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## Build a basket for grown-ups

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Easter baskets for children are easy: Any kind of candy hiding in the grass or peeking out of a basket will please a kid, so eggs of sugar-covered sugar and waxy milk chocolate bunnies are just fine.

But if you want to put together an Easter basket to please the more sophisticated tastes of an adult, you'll have to look beyond the pastel reaches of the grocery candy aisles. There's a new abundance of delicious chocolate everywhere: candy bars made of single-origin cacao beans, bonbons with exotic spicy fillings, chocolate imported from Europe. Even Target has Belgian chocolates.

I went on an Easter egg hunt of my own all over Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to find out-of-the-ordinary Easter candy, from the traditional, homemade glories of Aglamesis and Graeter's, to the trendy filled chocolates at Marble Hill Chocolatier, the new Loveland Sweets store and the bargains at Galerie au Chocolate outlet in Hebron. We put together one high-class Easter basket with something for everyone.

### EASTER GOODIES FOR THE GROWN-UPS

When you fill your own baskets, you might want to start at Loveland Sweets (125 W. Loveland Ave., Loveland, 513-583-8305), a new store on the main drag in downtown Loveland. It's done up with marble and glass cases, and you will feel like a kid in, well, a candy store. There are French truffles and filled chocolates behind a glass counter, homemade fudge and turtles, "penny candy" gummy worms and licorice whips in glass jars. Loveland Sweets carries Italian eggs (\$1.25) wrapped in tissue paper that come in almond or nougat and lots of spring colors. And the big homemade turtle eggs are delicious.

Haute Chocolate (9823 Montgomery Road, Montgomery, 513-793-9999) is an Easter paradise now, with its famous buckeyes dressed up in bunny ears for Easter (\$2.95), solid chocolate baskets and Peeps that have been improved by a dip in dark chocolate (\$4.95). Haute Chocolate also has a good selection of solid chocolate rabbits, including this extravagant milk-chocolate guy (\$24.95) suitable for some very special Easter occasion.

Jean-Philippe Solnom, who makes the pastries for Greenup Café (308 Greenup St., Covington, 859-261-3663; [www.greenupcafe.com](http://www.greenupcafe.com)), has an adorable collection of Easter shapes molded from Valrhona chocolate. I would put this sweet birdhouse (\$20) in the middle of the table and eat it after dinner.

The pelican is one of many animal symbols associated with Easter. It was once thought that pelicans fed their young by pecking at their own breast, so their self-sacrifice makes them symbols of Christ. Aglamesis (3046 Madison Road, Oakley, 513-531-5196; 9899 Montgomery Road, Montgomery, 513-791-7082. [www.aglamesis.com](http://www.aglamesis.com)).

This is the only local store I know of that sells a solid chocolate pelican for Easter. It also sells bunnies in a range of sizes, the ever-popular foil-wrapped cream eggs, and its dark chocolate bar wrapped in a springlike pastel lavender.

A box of Graeter's (several locations, [www.graeters.com](http://www.graeters.com)) foil-wrapped chocolate cream eggs looks like a jewel box, and they come in great flavors, including peppermint egg. The Cincinnati mainstay ice cream shops also sell sweet little mint patties with hand-piped decorations and big cream eggs you can have personalized with someone's name.

Schneider's (420 Fairfield Ave., Bellevue, 859-431-3545; [www.schneiderscandies.com](http://www.schneiderscandies.com)) sells its famous foil-wrapped opera cream and other flavors of Easter eggs in an egg carton and makes its own egg-shaped peanut butter and chocolate meltaways. (Not pictured.)

You might not think of it for Easter candy, but Wild Oats (2693 Edmonson Road, Norwood, 513-531-8015; 5805 Deerfield Blvd., Mason, 513-398-9358. [www.wildoats.com](http://www.wildoats.com)) carries cute items, including an organic chocolate bar in camouflage (\$4.59) to baffle your egg-hunting children.

World Market (Kenwood, Westwood, Springdale, [www.worldmarket.com](http://www.worldmarket.com)) has a cute collection of European Easter candy, including real egg shells dyed with polka dots and filled with a chocolate-hazelnut truffle mixture (\$15.99 for six), and chocolate German bees (\$2.49).

If you want a truly sophisticated basket, you have to stop by Marble Hill Chocolatier (1989 Madison Road, O'Bryonville, 513-321-0888; [www.marblehillchocolatier.com](http://www.marblehillchocolatier.com)), home of a fetching \$10 Barcelona bunny, cute but sophisticated with its sea-salt and hickory-roasted almonds. Its Easter eggs are gorgeous: there are small air-brushed truffle eggs (\$1.75) in various flavors, and large Haas eggs (above, \$7) that look like what a dinosaur might hatch from.

Galerie au Chocolate (3380 Langley Road, Hebron, 859-538-8000, [www.galerieusa.com](http://www.galerieusa.com)) is the spot to go for low-cost chocolate. This outlet store has a lot of kids stuff, but also excellent truffles and chocolates. You could put some in one of the store's Christopher Radko eggs, gold and jewels and fit for a czarina (\$3).

It doesn't have to be candy: Bonbonerie (2030 Madison Road, O'Bryonville, 513-321-3399; [www.bonbonerie.com](http://www.bonbonerie.com)) has a cookie for every occasion, including these spring flowers and bunnies.

Esther Price (7501 Montgomery Road, Silverton, 513-791-1833; [www.estherprice.com](http://www.estherprice.com)) has all its chocolates out in bulk, so you can easily assemble your own basket. Lots of cream eggs decorated with little flowers (\$1.50), and some novelty items like carrot lollipops (\$2.95).

Since this is an adult Easter basket, feel free to include some French Rabbit wine (\$7.99) - or Rabbit Ridge wine. Find it at the Party Source (95 Riviera Drive, Bellevue, 859-291-4007; [www.thepartysource.com](http://www.thepartysource.com)), along with Lindt chocolate carrots (\$2.99) and a bitter orange-crisped rice milk chocolate bar labeled "Rejoice" (\$4.29).

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