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## Getting Smashed This Easter With Cascarones

by Winnie McCroy  
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They say everything is bigger in Texas. That adage proves true even when it comes to holiday traditions. While the rest of the country is coloring Easter eggs to hide, Texas tradition calls for an even bigger payoff on your hard work. Texans enjoy emptying out an egg, stuffing it with confetti and glitter and smashing the finished product over each other's heads to grand spectacle and mess.

Known as cascarones (pronounced "kas-ka-ron-ez"), these confetti-filled eggs are common throughout Texas, Mexico and Central America. Children and adults alike enjoy breaking them over loved ones' heads on Easter or Cinco de Mayo, showering them with good luck and fortune. And if you make a wish and

the egg cracks open on the first try, your wish will come true!

A symbol of rebirth and resurrection, the egg ties in to a lot of religious celebrations around Easter, which makes this a great teaching tool for kids. It's also a nearly harmless way to vent some pent-up rage.

My friends have a longstanding tradition of saving empty eggshells throughout the year and coming together to make dozens of these cascarones to pass out and smash during AIDS Walk New York each May. It is always the hit of the event, and kids especially love being a part of it.

If you live in the Southwest, you can purchase cascarones at your local Spanish market, or in Texas at almost any grocery store. But they're a lot more fun to make yourself. While it's not difficult to make cascarones, it's best done in steps, with breaks in between to let the eggs dry.



(Source:Winnie McCroy)

### Making Cascarones

You'll need eggs, an egg dye kit, vinegar, Solo cups, a few crayons, tissue paper, confetti and glitter, a bowl and glue.

#### GET YOUR EGGSHELLS

First, hollow out your eggs. Tap the end with a spoon to create a dime-sized hole, and then shake out the egg, reserving it to cook something delicious. Wash the yolk out of the shell and put it back in the carton to dry.

Pro tip: If you want to make a lot of cascarones without having to eat quiche for weeks on end, save up your empty shells up throughout the year until you have multiple dozens to work

with.

#### GET YOUR MESSAGE ON

Once you have a suitable number of empty eggshells, it's time to call your friends over to dye them! After years of practice, we have found that the eggs end up most beautiful if you first use a crayon to carefully draw a message or image on the white eggshell before dyeing them. Since we use them for AIDS Walk New York, we like to draw red ribbons and write messages like "Fight AIDS!"

#### GET READY TO DYE

Next, place your egg dye tabs in your Solo cups with a tablespoon of vinegar to get them bubbling. Once the

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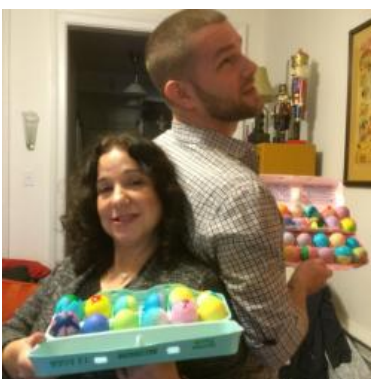


(Source:Winnie McCroy)

tabs dissolve, fill the cups two-thirds full of water. Carefully place your prepared eggshells into the cups. Because the shells are empty, you'll need to tip in the broken end of the shell and let it fill up with liquid until it sinks.

Pro tip: If you'd like multicolored, put one egg in the bottom of the cup and then fill another halfway with the dye so that it's sitting atop the fully submerged egg. This will result in a sharp color line break. When you're ready to dye the other side of the egg, just flip the egg over and repeat the process in another colored dye cup.

Super pro tip: If you really want things to get fancy, draw on the egg, dye it, then draw on it again, following that up with one last dip in the dye. This will create multiple levels of color to spectacular effect. Be sure to peek inside the egg to see the vibrant half-tones that line the inner shells.



(Source:Winnie McCroy)

## Get 'Em Dry, Get a Drink

After you color the eggs, set them to dry in their original cartons or on a drying rack made from a piece of foam core studded with pushpins. Make sure to use a paper towel to absorb any egg dye that has dripped onto the bottom so that your eggs dry well.

My friends like to call it a day at this point, letting the eggs dry while we catch up over tacos and beer. It's just part of our tradition: One group will be in the living room dying eggs, while another is in the kitchen making tortillas and peccadillo.



(Source:Winnie McCroy)

## Get Stuffed

Once all of your eggs are dry, it's time to get your friends back together to stuff the eggs full of confetti. We like to add Mylar glitter to the mix to jazz things up. For low-budget confetti, take a hole punch to construction paper or the funnies section of your newspaper. Some people also make cascarones with small toys inside, but this could prove painful if you plan to smash them over each other's heads.

Fill a big bowl with confetti and glitter (readily available at Party City). Get a heap of brightly colored tissue or crepe paper, and cut it into circles big enough to cover the hole at the bottom of your egg. In a smaller bowl, water down some Elmer's glue.

Dip the colored egg into the bowl and fill it two-thirds with the confetti mix. Using a small brush, paint the glue around the edges of the hole, and affix a piece of tissue paper to seal it. Place the egg glue-side up in your egg carton to dry.

This process takes a lot longer than you might think and dyes your fingers all colors. So be patient, and don't wear your

Sunday best to do it. Once you're finished, it's a great time for more tacos and beers. Take lots of photos of your finished product, because cascarones have an ephemeral quality -- once they're smashed, they're gone forever!



(Source:Winnie McCroy)

## Get Smashed!

Now it's time for the payoff: Hold the cascarón in your palm loosely, and bring it quickly down onto your friend's head until it bursts open. Don't smash it hard -- that person's your friend, after all -- but don't just hurl it loosely toward someone, because it won't break until it hits the ground. And that's not really the point.

The finished product is beautiful, fun and exhilaratingly messy. (Prepare to find glitter in your hair for days.) But for us, we're



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not just making cascarones -- we're making memories. It's the coming together of friends and family to create them that's

special.

Word to the wise: To save yourself from difficult cleanup, break your cascarones outside. If you're looking for an environmentally-friendly stuffing, consider birdseed or dissolvable confetti. Here's to a smashing good time!

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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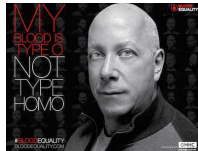
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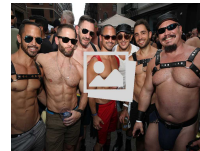
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