

Easter Egg colors with Natural Dyes

Red with *Madder*

Violet with *Logwood*

Yellow with *Fusticwood*

Pink with *Cochineal*

Includes:

Cochineal, 1 oz. This is the fabulous dye that comes from a domesticated insect. Raised in the high Andes for thousands of years, it comes to us from a traditional family farm. These you will boil in water to make your own extract. "Natural Red Dye No. 4" it is now the standard red food colourant.

Logwood Extract, 1 oz. This is made from the heartwood of a tropical tree. It is used as a skin and hair dye, as a stain for microscope studies, and to color steel. It is also a medicinal tea, high in anti-oxidants. "Natural Black No. 4" it is also used by artists who mix their own paints.

Fusticwood, 4 oz, heartwood shavings, from trees grown in the Caribbean. These you will boil in plain water to make your own extract. It is used as a medicinal tea, as it is an immune system stimulant.

Madder Roots, 4 oz, chopped dried roots. These you will boil in plain water to make your own extract. Madder roots are the original root-beer! Madder root tea is used to dissolve calcium rich kidney stones, and to keep them from forming.

You will need:

Stainless steel, glass or enamel saucepans in which to boil the Madder, Cochineal and Fusticwood; and then to dye the Easter eggs in boiling water.

Step 1: Boil the Cochineal, Fusticwood and Madder

In separate pots, cover the dyestuffs with plenty of water. If you use all the dyestuff, use 1 qt of water for each. You can halve or quarter this, and use the rest another time. The dry dyestuff keeps for years.

Strain off the liquid – this is the dye – then you may reboil the dyestuff with more water to extract out more dye. It will become lighter each time, yet two or three more boilings will keep extracting colour.

Step 2: Mix the Logwood Extract with water.

For the full 1 oz, use about 1 quart of water. However it is very very strong, so recommended to first try just a half teaspoon for a dark colour on several eggs.

Stir to dissolve completely.

You can use just a part of the amount, the dry dye extract keeps for years.

Step 3: Boil the eggs in the dye.

This is the best way I know to make yummy hard-boiled eggs that aren't over or under cooked:

Put the eggs into a bowl of warm water. (This pre-warms the shells so they don't crack when put in the boiling dye.)

Boil the dye water. Turn off the heat.

Using a spoon, gently and carefully lower the eggs into the hot dye. Leave to cool for 20 minutes.

Turn them occasionally so they dye evenly.

After 20 minutes the eggs will be both cooked and dyed. They will safely store in the refrigerator for several days before eating, or several weeks if you aren't going to eat them.

More fun:

Re-use the dye for lighter shades!

Mix the dyes for different colors!

You can also use pre-boiled eggs and only submerge part of the egg at a time, so that multicolored eggs can be made.

For fancy Easter eggs that can keep forever, blow out the egg from the shell:

Using an ice pick or a nail, punch a hole in each end of the egg. Blow out the contents into a bowl and use for scrambled eggs or baking. Rinse the eggshell and dye as above, with no limits on the heat of the dyebath, nor how long it is in the dye.

Bonus: Indigo powder, 1 oz.

Indigo blue is really pretty. It does not dissolve in water, so I find the funnest way to get blue eggs is just to rub a small amount of the powder directly on the egg!

Kids love this because it is very messy! The blue powder will wash off your fingers with soap.

Shiney eggs trick: rub the dyed and dried eggs with a drop of vegetable oil. This makes the eggs glossy shine.

Kit and instructions by Cheryl Kolander, Senior Master Natural dyer, Aurora Silk.
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