

# Quick Guide: Spring's Family Holidays



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## Quick Tips

- While there's no reason to differentiate between girls' and boys' Easter baskets, doing so is a good way to make sure none is identical to another, and to promote smooth sailing while working on them.
- Depending on the number of kids who will participate in the egg hunt, dye several dozen ahead of time to hide in the backyard or in the house. A nearby park is a good place for the hunt, too. Some moms and dads like to hide plastic eggs.
- Matzohs, symbolizing the hastily prepared unleavened bread the Israelites ate on their escape to freedom, are the centerpiece of Passover.
- If you have an egg toss, make sure you do so outdoors (it's messy when the eggs break!) or at least in a garage or on a covered patio. Only use raw eggs for the toss; hard-cooked could hurt someone.
- You can buy an egg dying kit or use food coloring to dye eggs. To do so, mix a few drops of color with warm tap water and a 2 to 3 teaspoons of white distilled vinegar.
- During the Passover Seder, the extended family and friends gather around the table, where through stories, songs, and prayers, they relive the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.



## Kid-Decorated Easter Baskets

*You and the kids will have fun turning simple baskets into fanciful ones*

With a little imagination and a few supplies from the local craft shop, you and your kids can transform simple, plain, inexpensive baskets into Easter charmers. Make new ones every year or keep these as treasured keepsakes.

While there's no reason to differentiate between girls' and boys' baskets, doing so is a good way to make sure none is identical to another, and to promote smooth sailing while working on them.

### Bundle Up and Get to Work!

When little girls decorate their baskets, with or without adult help, think about sugar and spice and everything nice. Choose pretty decorations such as pink, white, yellow, or lavender ribbons and silk or paper flowers, pastel pompoms, and colorful beads in various shapes and sizes.

Use a large sewing needle threaded with a length of ribbon to weave ribbon through the basket—or use wired ribbon that twists and turns as you like it. Use one color or several to create a pleasing design. Narrow ribbons work best, but try wider ones if you have the right sized needle.

(Of course, small children need supervision when it comes to using sewing needles.)

Wrap the basket handle with a single color ribbon. You don't want the handle, which is grasped by small hands many times during the holiday, to be too fussy.

Use craft glue to anchor the ribbon to the bottom of one end of the handle and then wrap the ribbon tightly around the handle, overlapping it as you work to insure total coverage. Secure it with glue at the other end of the handle.

Artificial flowers, pompoms, and beads turn ordinary baskets into whimsical ones. A hot glue gun makes it easy to attach these to the base, handle, or edge of the basket. Other glue works, too, but is not as speedy or efficient as a glue gun.

Please be careful when using a glue gun—the glue is very hot and so only an adult should handle it.

### Boys' Easter Baskets

Little boys might prefer deeper colors for their baskets. Try blue, green and purple ribbons and weave them through the basket as described above. Wrap the handle of the basket with wide or narrow ribbon.

Use a glue gun to attach colored beads, plastic figures and animals - even a toy car or two. Glue the figures on the handle, along the base, or on the rim of the basket.

Make sure an adult operates the hot glue gun!

### Surprise Easter Baskets

Leave these adorable Easter baskets filled with grass for the Easter bunny to fill.

Or, if the Easter bunny supplies his own baskets, suggest that the kids use these when they hunt for eggs. They can also fill them with flowers for the Easter table. The little ones will be proud of their contribution to the holiday!



## Easter Fun and Games

*Roll out the eggs and let the games begin  
we promise a good time!*

Easter weekend is a great time for the first outdoor games of the season, and while we all hope for sunshine on Easter, if rain drops fall, transfer activities inside. Even an Easter egg hunt is fun indoors.

Depending on the number of kids who will be hunting, dye several dozen eggs ahead of time to hide in the backyard or in the house. A nearby park is a good place for the hunt, too.

Don't let the egg-centered fun begin and end with the Easter egg hunt. You can dye and decorate eggs on the spot, have an egg toss (raw eggs only!), and an egg race (hard-cooked eggs only!).

### The Egg Hunt

Once the eggs are hidden, the kids can hardly wait to start hunting. Both young and older children participate, with older children helping younger ones search high and low.

Determine the boundaries for the hunt. Let the kids know exactly what these are. Boundaries could be a fence, a large tree, the driveway, or other outposts.

Boundaries are equally important if the hunt is indoors. They could be certain rooms and levels.

Hide eggs at eye level or lower, when possible. Be sure the older children let the little ones find some of the "easy" eggs. These should be in plain sight and at low eye level.

You could pair up kids -- an older child with a younger one. Or divide the children into two groups to encourage teamwork.

Consider the following hiding places:

- Among tree roots.
- Tree branch hollows.
- Drain pipes.
- Bird baths and feeders.
- Door and window sills.
- Doorways of dog houses, gardening sheds, play houses.
- Wheelbarrows.
- Flower pots.
- Behind fenceposts.

### The Egg Toss

Egg tosses involve cleanup, so be sure to have this in an open space, preferably outdoors.

Line everyone in two facing lines so that everyone has a partner. Hand a raw egg to one person in each pair.

The goal is to toss the egg back and forth without dropping it. Begin the toss with everyone close together. After each successful exchange, both partners take a step backwards. Pairs are eliminated as the egg falls to the ground (it does not have to break). The last standing pair is the winner.

### The Egg Race

You will need lots of hard-cooked eggs and several adult monitors for this.

Similar to a potato race, kids line up in two or more lines. A basket is placed at a distance from each line and a hard-cooked egg is in front of each line.

The goal is to pick up each egg with a large spoon, run with it to the basket, and drop it in the basket. As soon as one child is successful, the next in line has a turn. (The adult monitor puts a new egg in place.)

The tricky part is that the kids can't use hands, feet, or any other body part to lift the egg off the ground. The first team to pick up all the eggs wins.



*Decorated eggs have long been a symbol of rebirth and springtime. Here are some ideas to make this year's extra-special!*

Decorated eggs symbolize spring around the world. We call them Easter eggs and decorating them is a treat every kid enjoys.

#### Preparing the Eggs

Put the eggs in a single layer in saucepan. Add enough tap water to cover by about an inch. Put the lid on the pan and bring the water to a boil. Immediately remove the pan from the heat and let it stand, covered, for about 15 minutes. Run cold water over the eggs or place them in ice water until completely cooled.

Hard cooking the eggs this way is gentler than boiling them. They are less apt to move around in the roiling water and crack.

If you feel ambitious, make hollow eggs. These are far more fragile than hard-cooked eggs but last from one year to the next — if properly and carefully handled and stored.

Wash a raw egg in warm water. When dry, use a long, sterilized needle or small metal skewer to prick a small hole in the narrow end. Make a larger hole in the rounder end. Carefully chip away bits of shell around the large hole until it's large enough to accommodate the tip of a turkey baster.

Shake the contents from the egg or use the baster to suck it out. Expel the air from the baster's bulb. Hold the bulb closed between your fingers and insert the tip of the baster into the egg. Release the bulb; it will suck up the yolk and whites.

#### Dying Basics

At Easter time it's easy to find egg dying kits for sale, but you can use ordinary food coloring, too. Squeeze a few drops into a cup of water mixed with 2 to 3 teaspoons of white vinegar. Make sure the water is warmer than the eggs (warm tap water works well).

Submerge hard-cooked eggs in the tinted water.

Whether you use commercial dye or food coloring, leave the egg submerged until it becomes a shade that you like. The longer the egg is in the dye, the darker it will be.

#### Decorating Ideas

There are all sorts of ways to decorate the eggs. For example, paint eggs with undiluted food coloring. Or use a clean sponge to sponge-paint the egg with food coloring.

Dye the eggs with several colors by dipping part of the egg into dyes of varying colors.

Once the eggs are dry, decorate with stickers. Or, remove stickers after dying to leave a white shape on the egg.

Wrap a rubber band tightly around an egg, dye the egg, let it dry, and then remove the band to see the lines left behind.

Glue faux gems, available at craft stores, on the eggs. Add extra glitz with gold and silver paint.

Before dying them, draw patterns or write names on the eggs with wax crayons. The wax repels the dye so the pattern shows up.

As a group activity, make egg faces. The first person puts on the eyes, the second adds the nose, and so on. This way, the eggs quickly take on characters of their own. Use markers or affix jiggly eyes, yarn hair, and other things found at craft stores.





## A Passover Seder for the Family

*The traditional Seder is a joyous spring meal designed for family celebration!*

A gaggle of giggling cousins, a rousing treasure hunt for much sought-after matzoh, songs, luscious treats...the Passover Seder is meant for childhood memories. No wonder it's the best-loved of the Jewish holidays. Most Jews — and many non-Jews — attend a Seder, the special meal eaten the first two nights of Passover, an eight-day holiday in March or April, depending on the lunar calendar.

Set in spring, the season of new life, Passover celebrates the rebirth of the Jews after their liberation from slavery. The large extended family and friends gather around the table, where through stories, songs, and prayers, they relive the Exodus from Egypt, and experience the universal struggle of all people to be free.

### Traditions and Rituals

Many traditions and rituals are specially designed to keep children alert and excited during the long meal. Symbolic foods on the Seder plate make the Passover narrative come alive. Bitter herbs, like horseradish, evoke the misery; salt water represents the tears of slavery. A delicious fruit and nut paste recalls the mortar used to build Pharaoh's cities.

Everyone shakes out ten drops from one of their four cups of wine. These recall the plagues visited on the Egyptians and remind celebrants that their happiness is diminished because their enemies suffered greatly.

Matzohs, symbolizing the hastily prepared unleavened bread the Israelites ate on their escape to freedom, are the centerpiece of Passover. Matzoh and meal ground from it replaces bread, flour, and all other grain products. Leavening agents, like yeast, are not permitted during the holiday.

### The Seder Menu

Passover restrictions inspire creative cooking. Gravies are thickened without benefit of flour or cornstarch but by cooking them down to concentrate flavors and then perhaps stirring in a puree of sweet braised garlic.

Traditional plain matzoh is transformed into fragrant flatbread by dampening the matzoh lightly with water, sprinkling it with with coarse salt and pepper, fresh rosemary or minced garlic before it's baked in a hot oven until toasty.

Fresh asparagus is served drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil and a squeeze of lemon juice, or might be topped with a mixture of matzoh meal, chopped hazelnuts or pistachios and olive oil and then toasted in a moderate oven until golden.

Matzoh ball soup, a great favorite during the holidays, is often brightened with fresh herbs such as dill, parsley, and chives.

While many people associate Seders with sweet Concord wine, there are excellent kosher dry varietals available. Why not offer your guests both? And have plenty of grape juice for the kids, as well as adults who don't drink.

Finally, bring springtime to the table with colorful bouquets of daffodils and tulips.

Then, as the Passover book, the Haggadah, says, "Let all who are hungry come and eat."





## Matzoh Ball-Chicken Soup

*Try this traditional Passover soup during the holidays or any time of year.*

Serves 8

Broth

3 1/2 pounds chicken, cut into large pieces

1 onion, unpeeled, halved

2 stalks celery, coarsely chopped

1 carrot, coarsely chopped

2 bay leaves

6 black peppercorns

Matzoh balls

2 large eggs

1 1/2 tablespoons chicken fat (from the broth above)

2/3 cup matzo meal

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons chicken broth (from the broth above)

1. For the broth: Remove the giblets from the chicken, discard the liver, and rinse the remaining giblets thoroughly. Put the chicken and the giblets in a large pot and add about 12 cups of water. Add the onion, celery, carrot, bay leaves and peppercorns. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, skimming off the foam and fat that rises to the surface.

2. Refrigerate for about 4 hours until a semisoft layer of fat forms on the surface. Skim off and discard the fat but reserve 1 1/2 tablespoons for the matzoh balls.

3. Reheat the broth and strain it through a colander into a large saucepan. Discard the chicken bones and skin, the vegetables, bay leaves and peppercorns. Reserve the cooked chicken meat for another meal.

4. For the matzoh balls, combine the eggs and chicken fat in a small bowl and stir until well blended. Stir in the matzoh meal, salt and parsley. Add the 2 tablespoons of chicken broth and stir until just combined. Chill the mixture for at least 30 minutes.

5. Pour about 6 cups of water into a saucepan and bring to a boil. Put the chicken broth over low heat and bring to a gentle simmer. Form the chilled matzoh mixture into 12 balls by rolling it between the palms of your hands. Slide the balls into the boiling water, 4 at a time, and poach for about 2 minutes or until they rise to the surface. Prepare the remaining matzoh balls in the same way.

6. Put the poached matzoh balls in the simmering chicken broth. Make sure everything is heated through before serving.



## Bread Machine Hot Cross Buns

*These yummy buns are traditionally served on Good Friday. They always include raisins or currants, although dried cranberries would taste good, too.*

### Makes 16 buns

- 3 large eggs
- 4 cups bread flour
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons fast-acting active dry yeast (1 packet)
- ¾ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ cup dark raisins'
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk or water
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract, optional

1. For the buns: Break 2 eggs into 2-cup measuring cup. Add enough water to measure 1 1/3 cups. Transfer to a bread machine with the flour, butter, salt, yeast, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Process the dough in the bread machine. Add the raisins 5 to 10 minutes before the last kneading cycle ends. Use the manual dough cycle, not the delay cycle.
2. Butter or spray lightly with flavorless vegetable spray 2 9-inch round pans, each about 1 ½ inches deep, or butter a baking sheet.
3. Remove the dough from the bread machine pan and let it rest for about 10 minutes on a lightly floured surface, covered with a kitchen towel.
4. Divide the dough into 8 equal pieces and shape each into a smooth ball. Arrange the balls about 1 inch apart in the round pans or about 2 inches apart on the baking sheet. Using scissors, snip a cross in the top of each bun. Cover with a kitchen towel and leave in a warm place for about 40 minutes to rise until doubled in size. The buns are fully risen when a small indentation in the dough does not spring back.
5. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
6. In a small bowl, whisk the remaining egg with 2 tablespoons of cold water. With a pastry brush, brush the tops of the buns with the egg wash. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Lift the buns from the pans and cool slightly on wire racks.
7. Meanwhile, stir together the confectioners' sugar and milk. Add the vanilla, if using. Add a little more milk or water if the icing is not smooth. Spread the icing over the cross on top of the buns and serve them warm.