

EASTER EGG BRAID

1 (16 ounce) package hot-roll mix
3 tablespoons sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/2 cup water
2 tablespoons butter
3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
6 dyed raw eggs in shell, at room temperature (instructions follow)
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar (optional)
1 teaspoon nonpareils (optional)

Set aside 1 cup of the hot-roll mix. In large bowl, stir together remaining mix, contents of yeast packet, 3 tablespoons sugar and cinnamon.

In small saucepan over medium heat, heat water and butter until very warm, 120-130° F. (Butter need not melt completely). Add to reserved dry mixture along with 3 eggs and vanilla. Stir until well blended. Stir in enough of the remaining roll mix to make a soft dough. Knead on lightly floured surface five minutes.

Divide dough into 3 equal pieces. Roll each into a 24-inch strip. Loosely braid strips together. Shape braid into an oval on a lightly greased baking sheet. Pinch ends together to form continuous braid.

Dye raw eggshells with food coloring or food-grade egg dyes. With sterilized needle, carefully pierce large ends of dyed raw eggs. Place eggs in horizontal positions between plaits of braid. Cover with clean towel. Let rise in warm place until doubled and finger pushed into dough leaves imprint (about 20 to 30 minutes).

Bake in preheated 400°F oven about 20 minutes or until lightly browned. If desired, stir together confectioners' sugar and milk until smooth. Stir in candy nonpareils. Brush on bread. Cool on wire rack.

Makes 1 loaf of 8 servings.