



## Easter Egg Experiments

**With our teenage daughter speeding toward high school graduation, I've found myself wishing on a near-daily basis that I could turn back the clock and make her my little girl again.**

*Cherie Langlois*

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Photo by Cherie Langlois With our teenage daughter speeding toward high school graduation, I've found myself wishing on a near-daily basis that I could turn back the clock and make her my little girl again.

I know it sounds trite, but it really does seem like only a few short springs ago that she gently cradled ducklings in her toddler arms, or curled up warm against me on a rainy day while we read picture books, or raced around on adventurous Easter egg hunts. I'm so not ready for my baby to grow up and away.

Maybe that's why I drafted Kelsey, despite her insistence she had too much homework, to dye Easter eggs tonight using natural dyes, an activity we enjoyed together once upon a time when she was little.

Unlike using store-bought synthetic dyes, experimenting with spices, herbs, fruit juices and other natural dye materials yields less vividly predictable results, but that's just what makes it so surprising and fun (at least for science geeks like my daughter and me).

Take tonight's Easter egg experiments: While the exotic golden spice turmeric turned our eggs a predictably vivid shade of yellow, red wine imparted an...um...interesting gray color.

An instant coffee dye-bath turned our one experimental egg an unexciting light brown (I suspect a robust French roast would have yielded a richer color), but a gloopy, thawed mix of ancient frozen raspberries transformed the eggs to a cool, tie-dyeish looking pink.

If you'd like to give natural egg-dyeing a try, all you need are eggs (not hard to come by if you keep chickens!), vinegar, and dye ingredients you may already have in your kitchen. Along with coffee, wine, turmeric, and berry juice, you can experiment with onion skins, teas, paprika, orange peels, beets, spinach leaves, dandelions and more.

We used the following technique for our eggs (find complete instructions here):

1. Set uncooked eggs in pan in a single layer (to avoid cracking) and cover with water.
2. Add one to two teaspoons of vinegar.
3. Add the dye material (wine, turmeric, berries, etc.) and stir gently to mix.
4. Bring water to boil, then reduce to a simmer for about 15 minutes.
5. Remove eggs to an empty carton to dry and cool, then refrigerate.

With younger kids, it's probably safer if you make up a dye/vinegar bath (without the eggs) and cool the liquid, strain it into mugs, then let them dye hardboiled eggs as they would with a conventional egg-dyeing kit. Some dye materials can also be mixed with cold water. Keep in mind it usually takes longer for colors to deepen with natural dyes.

Have a Happy Easter!

~ Cherie

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