



# Easter

Family Fun

# The Easter Meal

Hosting an Easter meal — whether brunch or dinner, for four or 40 — can be an overwhelming task. With planning and preparation, a lot of that stress can be alleviated. Consider the following tips and tricks for an enjoyable and memorable holiday.

## POTLUCK

Having everyone bring a dish is an excellent way to lessen some of the stress of hosting. Just remember to coordinate the meal. A host or hostess acts like a conductor at a symphony; everyone contributes, but the conductor brings all the pieces together.

Consider creating a spreadsheet with the names of every person attending, along with what they wish to bring, or use an online invitation service such as Evite, which keeps track of potluck sign-ups. This will eliminate duplicates and lead to a smooth process.

## EAT AL FRESCO

Take the meal outside for a change in holiday pace, if weather permits. April can bring a lot of rain or lingering snow, but if you are lucky to have an Easter full of the promise of spring and lots of sunshine, take advantage of the gift. Just be sure to consider your outside space.

## SET YOUR TABLE

Set your table the night before. This will save valuable time the next day and hopefully give you more time to chat with guests. If you are hosting more than six people, planning your seating arrangement also will take



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stress off of you and your guests.

The great thing about place cards is that guests know exactly where they should be the moment they approach the table.

## PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS

It is the small gesture that people remember. Greet your guests at the door.

Pay extra attention to the room temperature. Don't let

the cooking overheat the house, or an unusually cold spring put a chill in the air. Guests notice (and appreciate) being asked about their comfort.

And for a special touch,

warm the dinner plates. Just heat your oven to 150 degrees Fahrenheit with your plates inside for at least 10 minutes or until you are ready to serve. This will help keep the meal warm throughout dinner.

# 10 Easter Traditions

Creating family traditions centered around Easter is a great way to make the holiday more memorable for you and yours. Try any of the 10 innovative ideas below or adapt them with your own personal spin.



## 1. Make a blessings jar.

Take an old container such as a canning jar, and deem it the Jar of Blessings. Everyone in the family has to contribute to the jar every day for a week leading up to Easter. At Easter dinner, they are read. It will be fun to see what your loved ones say about how they have been blessed.



## 4. Enjoy some Easter fun and games.

Create fun crafts with your kids to make this holiday special. Make Easter bunnies out of pipe cleaners or decorate Easter eggs. Make up your own Easter games, such as Easter bingo, for an interactive way to get all ages involved in the fun.



## 2. Read Easter books.

Reading Easter books with your children is a great way to get into the spirit of Easter. Books on Easter range from the more spiritual relating the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, to stories about the Easter bunny, baskets or springtime.

## 3. The Easter basket.

Have your child decorate his or her own Easter basket. Have more than one child? Have your children decorate a basket for their sibling. This will help harness the spirit of Easter in your family.



## 6. Hunt for Easter eggs.

Find an Easter egg hunt in your community. If there isn't one, host one — even if it is only for your kids in your own backyard. Turn your egg hunt into a scavenger hunt for a way to make the activity both fun and educational.

## 7. Plant an Easter garden.

Use the holiday to jump start a family garden. Pick a patch of dirt in your back yard and plant marigolds or herbs such as basil, rosemary and dill. Limited on space? Use a decorative planter for your deck or smaller containers

that will sit on a windowsill. Your garden can be as big or as small as you choose.

## 8. Create an egg time machine.

Have your child write a letter to himself and fold it into a plastic egg. Next Easter, hide it in your own family Easter egg hunt for him to find. It will be fun for him to see what he was thinking a year ago, or how he's grown.

## 9. Tell Easter stories.

Easter means something different for everyone. For many, Easter is a deeply personal and religious holiday. Others choose to focus less on the day's religious meaning and more on spending quality time with family. Storytelling is a great way to share what Easter means to you with those you love. Have your children make up stories about how the Easter Bunny came to be, or share scripture that conveys the story of Easter.

## 10. Hand out the aprons.

Organize a family baking event this Easter for a special — and delicious — touch. Make sugar cookies in the shape of bunnies, chicks and eggs and decorate them together. There is more than one way to decorate an egg, so get creative.



# Easter Decor Ideas

Christmas and winter decorations are put away, and it's time to reintroduce spring into your home. Spring decor tends to take advantage of fresh foliage and bright colors.

Where winter decor can feel bulky and take up more space, spring decor is best when it's much more understated.

## THE TABLE

Colored eggs can make great centerpieces for your Easter celebration. Pick a color and dye eggs in varying shades for a bold and festive feel. Consider using decorated Easter eggs as place cards at your Easter table. They will add a pop of something bright to each plate, and if they are wooden or plastic, you can have each guest take home an egg as a small gift.

Succulents and moss also can make a great centerpiece display because they grow so low to the soil. After the meal, the vessels can be placed in other rooms of the house as more general spring decor. The best part: they are super easy to take care of and won't turn brown on you anytime soon.

## THE HOME

Don't underestimate the power of fresh flowers. Plant tulips or daffodils in inexpensive terra cotta pots. You can leave the pots as is or spray paint them with chalkboard paint for fun labeling and doodles. Once the bulbs have bloomed, transfer them to your garden or front lawn so you can enjoy them for years.



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Bring the garden inside with other accouterments, such as using rain boots or watering cans as a vase or creating a wreath out of clothespins. Don't overlook small lawn ornaments, which can have a weathered and vintage feel to them. Place them on an end

table, or use them as a door-stop.

## THE YARD

It's spring cleaning time. Obviously, many of the decor ideas above will look beautiful in your backyard or front lawn. Planters with fresh flow-

ers always freshen up an entry, and even garden hand tools, such as a spade or rake, placed together in a wooden bucket or empty terra cotta pot can serve double duty as decor.

Don't underestimate what a good spruce-up will do to

your outdoor space. Remove the remnants of winter by raking up dead leaves, sweeping the walkway and cleaning out garden beds. Winter hibernation is coming to an end, and your yard will feel welcoming and new with a little attention and care.

# How to Color an Egg

We are all probably familiar with the process of vinegar and food coloring tabs to dye an egg. This Easter, take your eggs to the next level with one of the following creative techniques.

## CHALKBOARD PAINT

Buy chalkboard paint and completely coat the eggs. The eggs then become a reusable surface. Getting bored of a certain design? Erase and start over. This can lead to hours of egg-coloring fun.

## WASHI TAPE

Washi tape is a type of craft tape made of natural fibers. It resembles masking tape in feel but comes in every design imaginable. Its durability and fun colors make it a perfect choice for decorating eggs. Pick several patterns and cut each piece in a fun design before adhering to the egg. Parents will be thankful that there is no dye to leave stains and no liquid to be spilled.

## CRAFT PAPER

Time to transform those eggs into something else. By cutting and pasting craft paper to hard-boiled eggs, the eggs can instead become a bird, flower or bunny rabbit. For younger children, parents can pre-cut the designs.

## TATTOOS

Temporary tattoos can be an exciting way to personalize Easter eggs. You can find them in most any character or design now that online design platforms are big parts of our life, and the smooth surface of eggs make them a cinch to adhere.

## ADD SOME SCIENCE

Take this holiday to also teach the little ones in your life about color. Prepare dyes in primary colors and dip eggs in one color, and then another, to show them which colors to combine to make new ones.



## STAY MONOCHROMATIC

Picking one color and experimenting with various hues can create a bold yet cohesive look. Try dying several eggs various shades of the same color to cre-

ate an ombre effect when they are lined up.

## GO NATURAL

Use vegetables such as spinach, red

cabbage, beets and dill seeds to color your eggs. Not only will this allow you to save money on store-bought dyes, but natural dyes will give your eggs a richer, deeper color.

# Easter Fun Facts

To better understand how Easter is celebrated across the country (and for a little fun) consider the following statistics about this springtime holiday.

## TREATS AND EATS

- According to Just Born Candy Co., the company responsible for giving us marshmallow Peeps, Americans consume an average of 1.5 billion of the iconic fluorescent puffs each Easter season.

- 52 percent of Americans prefer their chocolate bunnies and eggs to be filled with a cream or caramel, while 32 percent of Americans prefer their eggs and bunnies solid and another 16 percent want them hollow, according to the National Confectioners Association.

- The first chocolate eggs were made in Europe in the 19th century and are the most popular Easter treat to this day. In fact, Easter is the second top-selling confectionery holiday behind Halloween.

## EASTER TRADITIONS

- The National Confectioners Association reports that 77 percent of Americans buy or put together Easter baskets for their children, 79 percent of Americans dye or color Easter eggs, and



71 percent of Americans hunt for Easter eggs.

- More than \$17 billion was spent celebrating the holiday in 2016, according to a Wallet Hub report, with more than \$2 billion spent on candy and more than \$5 billion spent on the holiday feast.

- The National Retail Federation reports that 57 percent of Americans visited

with friends and family, 50 percent went to church and 12 percent opened gifts on Easter in 2016.

## WHITE HOUSE EASTER EGG ROLL

- The Easter egg roll hosted by the White House is arguably the most famous in the United States. The event was created under President

Rutherford B. Hayes in 1878 for children who were not allowed to roll their eggs on the lawns of the U.S. Capitol.

- Each year, after the event, every child under the age of 12 is given a wooden keepsake egg inscribed with the event's theme and the signatures of the president and first lady. The tradition of wooden eggs began with President Ronald

Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan, who hosted a hunt for wooden eggs with signatures of famous people on them.

- President Dwight D. Eisenhower revived the White House Easter Egg Roll after the tradition had been stopped for 12 years due to war, food conservation and then renovations to the White House.

# Lent Sacrifices

If you are unfamiliar with the term, Lent is a ritual practiced by many denominations of Christianity focused on reflection and penance. For six weeks (between Mardi Gras and Easter) followers practice some form of fasting or abstinence. For most people today, this comes in the form of foods, behaviors or vices.

Lent offers families the chance to teach their children about the importance of sacrifice. There are many ways to get your kids involved in this practice, so get creative this year and think of ways to include the whole family.

## MOST COMMON LENT CHOICES

Last year, Time magazine published a study conducted by Google, which reported the item people are most interested in giving up for Lent by state — including the District of Columbia. Here's a look at Lent for 2016.

Fifty-one percent of states were interested in giving up food in some fashion, with 24 percent vowing to give up something sweet. They included:

- Montana
- Florida
- Ohio
- Utah
- Hawaii
- Wisconsin
- Minnesota
- Wyoming
- Vermont
- North Carolina

16 percent of states were interested in giving up alcohol, including:

- New Jersey
- Texas
- Illinois
- South Carolina
- Arkansas
- Maine
- Michigan
- New York

Eight percent of states were interested in giving up their social media, including:

- Georgia
- Oregon
- Massachusetts
- Tennessee

There also were a few outliers. Both

South Dakota and Maryland wanted to give up coffee more than anything else, Washington said goodbye to dating, and Delaware abstained from the Internet.

Idaho avoided Netflix, and Kansas intended to give up makeup. Oklahoma and Virginia were most interested in abstaining from fear and self-criticism, respectively.



# Mardi Gras 101

Before one deprives himself for the greater good of the community during Lent, a party must commence. The name of this party is Mardi Gras. Translated, Mardi Gras means “Fat Tuesday” and is meant to be the final celebration before Lent.

While most people in the United States recognize New Orleans, La. as the place to celebrate — attracting more than 1.4 million people each year — it is far from the only carnival worth traveling for. Read on for a look at Mardi Gras celebrations around the globe, including family-friendly options that are annually enjoyed by revelers of all ages.

## MOBILE, ALA.

While New Orleans gets all the glory in the United States, and is thought of first as the “go-to” celebration of Mardi Gras, Mobile, Ala., earns the title of the oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the country. It is considered a city-wide holiday, with dozens of parades and black-tie balls and entertains 1 million people every year.

## RIO DE JANEIRO

Mardi Gras is known as Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, and lasts officially for five days and unofficially for weeks. The city, in fact, is known as “Carnival capital of the world,” and the celebration brings in more than half a million people from outside of Brazil each year.

Rio has gained international attention, especially from its hosting of the 2016 Summer Olympics, which helped promote the city’s natural beauty to the global masses.

## NICE, FRANCE

The Mardi Gras celebration in Nice lasts 15 days. Why not, with the moderate temperatures during the winter months, provided by its location in the French Riviera? The don’t-miss feature of this celebration is the Battle of the Flowers. During the parades throughout the festival, performers toss thousands of flowers into the crowds, totaling more than 100,000 by the end of the celebration.

