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## April Newsletter

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Hello every one. Well our Melted Crayon class was a huge success. Miriam Joy is an excellent teacher. We provided our own gourds with a coat of black paint and Miriam provided everything else. We had small melting pots (not the kind used for hot glue) and three different sized stylus and patterns. We were given two different crayons, one of a color and one white. We broke the crayons into small pieces and dropped them into the well of the melting pot until the well was full then we dipped the end of a stylus in and applied the melted wax to the gourd. Each mark required a fresh dip of the stylus. After we practiced on a gourd fragment with the colored crayon, we cleaned the pot and added pieces of white. Miriam gave us a hummingbird pattern that we traced onto our black gourds and then she took us step by step through the application of the wax telling us which direction to pull the wax to create the patterns. We all came away with good looking gourds and a new technique to try on other projects.

Miriam's husband had a table set up with some great items. One of my favorites was a collection of rubber rings that resembled the sealer ring on canning jars. They were cut to fit into each other size wise and were great for using on the gourds to mark our circles and also good for getting a clean circle to cut a gourd open. They are called Gourd Toppers and come in large and small sets. She also had a number of items for doing the melted wax some in kit form and some separately. This is her website so you can look the items over. <http://www.miriamjoy.com/index.php>

Check out the website for photographs at:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Michigourders/photos/album/0/list>

Many thanks to Gary and Ingrid for sharing their home with us again. They host our meetings most of the time and we appreciate it very much.

Our next meeting is also going to be a class but it's open to everyone and free. We're going to learn "one stroke" painting from Margaret Schandavel at her home on May 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:00am. Margaret will provide everything we need. She's planning on providing us with a lunch of Sloppy-Joes so if you would like to bring something to add please do. And if you could give me an idea of what you may bring it would help us to keep from overlapping dishes.

Speaking of dishes, we ate (as usual) like royalty at lunch. We had chicken and spinach over pasta, chicken wings, salads, vegetables, brownies, angel food cake with pineapple, and more. I was STUFFED when lunch was over. Good thing we only meet once a month or I would be constantly buying larger clothes.

Reminder: if you are teaching a class or are entered in a show, please let us know and we will post the information. That way we can support each other's work

### **And now for the educational portion of our program.**

Since it's Easter week I thought I'd include a little history lesson.

## **Which came first, the rabbit or the egg?**

Bringing Easter eggs seems to have its origins in Alsace and the Upper Rhineland, both then in the Holy Roman Empire, and southwestern Germany, where the practice was first recorded in a German publication in the 1500s (early 16th century). The first edible Easter Eggs were made in Germany during the early 19th century and were made of pastry and sugar.

The Easter Bunny was introduced to the United States by the German settlers who arrived in the Pennsylvania Dutch country during the 18th century. The arrival of the Osterhase was considered one of "childhood's greatest pleasures", similar to the arrival of Kris Kringle on Christmas Eve.

According to the tradition, children would build brightly colored nests, often out of caps and bonnets, in secluded areas of their homes. The "Oster Hawse" would, if the children had been good, lay brightly colored eggs in the nest. As the tradition spread, the nest has become the manufactured, modern Easter basket, and the placing of the nest in a secluded area has become the tradition of hiding baskets.<sup>1</sup>

### **Rabbits and hares**

Eggs, like rabbits and hares, are fertility symbols of antiquity. Since birds lay eggs and rabbits and hares give birth to large litters in the early spring, these became symbols of the rising fertility of the earth at the Vernal Equinox.

The saying "mad as a March hare" refers to the wild caperings of hares as the males fight over the females in the early spring, then attempt to mate with them. Since the females often rebuff the males' advances before finally submitting, the mating behavior often looks like a crazy dance; these fights led early observers to believe that the advent of spring made the hares "mad". This bold behavior makes the hares, normally timid and retiring animals, much more conspicuous to human observation in the spring.

Rabbits and hares are both prolific breeders. The females can conceive a second litter of offspring while still pregnant with the first. This phenomenon is known as superfetation. Lagomorphs mature sexually at an early age and can give birth to several litters a year (hence the sayings, "to breed like bunnies" or "multiply like rabbits"). It is therefore not surprising that rabbits and hares should become fertility symbols, or that their springtime mating antics should enter into Easter folklore.

### **Eggs**

The precise origin of the ancient custom of coloring eggs is not known, although evidently the blooming of many flowers in spring coincides with the use of the fertility symbol of eggs—and eggs boiled with some flowers change their color, bringing the spring into the homes. Many Christians of the Eastern Orthodox Church to this day typically dye their Easter eggs red, the color of blood, in recognition of the blood of the sacrificed Christ (and, of the renewal of life in springtime). Some also use the color green, in honor of the new foliage emerging after the long dead time of winter.

German Protestants wanted to retain the Catholic custom of eating colored eggs for Easter, but did not want to introduce their children to the Catholic rite of fasting. Eggs were forbidden to Catholics during the fast of Lent, which was the reason for the abundance of eggs at Easter time.<sup>[10]</sup>

The idea of an egg-laying bunny came to the U.S. in the 18th century. German immigrants in the Pennsylvania Dutch area told their children about the "Osterhas", sometimes spelled "Oschter Haws". "Hase" means "hare", not rabbit, and in Northwest European folklore the "Easter Bunny" indeed is a hare, not a rabbit. According to the legend, only good children received gifts of colored eggs in the nests that they made in their caps and bonnets before Easter.<sup>[11]</sup> In 1835, Jakob Grimm wrote of long-standing similar myths in Germany itself. Grimm suggested that these derived from legends of a goddess called Ostara,<sup>[12]</sup> but as a romanticist, he tried to connect contemporary customs to pre-Christian traditions, knowing that no written sources of that time existed. Additionally, a goddess of that name is only mentioned in a single ancient source giving an ambiguous statement about an Ostara month.

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(all information taken from Wikipedia)

**And finally our recipe for the month**

### **Sugar Eggs:**

2 cups sugar

3 ½ teaspoons water

Food coloring (we used the paste)

Egg molds

In a large bowl add 2 cups sugar and 3 ½ teaspoons of water. Start with a little water and continue adding just a little bit at a time. You just want all the sugar to be wet enough to stick

together. The wetter your sugar the longer it will take to set up and dry and if it's too wet it won't hold the shape of the mold very well.

After you mix the water and sugar, press the sugar into your egg molds about 1/4-1/2 inch thick. You want it thick, but if you get it too thick, you won't have much room inside your egg.

Tip: Once the egg is dry you won't be able to make it thinner.

Around the top edge of your sugar eggs, make a flat edge so that the two egg halves will sit flat together. After that, take a spoon and take a small scoop out of the front of your egg, on the top and bottom. This will leave a hole you can peek inside your egg. Set aside to dry overnight. They'll get really hard and come out of the mold pretty easily.

### Royal Icing for Sugar Eggs

This recipe has egg whites so please make sure small children don't try to eat this!

3 egg whites, room temperature

4 Cups powdered sugar

½ teaspoon cream of tartar

food coloring

After your eggs harden mix royal icing. This icing will dry rock hard, so be sure to keep it covered tight when not using it. Spread icing in bottom of your egg. Use stickers, little wooden bunnies, little wooden eggs or small Easter decorations of your choice. Place a little Easter grass if you desire into the icing. Add your small Easter decoration into the icing as well.

Put icing around the edges on the bottom and put the top on. You can use your finger to wipe off the extra and fill in the empty spots. Don't leave the extra because it will get hard and can mess up the outside of the egg. Using a cake decorating bag with tips decorate the outside. Be sure to cover the middle seams and go around the rough edges on your peeking hole. Decorate the rest as you would like.

These really turn out beautiful and kids will be able to assemble and decorate easily for the Easter season.



Wilton makes candy egg molds and can be found at Michaels and other stores that sell baking supplies.

Happy Easter Everyone