

## **How To Prepare Turkey Eggs For Pysanky and Eggshell Jewelry by So Jeo LeBlond**

At first glance, turkey eggs are mottled and almost dirty looking because they are covered in dark brown pigment spots and even smears. One would not think that these tear-shaped eggs would make for very good Pysanky or other egg arts that require a bright white egg, but with some simple preparation, they become the most wonderful canvas.

The first thing to do is to plug the hole, either with wax or a rubber plug. Take a small piece of wax and roll it in your fingers, softening it into a little ball. Then flatten it with your fingers until it is just a little larger than the hole. Take your kistka and run hot wax all along the rim of the wax disc, sealing it to the shell. As an extra step, you can run the side of your hot kistka on the wax disc to make sure there are not spots that you missed. Those using the rubber plugs will simply insert the plug into the hole and gently twist it until there is a snug fit, but do not over twist!

If you have purchased the eggs blown out by me, you will see pencil marks where I have carefully measured each shell to find the very center of the bottom of the egg. (Holes in the pointed ends of the eggs are also available, but please give me plenty of notice as these would be a special order.) These pencils marks will disappear during the next step, which is to remove the spots so do not worry about them. If you are using full eggs, just continue on to the next step.

For removing the spots I prefer to use vinegar as it is not caustic and does not give off noxious fumes. Adding citric acid crystals to your vinegar will raise the acidity and make it work faster. You can purchase citric acid. The Works would also be fine if that is what you are used to using. You can either soak your egg by weighing it down in a jar of vinegar or by just floating it in a bowl of vinegar, I prefer the latter, and just roll the eggs after about a minute or two. The surface of the shell will look bubbly, similar to when you remove old paint with stripper. You know that the egg is ready when the spots just simply wipe off. Scrubbing will speed up this process, you can use a brush, toothbrush or a soft scrubby pad. Make sure that you get all the pigment out of the pores, if not, your pores will dye darker than the rest of the shell resulting in a spotted egg! If this happens, simply put the egg back into the vinegar until you can scrub it totally clean.

Once the spots are gone, rinse with water and then take a cloth or good quality paper towel and wipe down the egg. Not only does this step dry your egg, but it will also remove any chalky residue of eggshell that has been etched by the vinegar. Leaving this chalky substance on will interfere with how the dyes adhere to the egg. You may get great color, but then find that they wipe right off once you go to dry it and nobody wants that!

Now, the very last step is to remove your plug and clean around the hole. If you used a rubber plug, it should be fairly clean around the hole. To remove it, gently twist and pull out, then wipe the bottom with your cloth. For those that use wax, you can take a razor blade and very carefully pry up the wax disc, then take the blade and gently shave around the hole, removing any residual wax and spots until it is as clean as the rest of the shell. That's it, fast and simple and in the end you will have a pure white egg ready for your artwork!

Here are a few reasons why I love turkey eggs:

Lovely teardrop shape

Smoother than goose

Pores are nearly invisible

Shells are thick and sturdy

They take dyes wonderfully

Easily withstand repeated dyeing, washing, etching and bleaching

Double yolk shells are almost as large as goose eggs