

AHA: the heart-healthy way to dye those Easter eggs

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Put a twist on making colorful eggs this season that is to dye for.

Add pigment to eggshells this Easter holiday in an old-fashioned, natural way by using fruits and vegetables. Plus, if you offer up the produce to eat while you're at it, it will be making a healthy choice for your family.

Fruit and veggies provide nutrients, reduce the risks for dangerous health problems and help manage weight. Still, few people are eating enough of them.

A 2017 report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that roughly 10 percent of adults meet the federal recommendations of 1 1/2 to 2 cups per day of [fruit](#) and 2 to 3 cups per day of vegetables. Children don't get enough either, according to the CDC.

So, encouraging your children to eat some ingredients while dyeing [eggs](#) can tick a few good-parent boxes.

"One hard-boiled egg and fruit for a child could be the start of a lunch, if you add a slice of whole-grain bread and a glass of milk," said Dr. Linda Van Horn. She's division chief of nutrition in the Department of Preventive Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

"As a mom myself, it's all about access and preparation," she said, about encouraging children to eat fruits and veggies. "If you wash it, peel it, cut it up, put it in a colorful cup or bowl, have it in a snack bag for the car or any other option to bring it to their attention ready to pop in their mouths, they will eat it."

Here are the steps:

First, get all the fruit and veggies you need (for both dyeing and snacking). Almost any will work, although some colors will be a surprise.

Many are soft and muted.

Some variations include:

- **Red and pink:** beets, red onions, cranberries, frozen raspberries.
- **Green:** spinach, green cabbage, blueberries (That's right, blueberries.)
- **Blue:** purple cabbage leaves.
- **Orange:** [orange peels](#), carrots.
- **Yellow:** yellow onion skins, lemon peels.

Spices, herbs and drinks can also create dyes. For instance, coffee produces shades of brown, while turmeric can give a bright yellow-orange.

Next, wash and chop the raw ingredients. A rough estimate is about 2 cups of produce to about a quart of water for the dyes.

Put the produce and water in a pot, along with 2 tablespoons of white vinegar. Bring to a boil then lower the heat and simmer for 15 to 60 minutes. The longer the boil, the deeper the colors. Strain the dye into bowls.

To hard-boil the eggs, place them in a saucepan and cover them so they are about an inch underwater. Bring the water to a boil. Remove the pan from the stove and let it stand to the side for 12 to 15 minutes.

Once both are done, gently place the eggs into the dye bowls and place in the refrigerator, leaving them to soak about 30 minutes. The longer the soak, the deeper the shade.

After the egg hunt, serve them up alongside some cut-up fruits and veggies, or try this healthy twist on deviled eggs.

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