

UKRANIAN EASTER EGGS (PYSANKA) SUPPLIES AND PREPARATION

***EGGS:** Choose smooth, fresh eggs. Rinse in a solution of 1 quart tepid water mixed with ¼ cup white vinegar. This will remove any chemicals used to clean eggs and help eggs to absorb color better. Air dry. Allow eggs to come to room temperature before decorating.

***KISTKY:** (Stylus) There are 3 sizes – fine, medium, and heavy. Electric kistky are available (you need black wax to use with electric kistky).

***CANDLES:** Used to melt bees wax. Old candle stubs are great. I prefer to use holder with a lip so that you can rest stylus on it.

***BEES WAX:** Has a high melting point which allows it to flow without smearing or smudging. Candle wax or paraffin will not give the same clear effect. Bees wax will blacken from candle soot (this is a good thing as it makes it easier to see where you have applied wax).

***DYES:** Aniline dyes are used. They should not be used to color eggs that are to be eaten because they are chemical dyes rather than vegetable dyes. Mix dyes with boiling water (distilled water is preferred) according to package directions. Some colors require vinegar to be added (use white vinegar). Use clean wide mouth jars – glass is preferred but plastic is ok to store dyes in (do not add boiling water to plastic jars). Make dyes fresh each season. Vinegar may be added occasionally to dyes which require it. (Vinegar helps eggs absorb dye better.)

***SPOONS OR EGG DIPPERS:** One for each color.

***EGG RACK:** Made from nails and board. Form triangles with nails to hold eggs.

***WORKING AREA:** Use newspapers to cushion area. Cover with a paper towel to prevent smudges from newspaper.

***PAPER TOWELS:** Used to blot dye from eggs and wiping wax from eggs.

***VARNISH:** Use clear liquid varnish or polyurethane to finish eggs.

***PENCIL:** Draw lines lightly – they will not be seen on finished eggs. Do not erase lines from egg as this will prevent eggs from absorbing dye.

***EGG BLOWER:** Never blow out decorated eggs until after they have been varnished. (Dyes are water soluble and will run.) If you blow eggs before decorating, hole(s) must be covered with wax before dyeing. If holes are not completely sealed, eggs will fill with dye. Blown eggs will also float so they will have to be held down.

***COTTON SWABS:** Cotton swabs may be used to add touches of color.

***STORAGE:** Whole eggs should not be stored in styrofoam egg cartons or in an enclosed area such as a china cupboard. Turn eggs every couple of months to allow egg to dry out evenly.

EGG DECORATING RITUAL:

Before a Ukrainian woman could make *pysanky*, she was supposed to be in a perfect spiritual state of mind. The previous day was spent peacefully: She would avoid gossip, deal with her family patiently and cook a good dinner.

Pysanky were made at night after the children were asleep. Only women in the family could work together and on one else was allowed to peek, since the purpose of creating *pysanky* was to transfer goodness from the household to the designs and push away evil. This was a mystical expression and not a social event. The fresh eggs were gathered from hens where a rooster was in residence, for according to belief, if *pysanky* were made on non-fertile eggs, there would be no fertility in the home.

The process took several evenings to finish. In a large family, 60 *pysanky* would be completed by Holy Thursday.

HERE IS A PARTIAL LIST OF HOW THE *PYSANKY* WOULD BE USED:

1. One or two were given to the priest.
2. Three or four were taken to the cemetery and placed on graves of the family.
3. Ten to fifteen were given to small children and God-children.
4. Ten to twelve were exchanged by the unmarried girls with the eligible young men in the community.
5. Several were saved to place in the coffin of loved ones who might die during the coming year.
6. Several were saved to keep in the home for protection from storms and fires.
7. Two or three were placed in the trough where the animals ate, so they would have many young.
8. At least one egg was placed beneath the bee hive to insure a good harvest of honey.
9. One was saved for each grazing animal to be taken out to the fields with the shepherds in the spring.


Everyone from the oldest to the youngest received a *pysanka* for Easter.

"PYSANKY" (EASTER EGGS)


Over 2000 years ago, before the time of Christ, people decorated eggs believing that great powers were embodied in eggs. To them eggs symbolized the release of the earth from the shackles of winter and the coming of spring with its promise of new hope, new life and prosperity. With the advent of Christianity, Easter eggs symbolized the Resurrection and a promise of eternal life. Legend has it that as long as pysanky are decorated, goodness will prevail over evil throughout the world. Pysanky are not made to be eaten but given as gifts or exchanged with friends.


Dots: represent stars in heaven or
Mary's tears at Christ's crucifixion :::


Pine needles: long life, youth, health <<<<<


Flower: life, growth, love, charity 

Ram's Horn: strength, leadership 


Star: God's love toward man, purity and life 

Fish net: Christ asked apostles to be fishers of men 

Triangles: groups of 3-Holy Trinity/ father, mother, child/birth, life, death 


Diamonds: knowledge 


Empty rose: beauty, wisdom 


Fish: ancient symbol for Christ 


Ladders: prayers and getting to heaven 

Horse: wealth, and prosperity 



Rooster: symbolizes a rich married life with the blessing of many children 

Hen: fertility 

Water: wealth (no crops without rain) 

Wolves teeth: loyalty, wisdom, firm grip 

Crosses: Christ's crucifixion and resurrection or 4 corners of the earth


Circles: symbol for protection 

Black: eternity, darkest time before dawn

Purple: fasting, faith, patience, trust

Red: happiness, hope, passion

Dark Green: bountifulness, hope + victory of life after death

Blue: wishes for good health

Light green: spring, new growth, hope

White: purity, innocence, birth

Royal Blue: royal color, higher life and trust

Brown: Mother earth and her gifts, also a color of harvest

Dark Red: harvest color, gathering of fruit in fall

Orange: strength and endurance

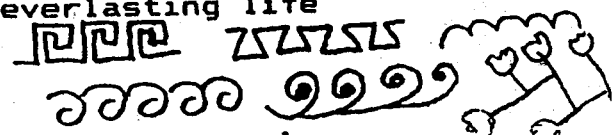
Yellow: light, purity, youth, happiness, hospitality

Gold: spirituality, wisdom

Pink: success, contentment

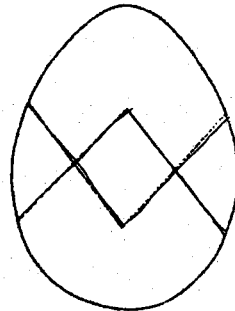
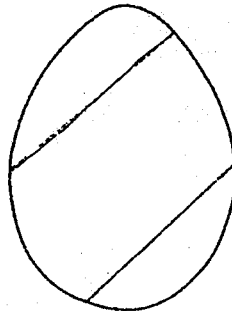
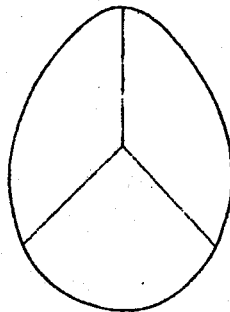
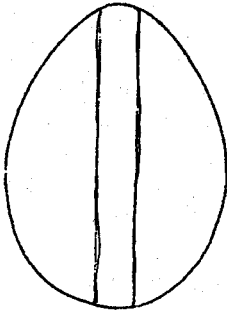
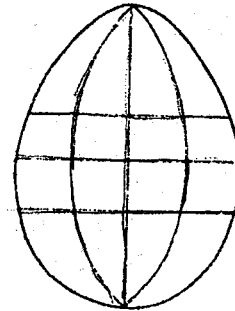
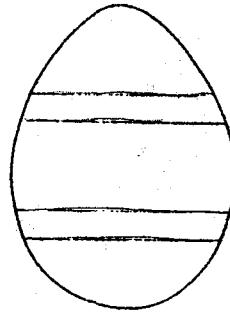
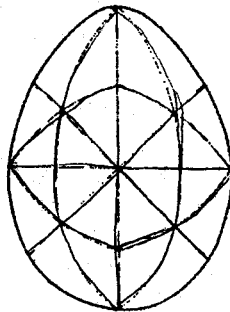
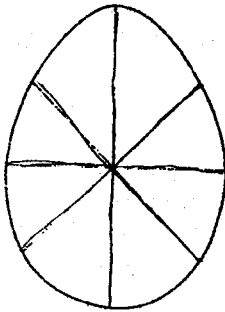
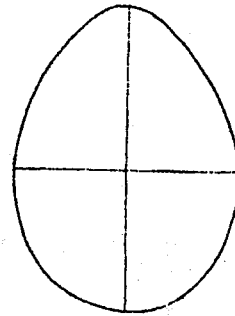
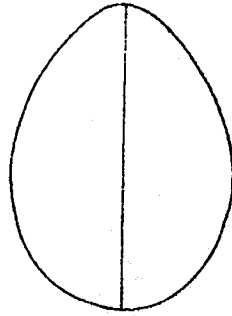
4 or more colors: family happiness, peace and love

Meander lines: have no beginning or end, like circle, it represents eternity and everlasting life



Ten Ways to Divide an Egg

For variety in design,
10 basic divisions
for beginning a pattern
are suggested.



Even though Ukrainian tradition
dictates a geometric balance
in designing the tips on *pysanky*,
the possibilities of variations
in the designs are limitless.