Easter Egg Safety Tips  

 Sometimes eggs are decorated, used as decorations and hunted at Easter. Here are some safety tips for Easter eggs.

 Dying Eggs: After hard cooking eggs, dye them and return them to the refrigerator within 2 hours. If eggs are to be eaten, use a food-safe coloring. As with all foods, persons dyeing the eggs should wash their hands before handling the eggs.

 Decorations: One Easter bread recipe is decorated with dyed, cooked eggs in the braided bread. After baking, serve within 2 hours or refrigerate and use within 3–4 days.

 Blowing out Eggshells: Because some raw eggs may contain Salmonella, you must use caution when blowing out the contents to hollow out the shell for decorating, such as for Ukrainian Easter eggs. Use only eggs that have been kept refrigerated and are uncracked. To destroy bacteria that may be present on the surface of the egg, wash the egg in hot water and then rinse in a solution of 1 teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach per half cup of water. After blowing out the egg, refrigerate the contents and use within 2–4 days.

 Hunting Eggs: The USDA does not recommend using hard cooked eggs that have been lying on the ground, because they can pick up bacteria, especially if the shells are cracked. If the shells crack, bacteria could contaminate the inside. Eggs should be hidden in places that are protected from dirt, moisture, pets and other sources of bacteria. The total time for hiding and hunting eggs should not exceed 2 hours. The “found” eggs must be washed, re-refrigerated and eaten within 7 days of cooking.

 Pack Dates and Sell-by Dates

 According to the USDA, “Many eggs reach stores only a few days after the hen lays them. Egg cartons with the USDA grade shield are safe for up to 3 weeks after the egg was laid. The ‘sell-by’ date on the carton tells stores and consumers how long the eggs are safe for eating. The sell-by date is the ‘last day recommended for use’ for the egg. After the sell-by date, the eggs are still safe to eat, but the quality may be reduced.” 

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 According to the USDA, “Many eggs reach stores only a few days after the hen lays them. Egg cartons with the USDA grade shield on them must display the “pack date” (the day that the eggs were washed, graded and placed in the carton). The number is a three-digit code that represents the consecutive day of the year (the “Julian Date”) starting with Jan. 1 as 001 and ending with Dec. 31 as 365. When a “sell-by” date appears on a carton bearing the USDA grade shield, the code date may not exceed 45 days from the date of pack.”

 Place within USDA inspection are governed by the state laws where the eggs are packed and/or sold. Most states require a number to be described in this article. For more information about state egg laws, contact your state’s Department of Agriculture.

 How to Keep Eggs

 USDA advises: “Always purchase eggs before the “Sell-By” or “EXP” date on the carton. After the eggs reach home, refrigerate the carton in the original carton and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator, not in the door. To keep hard-cooked eggs within 3–5 weeks of the date you purchase them. The ‘sell-by’ date will usually expire during that length of time, but the eggs are perfectly safe to use.”

 Use of either a “sell-by” or an “expiration” (EXP) date is not federally required but may be required in some states.

 If “by” you have an egg you have removed from the carton and no longer know when it was purchased, it may be difficult to determine its freshness,” according to Marcia Greenblum, MS, RD, Associate Director, Education Outreach, Nutrition and Food Safety, Egg see EGGS on next page

 Deviled eggs make a quick main dish for a light meal, especially if you have hard-cooked the eggs in advance. Here’s a simple recipe you can make earlier in the day, saving you even more minutes at mealtime.

 Deviled Eggs

 Serving Size: 1 egg (two halves) • Yield: 6 servings

 6 large hard-boiled and peeled eggs
 1/4 cup mayonnaise
 1/8 teaspoon salt
 1/8 teaspoon pepper

 Slice eggs into halves lengthwise. Remove yellow yolks and save whites. Place yolks in a one- quart zip lock style bag along with the remaining ingredients (except the egg whites). Press out air. Close bag and knead (much together) until ingredients are well blended. (Note: you could also put yolks in a bowl with other ingredients (except the egg whites), and mix together well until they look like a paste).

 Push contents toward one corner of the bag. Cut about 1/2 inch off the corner of the bag. Squeeze the bag gently, fill reserved egg white halves with the yolk mixture. (Note: If you used a spoon, you can spoon the yolk mixture into the egg whites. Or, a small cookie scoop may be used to fill eggs.)

 Chill to blend flavors.

 Nutrition Facts: Calories, 110; Carbohydrate, 0g; Dietary Fiber, 0g; Sugars, 0g; Protein, 6g