

How to Make a Ukrainian Easter Egg

Step 1

Preparation of Materials

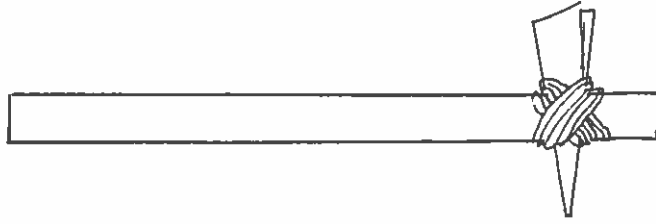
1. Eggs

This batik method of decorating may be used on several kinds of eggs. Duck, goose, and chicken eggs are good as long as they are fresh and the shell is smooth and unblemished. Ukrainian people generally use chicken eggs. We prefer to purchase them from the farm but commercially washed eggs may also be used. If washing is necessary rinse carefully, without rubbing, in a quart of warm water which includes one tablespoon of white vinegar. Avoid using soap or detergent. Blot the eggs with a clean cloth. We use raw eggs because they are traditionally used for decorative purposes and not meant to be eaten. Boiling the eggs causes a small amount of water to seep under the shell. This can damage the design in a few weeks time.

The whole raw eggs will keep indefinitely if the shell is in good condition, so, before we begin, we hold the egg up to a light and check for weak spots or hairline cracks. Be very selective when choosing your eggs. They should be at room temperature before decorating to avoid sweating, because wax will not adhere to a wet surface.

2. Kistka (stylus)

The kistka is a pen which writes with melted wax. This tool consists of a metal funnel attached to a stick which is wrapped with copper wire. The wire is used to keep the tool hot and to hold the metal tip steady. Kistkas come in sizes which write lines of fine, medium, and heavy widths. Experiment on a practice egg to get used to the kistka. Heat the head of the kistka directly in the flame. When hot, scoop a



small portion of beeswax (about the size of a BB shot) into the larger part of the funnel and begin to write on the egg. We use long strokes rather than short sketchy lines. When we use a new kistka and wax, the first lines are almost transparent. Gradually, the wax will turn black from the carbon in the flame. By holding the kistka perpendicular to the egg the wax flows more evenly and makes a smoother line.

The kistka may drip wax if overheated or overloaded. You will learn to control this with practice. If the kistka should start to burn, quickly blow it out. Eventually the wax will protect the wood from burning. Impurities in the wax and soot from the candle cause the kistka to become clogged occasionally. To clean the kistka, scoop the tip full of *candle*



wax, heat in the frame, and tap against a newspaper until it is empty. The funnel is clean if you can see through it.

3. Candle

The candle is used to heat the funnel part of the kistka. It is better not to use a brand new tall candle because you'll have to reach up too high! This is a good chance to use up the short candles you may have stored away.

4. Beeswax

The beeswax is used because it has a high melting point making it possible to get even lines which will not smear. If you use candle wax and place the egg in the dye bath, the dye would seep through and spoil the design. Beeswax prevents this from happening. Black wax is used for the electric kistkas.

5. Dyes

Mix dyes according to the directions given on the envelope. Use clean wide mouth pint jars (salad dressing and peanut butter jars are excellent). You will want to cover the dyes when you are not using them. It is very important to allow the dyes to cool to room temperature. Be sure to follow directions carefully for each color, as certain colors do not take vinegar. Dyes may be stored and used for more than one season. Vinegar may be added several times during the life of the dye. After dipping several dozens eggs (seven to ten) the dye mixture may need to be replaced.

6. Spoons

You will need a tablespoon or a teaspoon to dip the eggs into each color.

7. Working area

Cover a table with newspapers and place some paper towels where you will rest the egg as you work. Paper towels will also be needed to blot the egg dry when you remove it from the dye. It is possible to re-use the towels provided you use

them to blot the same color each time. This way you can conserve towels. Try to get a desk lamp so you will have a bright light. It is important to see well. You may want to set your jars on a tray for easy mobility and storage.



8. Soft cloth or tissue

This will be used for wiping the melted wax from the egg when you are in the final step.

9. Gloss Coating

Clear gloss varnish, shellac, or art spray may be used. Do not use any varnish which is water soluble. If cleanup is with soap and water, do not use it. Varnish and shellac are available in hardware and paint stores. Art spray is available in hobby or art supply stores.

10. Pencil

A hard #3 pencil is best for drawing the basic dividing lines on the white eggs before you begin to apply the wax. Using a pencil however, is optional.

11. Paint Brush

Occasionally, a small area on your design can be filled in with a fine paint brush or a cotton swab.

12. Egg Rack

This rack is used when you wish to melt the wax from the egg and also when the gloss is drying. It is a board with nails pounded into it to form triangles to hold the eggs. You may use a piece of heavy cardboard instead of a board.



Step 2

Application of Designs

Place your arms on the table holding the egg on a paper towel. Starting at the top of the egg, hold the lead pencil steady in one hand and rotate the egg in the other making a light line lengthwise.

Again at the top, draw another light line crossing the first at right angles. The egg will now be divided into quarters. (Figure 1)

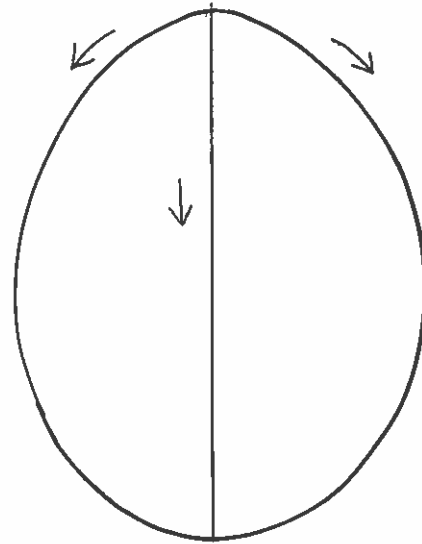
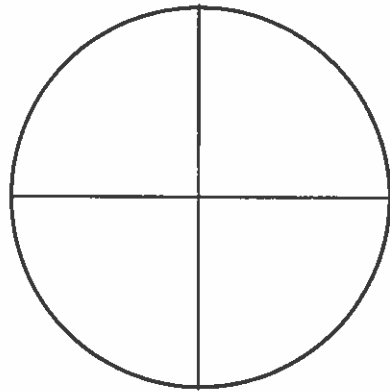


Figure 1 as seen from the top.

Figure 1



Now, draw a horizontal line around the middle of the egg, dividing the egg into eight equal parts. Remember, never erase pencil marks on the shell, for erasures will cause smudging. (Figure 2)

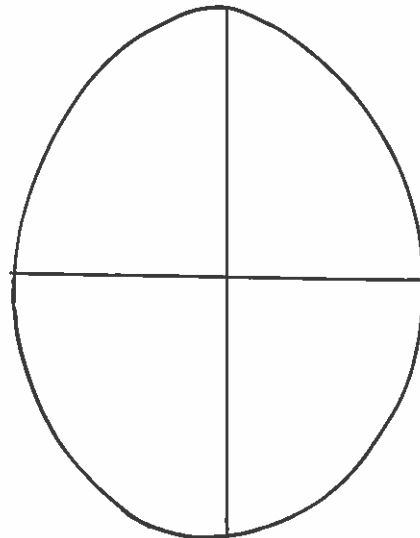


Figure 2

The next step is to draw diagonal lines beginning at the center and, with a long stroke, divide each section again forming a basic pattern with eight divisions on each side of the egg. (Figure 3)

These lines are drawn to give you a framework from which to form your full design.

You are now ready to apply the wax to the design. With the heated kistka, cover the pencil lines with long strokes. Try to relax your hand and not press the tool into the shell.

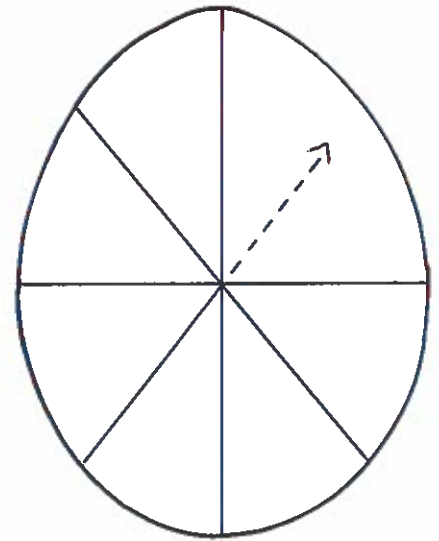


Figure 3

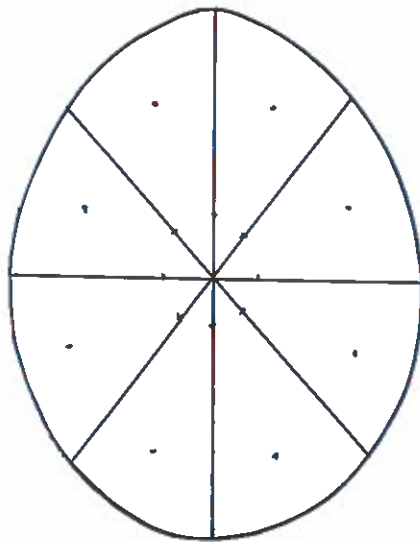


Figure 4

The star pattern is a favorite. Put dots on each of the sections equal distance from the center as indicated. (Figure 4)

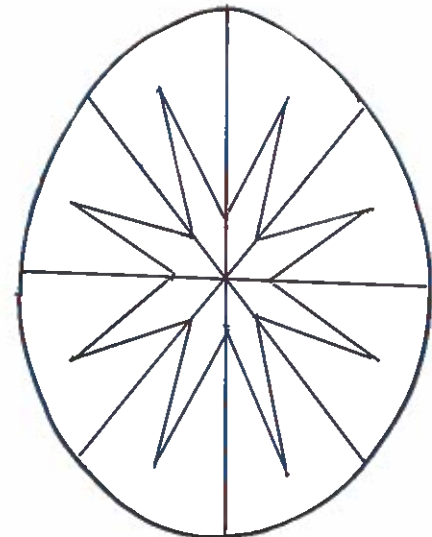


Figure 5

Connect the dots with wax lines forming a star as seen in (Figure 5). All these wax lines will remain white in the completed design.

Place the egg on a spoon and ease it into the yellow dye. In approximately five to ten minutes the egg may be removed from the dye and patted dry. Do not rub.

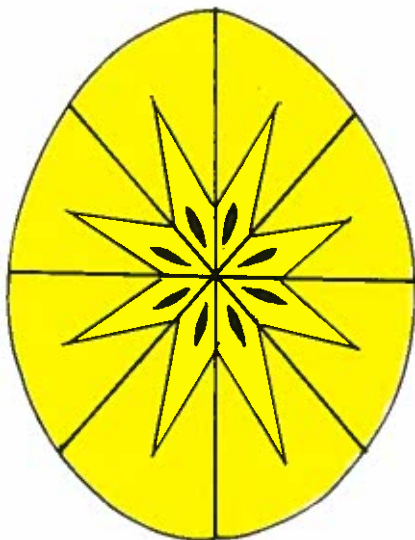


Figure 6

Wherever wax is applied to the yellow egg, the areas will remain yellow in the final design. Following the next figure, make petals in each section of the star. Fill them in solidly with wax. Do this on both sides of the egg. (Figure 6)

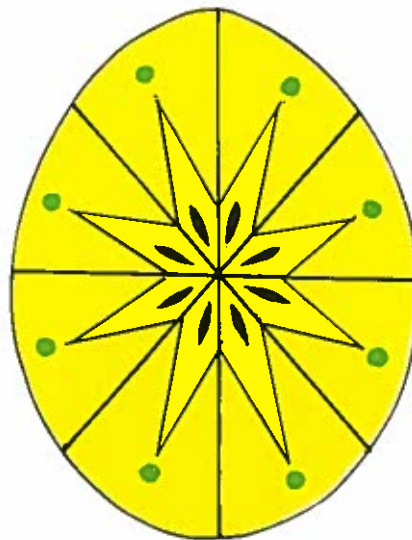


Figure 7

For applying green to the design, we use a small paint brush, cotton swab or a toothpick. Apply a small amount of blue or green dye to the design at the outside tip of the points. Blot them dry with a clean tissue. (Figure 7)

The color from the blue dye on the yellow egg will produce a beautiful green. Don't be concerned if the blue dye smears a bit.

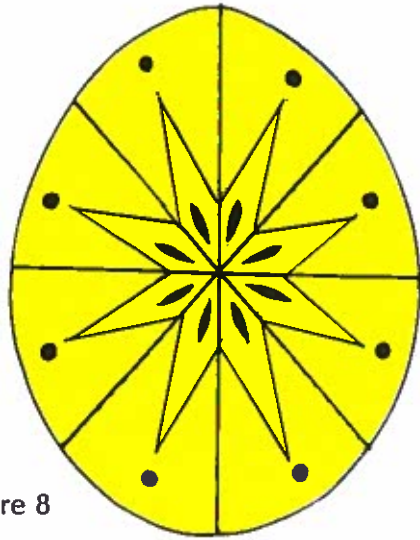


Figure 8

Now cover each dot with wax. The orange dye will cover over any green color not covered with wax. (Figure 8).



Figure 9

Next dip the egg into the orange dye. In five to ten minutes, remove it and pat dry with a clean tissue. With a kistka, draw a fringe on each line leading away from the star as seen in (Figure 9).



Figure 10

The egg is now ready for the red dye! Proceed to dye the egg in the red dye, then pat dry. Fill in the entire star with a coat of wax. If it is easier, you may cover one section at a time. Don't worry about covering over the inner lines of the star or the petals with wax. This is the way to do it correctly. Try to cover it solidly, leaving no spaces uncovered. It's a little like coloring in a coloring book. Fill it in completely as seen in (Figure 10).

Now we suggest that you dip the egg into the black dye. After ten minutes or longer, the egg may be removed and patted dry. Your egg is now finished as far as applying the design is concerned. The exciting moment has now come. You must melt the wax in order to see the colors beneath.

When we demonstrate how to make decorated Ukrainian eggs we often melt the egg in the flame of the candle. This is done by carefully holding the egg into the side of the flame until it "looks wet" (about two or three seconds).





Then, with a clean soft cloth, wipe off the wax. This is indeed an exciting step for all the work you have done comes to colorful life in your hand. Be careful not to hold the egg over the flame because carbon will collect on the shell and darken the design. Also do not attempt to heat too large a portion of the egg at one time.

Your finished egg will be a pleasant surprise! (Figure 11)

Step 3 Completion of the Egg

Since we make dozens of eggs, we use a faster method for melting the wax. A board with 1½ inch nails grouped in sets of three is used. The egg is placed into a preheated oven set at 180° fahrenheit. The eggs are then allowed to heat gently for fifteen to twenty minutes. The oven door should be kept open. We are careful to *check from time to time so that the eggs do not become too hot*. When they are warm and look glossy we take them out one at a time from the oven and wipe off the melted wax with a clean cloth. This is where old pajamas and T shirts really come in handy. After all of the eggs are wiped dry and cooled, they may be varnished in the following manner.

First, spread some newspapers on the



Figure 11

oven door, open a small can of clear gloss varnish, turn the heat to the "off" position. Then take one egg at a time and gently, with your fingers, apply a thin coat of varnish. Make sure you cover the whole egg and then place it back on the rack in the oven to

dry. Keep the oven door ajar slightly while drying the eggs. It will probably take several hours for the eggs to dry. When the eggs are dry, they are ready to enjoy! The decorated egg, though fragile, will keep for years, long after its contents dry out.



Suggested Designs

On the following pages you will find the step-by-step diagrams of each of these eggs in corresponding order. Mrs. Luciw has suggested a good variety of designs for the serious beginner.

In the diagrams, beginning on page 62, the first drawing shows the design that should be applied to the white egg. The second drawing shows the lines that should be added to the design after the egg has been dipped into the yellow dye. The third drawing shows the lines that should be added after the egg has been dipped into the third color, and so on, depending upon the number of colors. The darkest color is always the last.

The egg is then ready to be melted and varnished. Each individual egg has a suggested final color. However, you may choose any final color that you prefer.



