

SORBIAN/WENDISH EASTER EGGS



WAS IST AUF DEN OSTEREIERN ZU SEHEN?

Die Gestaltung der sorbischen Ostereier erinnert oft an Blaudruck, der in der sorbischen Kultur auch tief verwurzelt ist. Zur traditionellen Symbolik werden gern persönliche Varianten hinzugefügt. Dabei legen die Sorben großen Wert auf Symmetrie, Harmonie, Rhythmik und Gleichgewicht. Geometrische Ornamente finden sich in den Wachstechniken in den Grundformen Linie, Dreieck, Rhombus und Kreis. Die Sonne als Quelle von Licht und Leben zählt zu den ältesten und häufigsten Symbolen. Dreiecke versinnbildlichen die göttliche Dreifaltigkeit oder auch die Familie. In der Kratz- und Ätztechnik werden besonders stilisierte Blumen, Ranken, Rosetten und Sterne dargestellt. Der Lebensbaum ist Sinnbild für Fruchtbarkeit und Wachstum. Auch christliche Ostersymbole werden gern verwendet, wie zum Beispiel Lamm und Kreuz.



<https://sorbischerleben.de/brauche/sorbischer-ostereier/>

WHAT CAN BE SEEN ON THE EASTER EGGS?

The design of Sorbian Easter eggs is often reminiscent of blue print, which is also deeply rooted in Sorbian culture. Personalised variations are often added to the traditional symbolism. The Sorbs attach great importance to symmetry, harmony, rhythm and balance. Geometric ornaments can be found in the wax techniques in the basic shapes of line, triangle, rhombus and circle. The sun as a source of light and life is one of the oldest and most common symbols. Triangles symbolise the divine trinity or the family. Scratch and etching techniques are used to depict stylised flowers, tendrils, rosettes and stars. The tree of life symbolises fertility and growth. Christian Easter symbols are also popular, such as the lamb and cross.



<https://www.wendishheritage.org.au/research/who-are-the-wends/>

MORE EASTER EGGS AND OTHER COOL INFO



<https://www.spreewald-info.de/ostern/sorbische-ostereier/>



<https://germangirlinamerica.com/sorbian-easter-eggs/>



Photo: Adobe Stock

ORIGIN OF DECORATED EGGS



Eggs have always been a symbol of the origin of life. Decorating eggs has a long history dating back to ancient China and Egypt. Coloured eggs were given as presents by the Persians.

The egg still plays a role in the customs of many people. Decorating eggs are not a specific Sorbian/Wendish speciality, as this traditional form of folk art (*Volkskunstradition*) can be found all over Europe. However, every cultural group developed its own type of character (*Wesensart*).

For the Sorbs/Wends in Upper Lusatia (*Hornja Łužica /Oberlausitz*) and Lower Lusatia (*Dolna Łužyca/ Niederlausitz*) in Germany, decorated eggs (*verzierte Eier*) are given as gifts e.g. from godparents or to friends, and are intrinsically linked to Easter. Blown-out coloured eggs are sometimes hung on tree branches as a symbol of spring, rebirth and renewal. Over Easter, children may play games involving rolling decorated eggs (called *Walkowanja/Waleien* or *Eierschieben*). Decorated ceramic or wooden eggs are now sold as souvenirs from Lusatia.



Photos: Colouring eggs — ©Nesteaab / Eggs in tree — ©Kertrik / iStock | Waleien — ©framerate-media

COLOURING AND DECORATING EGGS



A traditional method to produce coloured eggs (*gefärbte Eier*) is to boil the eggs with natural products (such as onion peel, red cabbage, blueberries or beetroot) to achieve different colours.



Easter in Germany:
Sorbs, Wends and
Easter Eggs

<https://judithsalecich.com/easter-germany-sorbs-wends-easter-eggs/>

In Lusatia, there are various folk art techniques (*Volkskunst-Techniken*) for decorating eggs including:

WAX TECHNIQUE *wóskowańska technica/ Wachstechnik*

Melted wax is applied to the egg using quills and pinheads. After drying, the egg is dyed and after drying, a second wax design is applied. After drying, the egg is dyed again with a darker colour. This process can be repeated. Finally, the wax is removed, and the final design is revealed.

SCRATCHING TECHNIQUE *škrabane technica/ Kratztechnik*

Made by gently scratching away the colour from a dyed egg using a small, sharp instrument such as a nail or thin tip of a knife. It is a slow and careful process. Too much pressure by the decorator can puncture the egg.

ETCHING TECHNIQUE *wužrawane technica/ Ätztechnik*

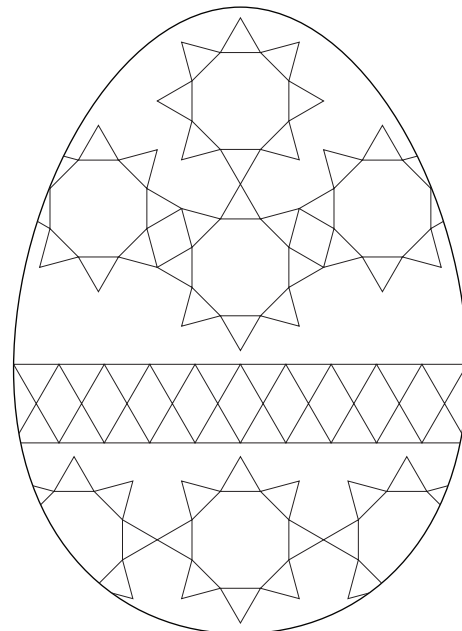
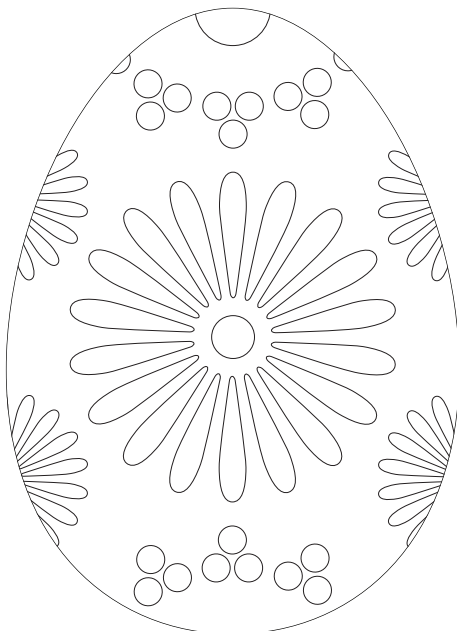
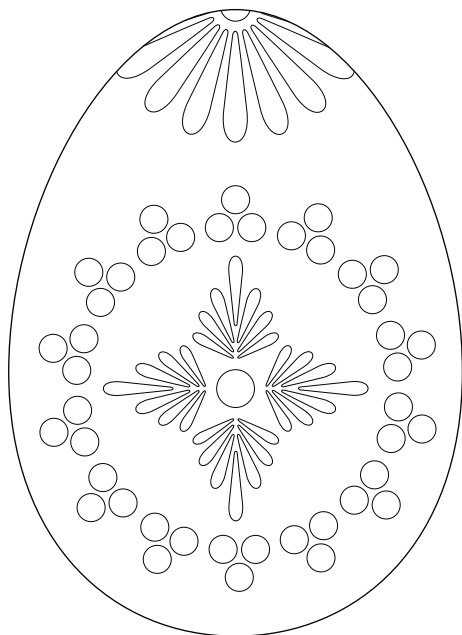
Rarely used today, this technique involves using acid (e.g. diluted hydrochloric acid) applied by a nib on a dyed eggshell, to make the patterns. The egg is carefully wiped to remove the colour. The traditional method was to use a goose feather quill and sauerkraut juice or vinegar.



Bunte sorbische Ostereier, Ernst Schmidt,
VEB Domowina-Verlag Bautzen 1982

Photos: Wax — © Mark Potermann / Scratch — © Harald Pizzini /
Natural dyes — © artinabich / iStock | Sample Eggs: Adobe Stock

SORBIAN EASTER EGG DESIGNS



TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS



BEE CELL AND HONEYCOMB
Spring, hard work and industriousness



SUN, RAYS, BUNDLES OF RAYS
Light, growth, Spring and awakening life



WOLF TEETH
Protection from evil, strength



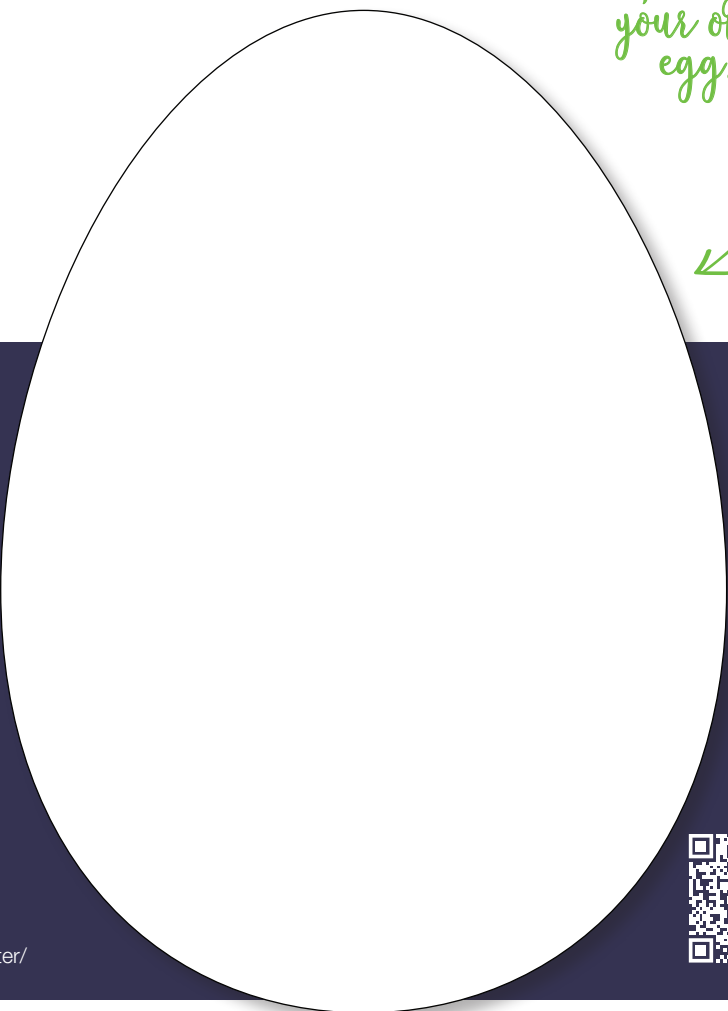
PINE BRANCH
Health



THREE POINTS
Holy Trinity, the family — father, mother and child

<https://www.spreewald-info.de/ostern/sorbische-ostereier/muster/>

*Design
your own
egg!*



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