



How to Decorate Beautiful Ukrainian Easter Eggs “Pysanky”

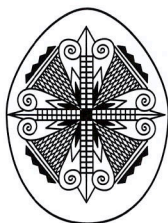
by Luba Perchyshyn

Ukrainian Easter Egg Decorating has been handed down through generations of Ukrainian people. They are famous the world over for their colorful Easter eggs (PYSANKY). Over 2000 years ago, before the time of Christ, people decorated eggs believing that great powers were embodied in the egg. 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 symbolize 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. They are given as gifts, exchanged with friends and used as decorations all year round.



How nice it is to have your Easter basket filled with pysanky decorated by you. As you exchange the pysanka with one another as a token of love and friendship, the significance becomes greater when you can beam with pride and say “I made them,” for the egg carries considerable proof of the effort extended upon it, and therefore makes a cherished gift.

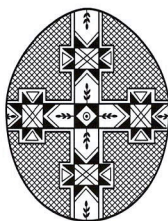
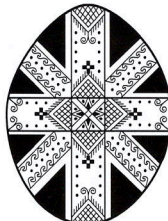
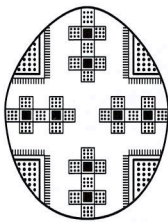


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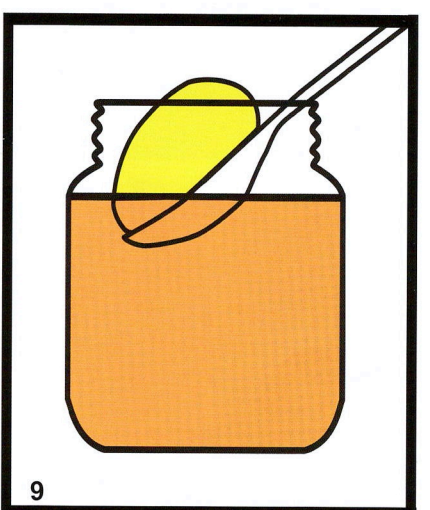
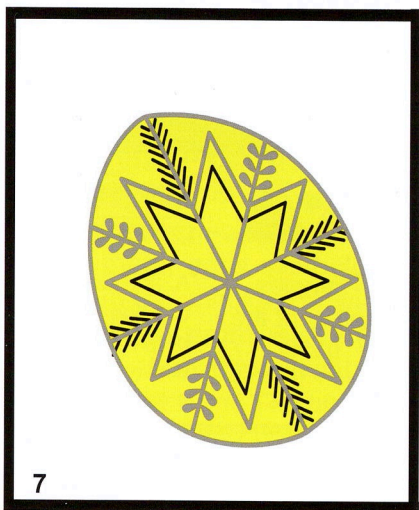
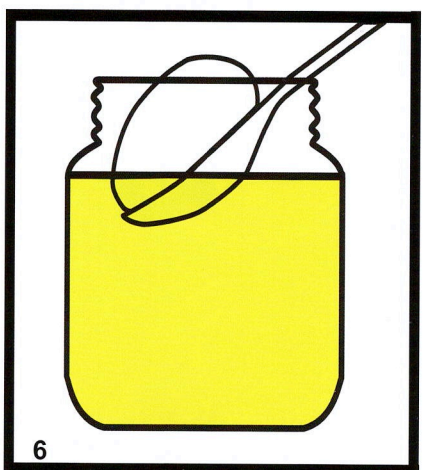
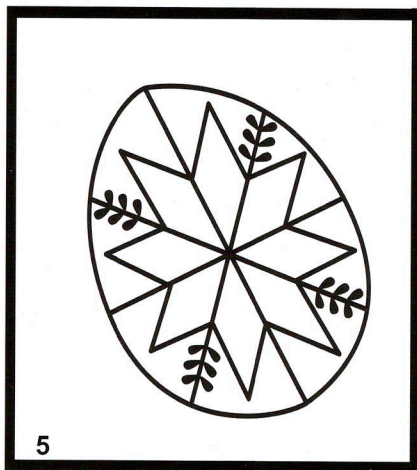
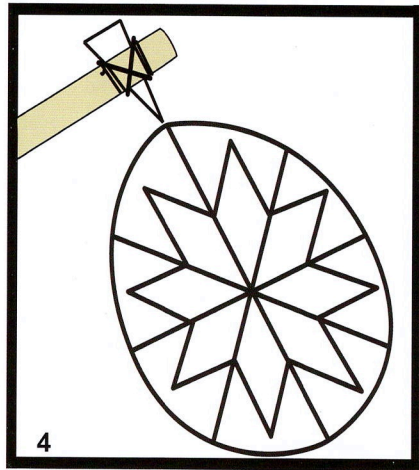
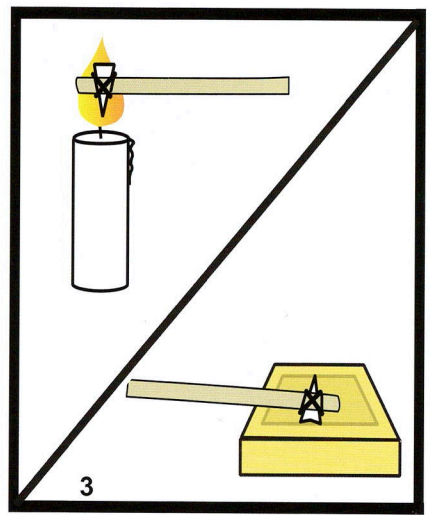
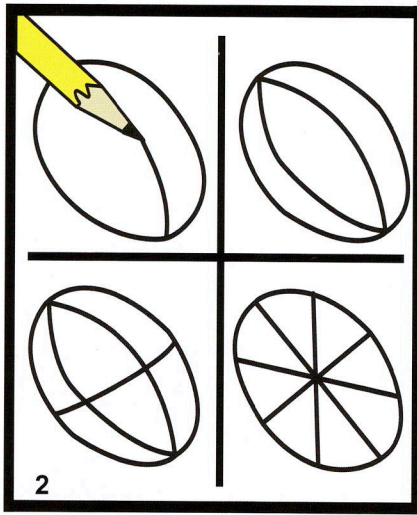
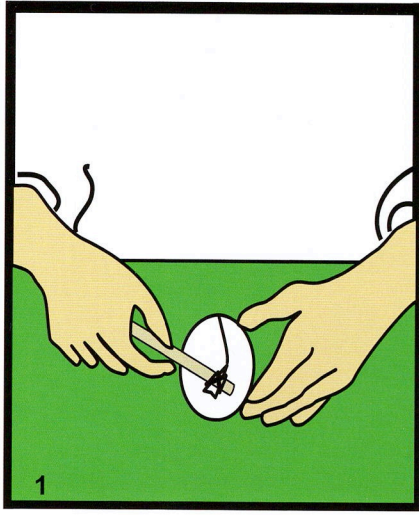
MATERIALS: White eggs, kistky (writing tools), beeswax, water soluble dyes, white vinegar, pint-sized jars with wide mouths and covers, small brush or cotton swab, spoons, candle and candle holder, soft tissue, pencil, and a drying rack.

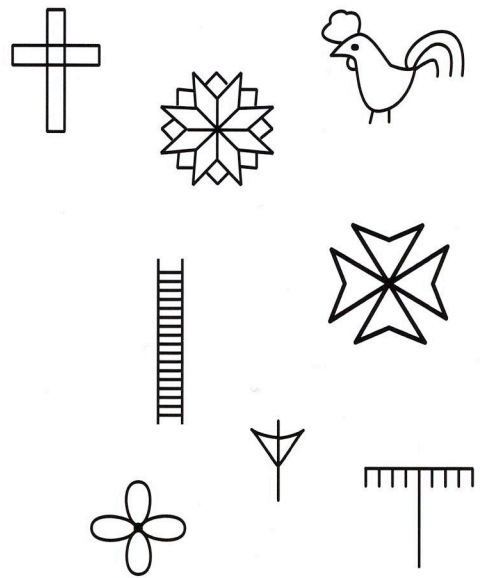
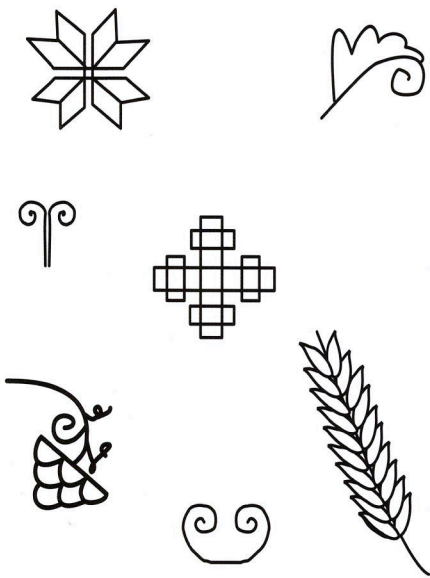
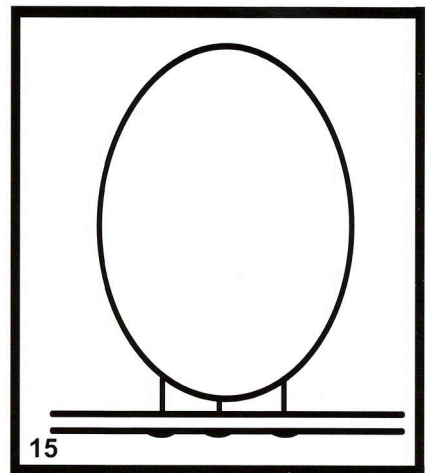
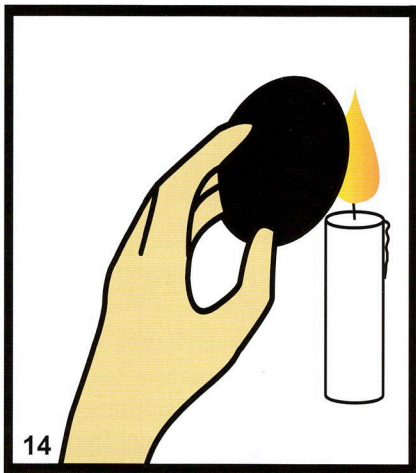
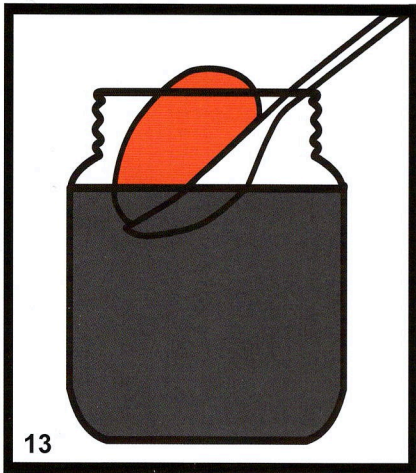
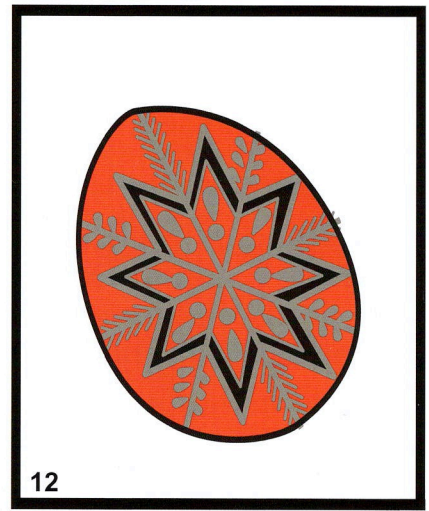
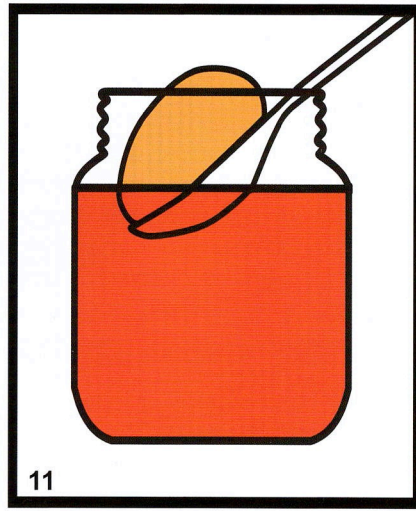
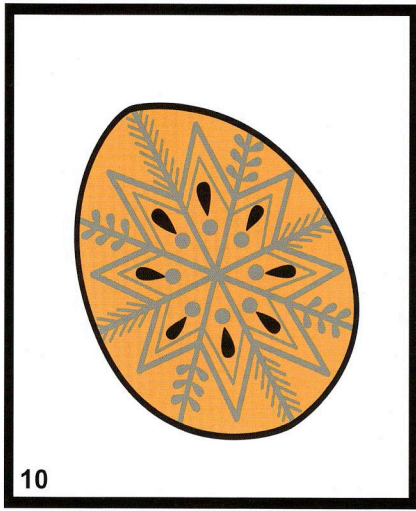
Prepare dyes as directed on each package. Remember, do not add vinegar to the orange dye. Use dyes at room temperature.

Select raw, fresh, clean, smooth white eggs. If washing is necessary, wash gently (do not rub) in a solution of one quart warm water to one tablespoon white vinegar. (Never use soap or detergent). Put eggs out on clean cloth to air dry, or gently wipe with clean cloth or tissue.



1. A good way to keep the egg steady while writing is to hold the egg on the table with one hand and write with the other. Rotate the egg as you work.
2. Draw the basic design lightly on the egg with a pencil before applying the wax lines. The pencil lines are used as guide lines and will not show on the completed egg. It is better to make long, smooth lines, rather than short sketchy lines.
3. Heat the head of the medium size kistka (writing tool) in the flame of the candle. When hot, scoop a little beeswax into the funnel of the kistka.
4. Begin to write over the pencil lines (as shown in figure 2), keeping the kistka at right angles with the egg, allowing the wax to flow evenly. As you work the kistka the beeswax will blacken. This blackening is beneficial. Overheating the kistka and too much wax will cause the wax to drip. As soon as the kistka stops writing smoothly, reheat, add wax and continue.
5. Use the heavy kistka to complete the design. The wax lines which you have made will be white on the finished pysanka. (The wax seals the color underneath it).
6. Place egg on spoon and lower into the yellow dye. The spoon may remain in the dye. Always start with the lightest color and work towards the darkest. When the desired shade is obtained (5 to 15 minutes), remove and dry the egg with tissue. Do not rub, pat dry.
7. Heat the fine kistka and draw all the lines which are to be yellow.
8. Green is applied to the design. This is done with a cotton swab, small brush or toothpick which has been dipped into the green or blue dye. Apply to the egg in the areas as shown. Pat dry with tissue and cover with wax, using the medium or heavy kistka.
9. Dip egg into the orange dye bath.
10. Complete design as shown using the medium or heavy kistka.
11. Dip egg into the red dye bath.
12. Complete the design as shown using the heavy kistka.
13. Dip egg into the black dye bath. If desired, dark red, purple or royal blue may be used as the final background color.
14. The most exciting step of all is removing the wax and watching the design come to life! Hold the egg to the side of the candle flame for a few seconds until the wax starts to melt. With a tissue or cloth, wipe away a small portion of the melted wax at a time until all the wax is removed.
15. The egg may now be varnished, and placed on the egg rack to dry. Varnish adds protection and luster.





IMPORTANT HINTS, *read before decorating your first egg . . .*

The following hints and information will answer many of your questions as you develop this beautiful art.

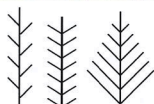
- Make dyes in advance and allow to cool to room temperature before using. Follow the directions on each individual package of dye. Keep dyes covered when not in use to avoid evaporation. Vinegar will evaporate in time and can be added periodically. This helps the dye adhere to the egg better. Do not add vinegar to orange. Dyes usually keep for several months to a year. Each dye has its own character, some last longer than others. If your eggs don't take a brilliant color, your eggs are most likely the problem. Store bought eggs may be washed with harsh chemicals that are not compatible with the dyes. Cleaning the eggs as directed on page 2 might help. Unwashed farm eggs are best.
- Protect your table with newspaper, tissue or plastic and place your hot kistka on a small dish when not in use.
- Clean hands are a necessity. Do not use any hand creams or lotions while decorating your egg.
- Keep a tissue under the egg on the table while working.
- When selecting an egg, hold it to a light and check it for any cracks or weak spots. Use eggs with good strong shells. Do not boil the eggs.
- Use fresh raw eggs or blown out shells. If you use empty shells, seal the holes with beeswax before decorating. Apply the wax to the edge of the hole with your heaviest kistka. Both the inside and outside of the shell must be completely dry or the seal will not hold and dye will seep into the shell causing dye spotting. You will need to find an object to place on top of the egg to keep it submerged in the dye. Narrow olive or spice jars (glass or plastic) with water added for weight work well.
- Eggs should be at room temperature. Cold eggs will sweat and cause spotting.
- Never erase pencil marks-this will cause scratches on the egg and the dye will not take perfectly over scratches.
- Be careful not to burn your kistka (traditional writing tool). If it starts to burn, blow out the flame.
- When removing wax from the egg, never hold the egg over the tip of the flame as it will turn black with carbon and discolor the design.
- It's important to have wax thoroughly removed from the egg before varnishing. If desired, wipe the egg with a cloth or tissue moistened with cleaning solvent/de-greaser or paint thinner. Any solvent must be used in accordance with manufacturer's directions and safety precautions. You can get solvent or thinner at a paint or hardware store.
- The oven method for wax removal can also be used. Preheat oven for 10 minutes at 200 degrees with the door open. Place the egg on a drying board in the oven until wax begins to melt. Remove egg and wipe it with a soft cloth or tissue. Drying boards (egg rack) can be purchased or made. Construct a simple rack by taking 3 thumb tacks for each egg. Push the tacks through a piece of cardboard in the shape of a triangle. For a larger and more durable rack, use wood and nails (one inch apart). A rack made of wood is recommended for oven use.
- For best results, a clear fast drying high gloss polyurethane or varnish is recommended. **NEVER use water based products.** Put a small amount of varnish in the palm of your hand and gently roll the egg until it is covered with a thin coat of varnish. Set the egg on a drying board to dry. If you want to put additional coats of varnish on the egg, be sure the previous coat is perfectly dry or the additional coat will remain sticky.
- To clean varnish from hands, wipe off excess varnish with tissue, then clean with waterless hand soap (mechanics cleaner). Wash hands with soap and water. *Vinyl (non-latex) gloves can be used to avoid varnish on the hands.*
- Eggs can keep indefinitely. If left full, the insides eventually dry out, leaving only the shell. This process can take years. Keep decorated eggs out of direct sunlight so colors will not fade. Don't allow eggs to freeze or become overheated. Use paper cartons (not plastic) for storage. Do not store in air tight places. Eggs need to have air circulating around them.
- This art is fun for all ages. Enjoy yourself with this ancient creative process!



The fish represents Christ from the Greek acronym for "Jesus Christ Son of God Savior"



Deer and horses represent prosperity



Pine needles symbolize youth and health



Birds represent fertility and the fulfillment of wishes



Triangles represent the trinity



A line encircling the egg without a beginning or an end represents eternal life.

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