

When I think of Easter, I think Spring. The flowers are starting to surface and gain color, the grass is turning from brown to green. It is all so refreshing—a sign that summer is near.

It always amazes me to think that Easter is such a wonderful holiday, however, celebration of this holiday does not contain much structure. We all have fairly strict traditions for Thanksgiving and Christmas, but what about Easter.

Easter in my family has become a “fly by the seat of your pants” holiday. Sometimes the men are in the fields so it becomes a quick egg hunt at Grandma’s, dinner at the restaurant of choice and then out to the fields—everyone scurries. Or there are years like this—the weather has not been very cooperative in allowing us to have a little structure and planning for this day of celebration. Now if we can just get Mother Nature to cooperate we will all have a wonderful day.

I received a phone call from my Dad a few weeks back telling me that he wanted to start a new Easter tradition. He wanted to move the egg hunt on Easter morning from Grandma Irma’s to his house on the farm! Yikes! So as the story goes, much like Thanksgiving, we are now passing the holiday down one generation from Irma to Bruce and we will be having our Easter festivities out on the farm.

So as my step-mom Stef prepares a feast of all feasts, I have begun to think of some fun little Easter additives that I can bring as well. The following recipe is top on my list this year, what is on yours?

### ***Cheesecake Easter Baskets***

2 pkg. (8 oz. each) PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese, softened

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 tsp. vanilla

2 eggs

12 NILLA Wafers

36 small jelly beans

12 pieces shoestring licorice (4 inch each)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat cream cheese, sugar and vanilla with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add eggs; beat just until blended.

Place a wafer in the bottom of each paper lined cup of a muffin tin. Spoon cream cheese mixture evenly over wafers.

Bake 20 minutes or until centers are almost set. Cool. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Top evenly with jelly beans just before serving. Bend each licorice piece, then insert both ends into each cheesecake to resemble the handle of a basket. Store leftover cheesecakes in refrigerator.

\*You may also use coconut to garnish along with your jelly beans, however, I am allergic to coconut, so I leave that part out!