

COMMUNITY NEWS

# Ukrainian pysanky eggs add color to Easter

By ANN SULLIVAN  
News Reporter

Eggs are more than a breakfast food to Joan Brander.

Using beeswax and dyes, the Richmond woman can transform the humble chicken egg into a work of art.

Just after Christmas, Brander starts decorating eggs Ukrainian style -- with intricate patterns in bold colors -- for the following Easter.

This year has been a challenge, she said, as Easter comes early. But already she has a box of 36 decorated eggs, some of the six dozen she will create by next weekend.

"I've always run out," Brander said. "I can never make enough. I think that's why I don't have any eggs of my own -- the demand is so high."

Brander, who moved to Richmond in 1978, grew up in Saskatchewan in a Ukrainian family. She learned the art of creating deco-

rated Easter eggs -- pysanky (pronounced *peh san KEH*) -- from her mother and grandmother. "I have very warm, nostalgic feelings related to this art because of my grandmother and mom," she said.

Contrary to what people think, pysanky are not painted but decorated using the "wax resist" method.

In a tiny copper, funnel-shaped stylus attached to a plastic handle, Brander melts beeswax over a candle. The melted wax is then "painted" on a raw egg before the

egg is dipped in dye. Brander alternates wax and dye baths in a variety of colors. After the final dye, the wax is peeled off, revealing the colored pattern, and the egg is varnished.

"The technique is very simple," Brander said. But the designs she creates -- flowers, fish, deer, tiny triangles -- are not. "You do have to think ahead. You can't see the design ahead of time because all the colors are covered in wax."

Not surprisingly, Brander said Easter is a favorite time of year for her.

"Around this time of year, I always have candles and beeswax around," she said. "One of the things I really like is the smell of beeswax in the house at Easter."

Several years ago, Brander turned her love of egg decorating into a home business, called *Baba's Beeswax*. She's done workshops and demonstrations at Multifest, the Richmond Nature Park, local schools, sororities, even a law firm.

Weather permitting, Brander will demonstrate egg decorating on the waterfront at Steveston from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 1 to 4.