

A FEW THINGS YOU PROBABLY ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT EASTER EGGS

Those who celebrate Easter often do so by boiling eggs, coloring eggs, hiding eggs, rolling eggs and eating eggs. But what do you look for when choosing eggs for Easter or everyday consumption? [Animal Welfare Approved](#) shares a few tips on finding the best tasting and healthiest eggs for your family and provides some ideas on how to heighten your enjoyment of this holiday that celebrates renewal and the coming of the spring season.

UNDERSTANDING EGG LABELS

Letting chickens move about freely and providing them with outdoor access dramatically cuts the risk of diseases like salmonella and *E. Coli* in eggs. When you're shopping for eggs, be sure to look for labels that say "pasture-raised." If you purchase your eggs at a farmers' market or through a CSA, be sure to ask the farmer about the pasture access available to the laying hens. For the [highest welfare standards](#) according to numerous independent sources, choose eggs that are Animal Welfare Approved.

Here are some labels to avoid:

"Cage-free" or **"free range"** egg labels can mean that chickens aren't caged, but may be trapped indoors in crowded conditions, and the risk of promoting disease still exists. In addition, producers who raise hens that lay "cage-free" eggs often trim the beaks off birds to keep them from fighting. This is a painful and stressful process for the bird.

"Natural" egg labels can mean anything. There are no laws or regulations regarding "natural" labels.

"Organic" egg labels fall under some regulations, but those rules don't do much to prevent disease. Chickens have to be fed an organic diet, but it has nothing to do with how they're kept. They can be cramped into battery cages and disease can still be spread due to confinement.

OTHER BENEFITS OF PASTURE RAISED EGGS

Research published by [motherearthnews.com](#) shows the nutritional value of eggs that come from pasture-raised hens is far superior to conventionally raised eggs. According to the research, pasture-raised eggs have:

- 4 times as much vitamin D
- 7 times more beta carotene
- One-third less cholesterol

- One-quarter less saturated fat
- Two-thirds more vitamin A
- 2 times more omega-3 fatty acids
- 3 times more vitamin E

TIPS FOR COOKING AND COLORING

- Boil your pasture raised eggs in a big pot using plenty of water.
- The water should cover the eggs by about an inch so when the water starts to boil and bubble, the eggs won't knock into each other and crack.
- Bring the water to a rolling boil over high heat, then promptly turn down the heat to a lower medium boil and cook for an additional 10 minutes.
- Remove from heat, and chill in ice cold water.
- Let them cool before coloring them.

NATURAL EGG COLORING IDEAS

Many have fond memories of Paas color tablets kits for egg coloring, but for something different, you may want to try some natural materials to color your eggs. (Then again, pasture-raised eggs can be so colorful in vivid shades of green and blue and brown that you may not want to.) Here's a list of some natural items you may already have on hand that produce some wonderful shades of color just perfect for any bunny's basket:

- BLUE- canned blueberries, grape juice
 - PINK- cranberries, beets
 - ORANGE- paprika, chili powder, cooked carrots
 - RED - canned cherries with juice, pomegranate juice, raspberries
 - GREEN-boiled spinach
1. Place eggs in a single layer in a pan. Add water until eggs are covered.
 2. Add about one teaspoon of vinegar.
 3. Add the natural dye of your choice from the list above. Use more dye material for more intense color.
 4. Bring water to a boil.
 5. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
 6. Remove the eggs from the liquid.
 7. Pat dry, cool and place in your basket.

Want to learn more about Animal Welfare Approved farmers and where to get these beautiful eggs? [Go to our online product directory](http://www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org/product-search) [http://www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org/product-search] and visit a farm, farmer's market or shop.

Animal Welfare Approved audits and certifies farms that raise their animals with the highest animal welfare standards, outdoors, on pasture or range. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has lauded these standards for two years running as being the most stringent when compared to other third-party certification programs. Visit www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org for an online directory of approved farms, as well as restaurants, shops and markets where AWA farmers' products are sold. Choose the one independent food label that means healthy, safe, environmentally responsible and humanely raised.

