

Easter egg, *n.*

Brit. /ˈiːstər ɛg/, *U.S.* /ˈɪstər ɛg/ [< EASTER *n.*¹ + EGG *n.* Cf. Middle High German *ĕsterei* (German *Osterei*). Cf. earlier PACE EGG *n.*, PASCH EGG *n.*]

I. Simple uses.

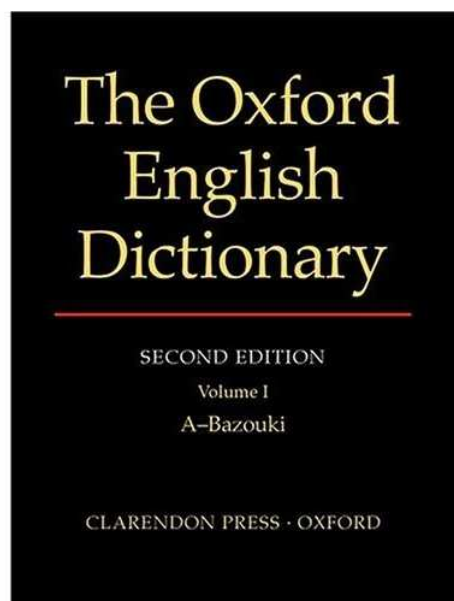
1. Traditionally: an egg, usually blown or hard-boiled and with a brightly dyed or painted shell, used as an Easter decoration or given as an Easter gift (cf. PACE EGG *n.*); (also) an egg-shaped wooden, porcelain, or jewelled trinket similarly given at Easter (cf. *Russian Easter egg s.v.* RUSSIAN *a.* 2e). Later also: a hollow or solid egg-shaped chocolate confection given at Easter (now the usual sense outside the United States).

Quot. 1601 appears to refer to ordinary eggs eaten on Easter Sunday, and probably does not exemplify a fixed compound.

[1601 J. VAN NECK *Jrnl. Voy. Eight Shippes of Amsterdam* f. 56^v, The second day (being Easter day) we were allowed to our Easter egges a dish of small beanes with a dish of dried fish, and a kan of sacke, in lieu of Arack.] 1737 tr. C. de Bruyn *Trav. into Muscovy* I. 31/2 They then begin to give Easter eggs, which continues for a fortnight, a custom as well among the great as the small, the old as the young, who mutually make each other presents of them. 1772 tr. *Antidote* 199 The custom of giving eggs is only among the common people; and that not alone in Russia, but in Germany, and many other countries, where every one undeniably has heard of Easter eggs. 1804 M. WILMOT *Let.* 11 May in M. Wilmot & C. Wilmot *Russ. Jrnls.* (1934) I. 97, I must not forget Easter Sunday... The service is the same, and after it is over Easter Eggs are presented painted and carv'd and decorated in a variety of ways. 1825 W. HONE *Every-day Bk.* I. 426 *Easter Eggs*..pass about at Easter week under the name of *pask*, *paste*, or *pace* eggs. 1894 G. DU MAURIER *Trilby* I. I. 34 They would..marvel at the beautiful assortment of bonbons..especially, at this particular time of the year, the monstrous Easter-egg, of enchanting hue. 1921 *Times* 5 Mar. 7/1 A window filled with gorgeous Easter eggs, dominated by a chocolate one that any nursery would be glad to welcome. 1974 B. BUCKLEY & J. HAMILTON *Festival* 90 Past Mrs Raffles' lolly shop, with quilted Easter eggs in golden foil, and fat doughnuts with red jam eyes. 1979 *Sunset* Apr. 168/1 (*heading*) Swirls of color 'marbleize' these Easter eggs. Blow your own or buy them already blown. 2000 *Victorian* July 10/1 Thanks in part to the artistic world's continued fascination with his Imperial Easter eggs, the name of Carl Fabergé comes easily to mind when one is asked to name a famous jeweller-goldsmith.

2. orig. *Computing*. [With allusion to *Easter egg hunt*, sense 3.] A message hidden as a joke in the object code of a program; an unexpected or undocumented feature in a piece of software, intended as a joke or bonus; (now also) a feature of this kind in a sound or video recording, esp. on DVD.

1987 *Re: Does Set Startup work Anymore?* in *comp.sys.mac* (Usenet newsgroup) 13 Nov., The Option-Command 'About MultiFinder' easter egg was a good laugh. 1988 *MacUser* (Nexis) Oct. 10 Rumor has it that..[the company] has discovered how this unexpurgated 'Easter Egg' was inserted and..has removed it from future copies of MacPaint. 1992 *Globe & Mail* (Toronto) A20/1 Secret screens, also known as doodads and Easter eggs, can range from simple lists naming the development team to complex, animated whacks at competitors. 2002 *Indianapolis Star* 19 Apr. (Weekend section) 14/5 The special edition..of the taut crime film contains a slew of extras... An 'Easter egg' produces an 18-minute interview with Ottman and an outtake reel.



II. Compounds.

3. Easter egg hunt orig. *U.S.*, a children's game in which the participants search for hidden Easter eggs; (in extended use) an act of hiding items for others to find; a search for something that has been hidden with the intention of its being found.

1891 *Denton* (Maryland) *Jrnl.* 11 Apr. 3/3 An *Easter egg hunt by the Sunday School of Christ Church took place..on Monday... The children..went home laden with the pretty, colored eggs they had found. **1926** [T. ROOSEVELT](#) & K. ROOSEVELT *East of Sun* x. 248 Occasionally we hid our lesser belongings as a sort of Easter-egg hunt for the inhabitants of some village where we had spent the night. **1954** A. W. FOSHAY et al. *Children's Social Values* iii. 71 Friday is the day when the children would normally want to have an Easter Egg Hunt. **2002** *New Yorker* 22 Apr. 198/2 Empirical research has become something of an Easter-egg hunt, where you find only what you've already planted.

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