaining a consistent color.
3. Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 2 or more tea bags, and steep for at least 10 minutes. Gently squeeze the tea bags and remove. **Add 1 teaspoon of white vinegar to the tea. Let cool.**
4. Gently submerge an egg into the tea. **Allow the egg to sit in the tea for several hours or overnight.** The longer the egg soaks, the deeper the final color will be. **If you plan to eat the eggs, be sure to do this step in the refrigerator.**
5. Remove the egg from the tea and let it dry—an egg carton works nicely as a drying rack. Be careful to handle the eggs gently and minimally as some of the colors can easily be rubbed off before the egg has dried.

#### Finishing Touches

**Sponging:** Dab the still wet egg with a sponge for a textured look.

**Glossing:** Rub dried eggs with vegetable oil for a soft sheen.

**Wax resist designs:** Before dyeing the eggs, draw shapes, pictures or inspiring words on them with crayons or a piece of wax. The wax won't absorb the color so the designs will show through.

## Tea-Speckled Eggs

This is another way to dye eggs with tea that creates a speckled or mottled effect.

1. Secure one end of a 4-inch length of stocking with a twist tie.
2. Wrap 2 tea bags around a hard-boiled egg\* and place in the stocking. Be sure to disperse the tea within the tea bag to cover as much of the egg shell as possible. Secure the open end of the stocking with another twist tie.
3. Place the egg in a mug or small bowl, cover with boiling water, add 1 teaspoon of white vinegar and steep for several hours or overnight. You can do this step in the refrigerator, **but eating these eggs is not recommended.**
4. Carefully remove the egg from the brew, and gently remove the stocking and tea bags. Place on a rack to dry.

\*For a more intense speckled effect, remove the tea from the bag and spread the herbs around the egg as it is placed into the stocking.

The final color depends on the strength of the tea solution and how long the egg is soaked in it. You can also try blending two different types of teas together. Whatever brew you choose, this old-fashioned method of egg dyeing will add natural charm to your holidays with lovely earthy colored eggs. Here are some of the teas we tried and the resulting egg color:

<b>Tea Flavor</b>	<b>Egg color</b>
Red Zinger®	lavender to deeper purple
Wild Berry Zinger®	greenish blue
Tangerine Orange Zinger®	purple to purplish red
Sleepytime®	light yellow
Chamomile	golden yellow
Roastaroma®	light brown
Green tea	bright yellow shades
Black tea	various brown shades

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070103014159/www.celestiaseasonings.com/tea-health/egg-dyeing-article.html>

# Tea and Your Health

## Egg Dyeing Article

### Au naturel: Color your eggs the old-fashioned way

By Lee Svitak Dean

*Star Tribune* Taste Editor

Pictures by Tom Wallace/*Star Tribune*



Piles of yellow onion skins, chunks of bright red beets, bunches of deep-green spinach leaves, even bags of fragrant Red Zinger tea, redolent with hibiscus flowers, filled the kitchen counter. Bottles of paprika, dill seed and turmeric stood at the ready, as did a pot of coffee. So did dozens of eggs and a jug of white vinegar.

We were dyeing eggs. And there wasn't a PAAS coloring kit in sight.

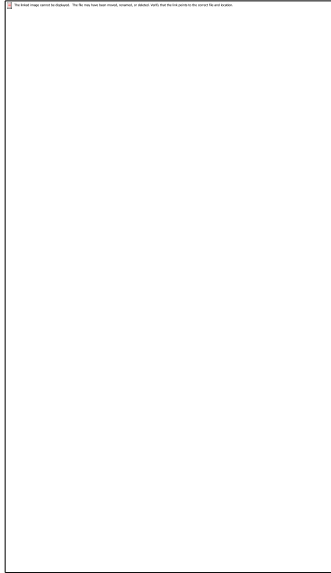
Egg dyeing, by its very nature, makes a mess and, frankly, it's even messier when the colors are made from from edible food. The homemade version also takes a bit longer to prepare than dye from a package.

But don't let these cautions deter you. The homemade variety offers more of a challenge—and it's fun, too. As many cooks know, that sense of curiosity and discovery is half the reason so many of us hang out in the kitchen. Making your own dye lets you experiment with the vagaries of color, from the leftovers in the refrigerator to the stock of spices in the pantry.

Many of the colors from homemade dye are a softer hue, and there's more possibilities of shades in the color palette. But there is nothing precise about natural food dyes: You might get the colors you anticipate when using them; then again, you might not. The variations depend on what you're using for dye—and how long you soak the egg. It also depends on the egg shells, which are as variable as snowflakes.

Though not readily apparent, shell texture differs from egg to egg—from smooth to rippled—as does the thickness of the shell. All of this affects how the egg picks up dye. So if you expect the unexpected when you're using homemade dye, you won't be disappointed.

## Cold vs. hot



There are two ways to color eggs with natural dyes: cold and hot dye.

Most directions recommend starting with hard-cooked eggs. The dye is then prepared separately, and in the last step the egg is soaked in the coloring (which usually is recommended to be hot). This method works fine with commercial food dyes, such as PAAS or Dudley, where eggs are dipped into color for only a few moments.

But with natural dyes—which take longer to imprint their shade—the eggs are soaked in the color for at least 15 minutes, which is the same amount of time it takes to hard-cook eggs. So eggs can be dyed at the same time they are being hard-cooked (they also will get a more uniform and saturated color as they roll around in the simmering dye).

The hot method of natural food dye means placing the eggs in a single layer in a non-aluminum pan. The eggs are covered with 1 inch of water and vinegar is added to the water to help the color adhere to the eggs. The dye materials—which include spices, fruits, vegetables and more (see chart at below)—are also added, and the whole mixture is brought to a boil, then reduced to a simmer for 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the desired color.

Whatever food is used to dye eggs, vinegar should be added to help the color adhere (but if you forget to add vinegar, don't fret; the eggs will still be colored, but it likely will be lighter).

Which leads the cook to a familiar question: Can these dyed eggs be eaten? Well, it depends. Eggs should sit out no longer than two hours if they are to remain safe to eat. And hard-cooking them for more than 15 minutes will definitely toughen them up (though they will look beautiful). Also, some colors might seep into the egg white, which makes them less appetizing. So, you might want to use these colorful eggs for decoration only, or else refrigerate them until mealtime.

## Cold method of dyeing

If you want to eat your colored eggs—or if you want to dye them a second time for added interest—try the cold method of coloring. In this case, to prepare the dye separately, add the edible materials to water, along with vinegar (see chart for quantities). Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until the dye is the preferred color, 15 minutes or more. Remove from heat and cool; strain. Dip cooked eggs in the dye for at least 15 minutes. The longer the eggs sit in the dye, the richer the hue will be.

## Adapt the dye

If the dye isn't dark enough, add more ingredients to deepen the hue—or let the eggs soak in the color for hours or overnight (in the refrigerator, of course).

You don't necessarily have to stop after dyeing the eggs once. Dip them in a darker color for a second coating. (In this case, do not boil the eggs a second time; simply dip the egg in the second dye for 5 to 10 minutes). Some color combinations recommended by the Alberta (Canada) Egg Producers Board: coffee dye, then blueberry; turmeric and onion skins, followed by cranberries.

Once the dyed eggs are dry, they can be rubbed with vegetable oil for a sheen (if being used for decoration).

## Dress up the eggs












Martha Stewart wouldn't stop at homemade dye—that would be just the beginning. Try one of these steps to make even more beautiful eggs:

- **Onion wraps** (for a tie-dye effect): Rub clean, uncooked eggs with vinegar, then wrap in onion skins and bind with kitchen string or rubber bands. Simmer eggs in plain water for 20 minutes. Then remove onion skins.
- **Rubber bands:** Use to create contrasts. On a white egg, the rubber band will prevent color where it is located. On a colored (dry) egg, a band will give a stripe of the original color if the egg is redipped in another.
- **Patterns:** Rub the cooked, dyed egg to remove some of the color after it is dry, or drip additional color onto the dry egg to make a pattern. Or wrap in onion skins or tiny leaves after the egg has been colored, but before it has dried (this will add a texture to the dye pattern). You also can use a clean sponge and dab at the wet colored egg to add a stippled effect. If making dye from powdered spices, some residue may linger on the egg.
- **Marbleized:** Stir a tablespoon of vegetable oil into some natural food dye (or other dye). Dip the egg into it for a marbleized look. Once dry, it can be dipped into another color for additional decoration.
- **Mosaic:** It's not dyeing, of course, but since you're in the kitchen anyway you can decorate hard-cooked eggs by glueing on spices from the kitchen: star anise, peppercorns, powdered spices or even tiny pasta or rice (the latter two could be dyed first).

## Hints for the cook

- Wash uncooked eggs in mild soapy water before they are hard-cooked to remove any oily coating that might prevent the dye from adhering.
- To avoid staining your fingers, wear rubber gloves when working with reds, yellows and purples. And cover the table or counter with newspaper or a protective coating for the same reason.

## NATURAL DYES FOR EGGS

	<b>Pink/red:</b> Fresh beets, pickled beet juice, pickled red cabbage juice, cranberries, frozen raspberries
	<b>Orange:</b> Yellow onion skins, paprika
	<b>Deep yellow:</b> Ground turmeric
	<b>Pale yellow to light green:</b> Spinach leaves, Golden Delicious apple peels
	<b>Soft yellows:</b> Orange or lemon peels, carrots tops or shredded carrots, celery seed, ground cumin
	<b>Purple:</b> Red Zinger® tea (by Celestial Seasonings)
	<b>Blue:</b> Canned blueberries, blackberries, red cabbage leaves, purple or red grape juice
	<b>Beige to brown:</b> Strongly brewed coffee, tea, walnuts, dill seeds
	<b>Brown to orange:</b> Chili powdered, ground cumin

## Natural Food Dye

### **Makes 4 cups.**

Add more of the coloring agent for a deeper hue.

- 1 Tbsp. spice or 4 c. chopped fruit or vegetable, or more
- 4 c. water, or more
- 2 Tbsp. white vinegar (per 4 c. water)

Combine spice or foodstuff with water and vinegar. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 15 to 30 minutes. Eggs can be colored (and cooked) in the dye while it is being prepared. Or they can be hard-cooked in advance, then dipped into the prepared dye (which can be either cold or hot).

— *Lee Svitak Dean is at [Idean@startribune.com](mailto:Idean@startribune.com).*

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