

UKRAINIAN EASTER EGG

Pysanka



by Joan Nakonechny



How to Make a Ukrainian Easter Egg “Pysanka”

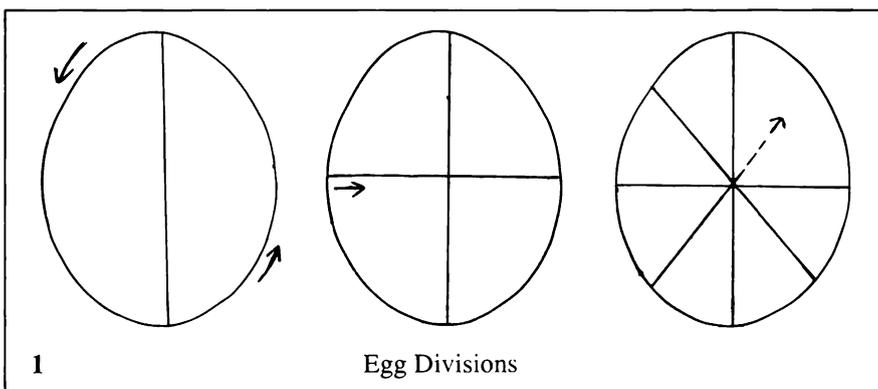
(Wax-Resist Technique)

Materials required: eggs, kistky (writing tools), beeswax (plain or coloured), egg dyes, white vinegar, pint-sized jars with wide mouths and lids, candle or spirit lamp, stainless steel tablespoons (one for each colour), hard H pencil, tissues, toothpicks and clear gloss varnish.

Use clean, white, smooth, unblemished raw eggs at room temperature. Unwashed fresh farm eggs are best. If washing is necessary, wash the eggs gently in a solution of one tablespoon white vinegar to one quart warm water. Place the eggs on a clean cloth to air dry or gently wipe them with tissues.

Prepare dyes in advance as directed on each package so they can cool and be used when at room temperature. If possible, use distilled or rain water as the dyes will last longer and remain fresher. Jars containing diluted dyes, when not in use, should be capped to prevent spilling and evaporation.

Hands must be clean, free from perspiration and any trace of hand creams, lotions, etc., before handling the egg.



1. Place the egg on tissues and lightly draw the basic divisions with a pencil dividing the egg into 16 equal parts, 8 sections on each side. Division lines can be easily drawn by placing a rubber band or 1/4" masking tape around the egg and pencilling along the side of it. Pencil lines will not show on the completed egg. Never erase pencil marks or the dye will not 'take' to the shell. You are now ready to use the kistka and wax. Heat the tip of a medium size kistka in the flame, scoop a little beeswax into the funnel and heat again to get the wax flowing. Draw over the pencil lines, keeping the kistka at right angles to the egg. Rotate the egg towards yourself while working the kistka away from yourself. When the kistka stops writing, reheat it, add wax and continue writing. Cover all the pencil lines on both sides of the egg.
2. With a pencil, divide each section one more time as shown. These lines help to insure a more balanced design. With a kistka draw a small circle in the centre of the egg and using the pencil lines as a guide, draw petals in each section. You have now completed your basic design on the egg. The wax lines which you have made will be white on the finished pysanka as the wax seals the colour under it. Dip the egg in a vinegar solution in the proportion of one part vinegar to four parts water. This counteracts any perspiration oils which may get on the egg and also gives the shell a rougher surface enabling the dyes to 'take' properly.

3. Place the egg on a tablespoon and ease it into a yellow dye. When the desired colour is reached (5 to 15 minutes), remove the egg with a spoon and pat dry with tissues. Place the egg on an egg rack to dry for a few minutes. When the egg is dry, draw a fringe around each petal as shown. When dyeing, always start with the lightest colour and work towards the darkest.
4. With a cotton swab or toothpick, dipped into a green dye, apply colour to the drawn circle. Dry the egg and cover the circle with a solid coating of wax.
5. Dye the egg orange and dry. Draw a short line in the middle of each petal as shown.
6. Dye the egg red and dry. Cover the petals with a solid coating of wax leaving no spaces uncovered.
7. Dye the egg black and dry. If you wish, dark red, purple or royal blue may be used as the final colour. The waxing and dyeing process is now complete.

Always remember the egg is dipped in a series of dye baths ranging from the lightest colour to the darkest. The darker dyes cover all previous colours except where the previous colour has been protected by a coating of wax.

Removal of the wax: Place the egg on tissues or an egg rack and put it into a preheated oven set at 250° Fahrenheit. When the wax begins to melt, remove the egg and wipe with tissues or a soft cloth.

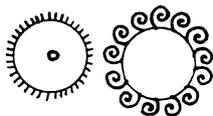
To remove all traces of wax, wipe the egg with a soft cloth or tissues dipped in cleaning fluid. **Caution:** Cleaning fluid is flammable.

Varnishing the egg: Varnish is applied to cold decorated eggs. For best results, a clear fast drying varnish with a polyurethane or plastic finish is recommended. Do not use a water soluble varnish as it will cause the dyes to run. Put a small amount of varnish in the palm of your hand and gently roll the egg until covered with a thin coating of varnish. Place the egg on an egg rack to dry. Varnishing gives the egg luster and protects the colours.

Use a waterless hand cleaner to remove varnish easily and gently from your hands. It can be purchased at your local hardware store.



In the language of symbols, a star symbolizes God's love toward man. Stars are used extensively in egg decorating.



Straight or curved spokes protruding from the circle represent the rays of the sun. The sun symbolizes growth, good fortune and happiness.



Deer and other animals signify prosperity and wealth. Pine trees symbolize health and stamina.



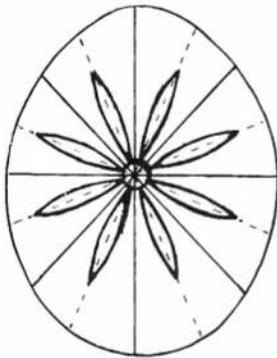
Waves and ribbons circling an egg, without recurring, stand for eternity.



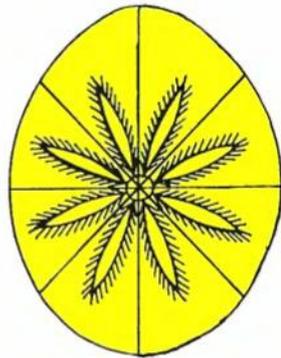
A triangle symbolizes the Trinity and netting suggests Christ's fishing for men.



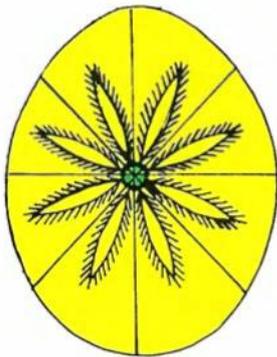
Dots suggest stars in the heavens, and also recall Virgin Mary's tears as she wept for Jesus.



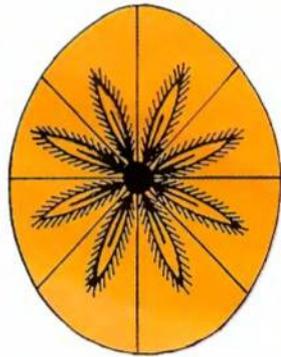
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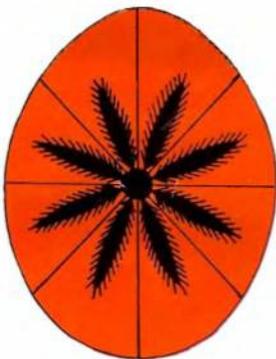
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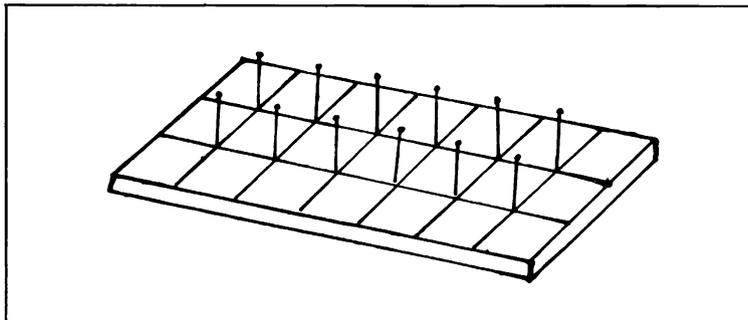


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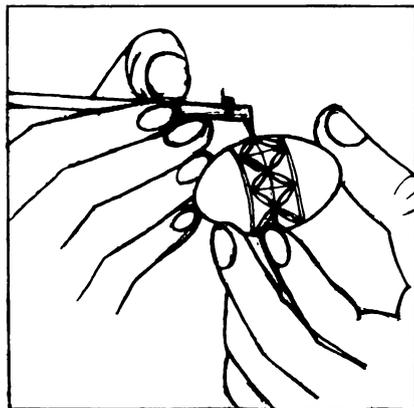
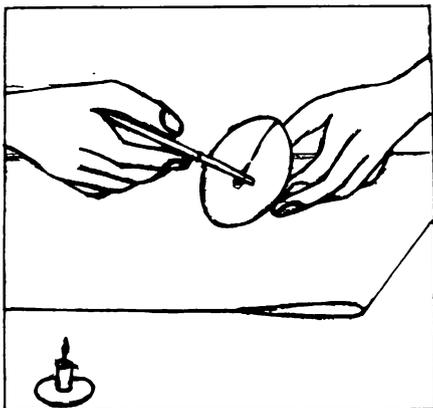


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How to make an Egg Rack: Mark off a board in 3/4'' squares and drive a 1'' small-headed nail into the corner of each square to a uniform height.



There are different ways of holding the egg when writing. Time and practice will tell which is most comfortable for you. The recommended position is to sit placing both arms on the table. To keep the egg steady when writing, hold the egg placed on tissues with one hand and write with the other. Rotate the egg as you work.



Two popular ways of holding an egg when writing.

Blowing the egg: By using a suction apparatus especially designed for this purpose, the entire contents of the egg can be suctioned out within a few minutes. It is available at Ukrainian book and hobby stores.

The decorated egg, empty and coated with varnish, is yours to enjoy for years to come.

HAPPY DECORATING!



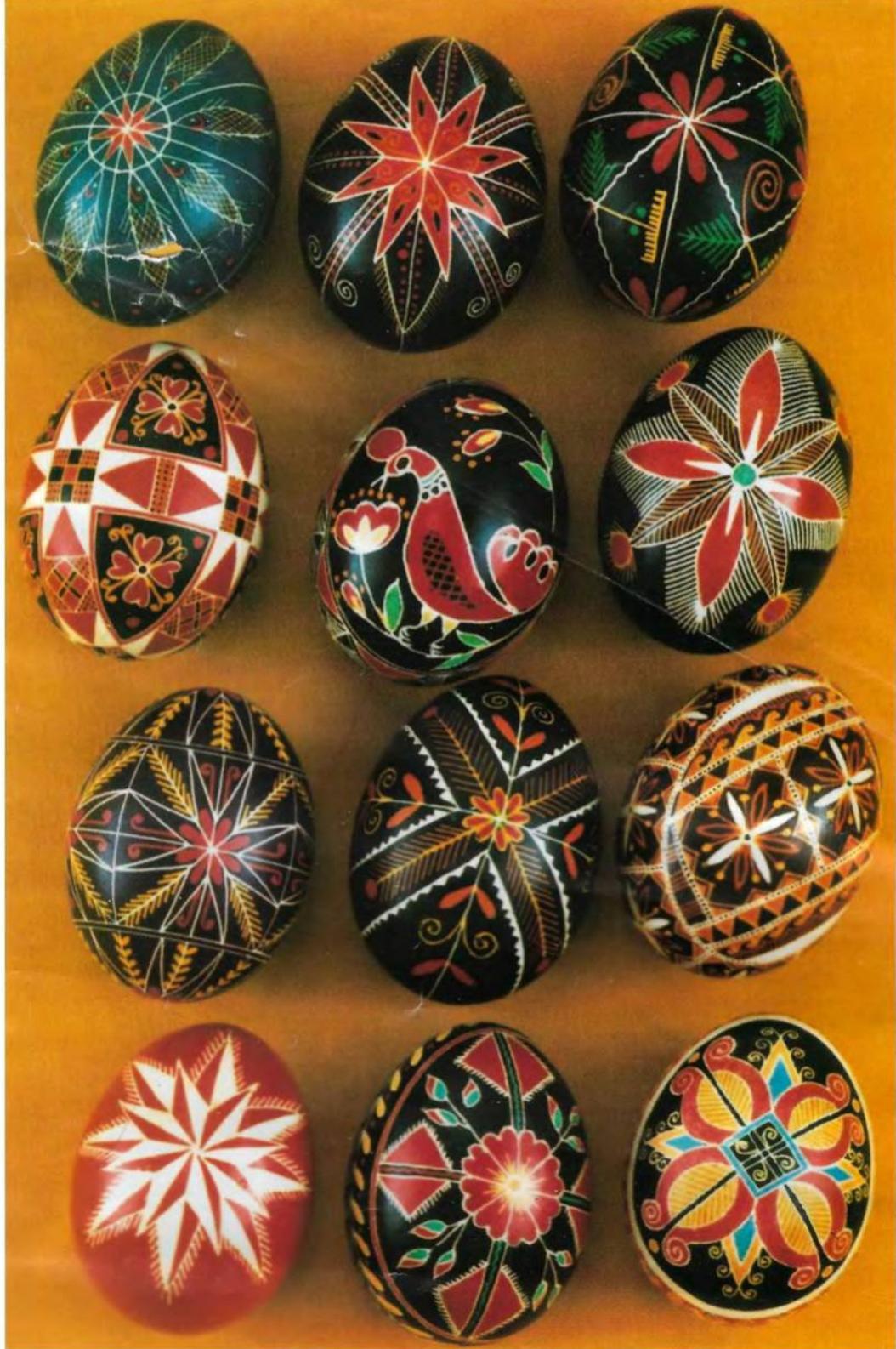
Emblem of the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Christ the cross appears in many forms.



Wheat symbolizes wishes for a bountiful harvest.



When the Ukrainians accepted Christianity in 988, the fish became a sign of Christ. The Greek alphabet spells the word "Fish" from "Jesus Christ Son of God Savior" (Ichthys).



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