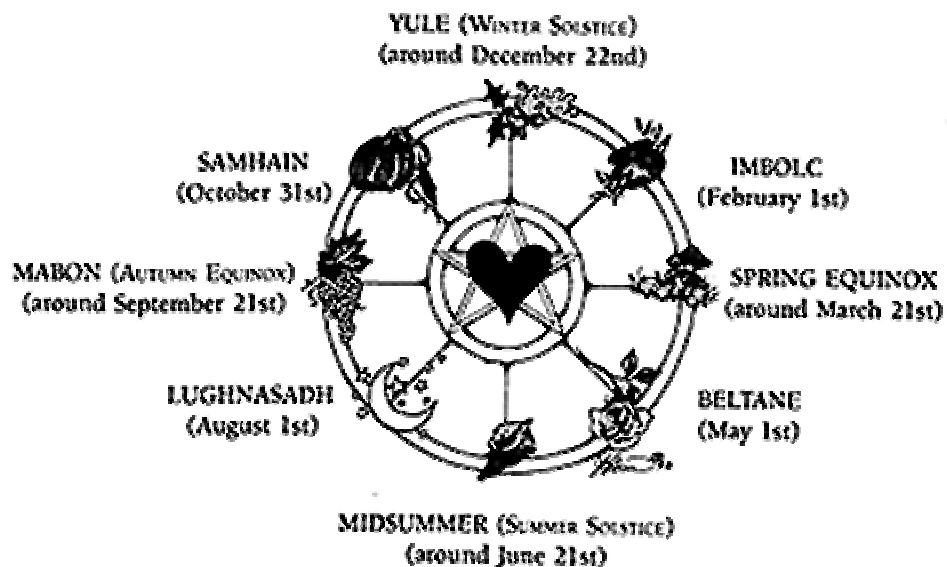


The Sabbats

By
Gordon Ireland



There are eight Sabbats, or holidays, that make up the Wheel of the Year. The wheel reflects the cyclical nature of the world, the seasons, and life. The Wheel has no start or end.

The Sabbats are spaced evenly through the year, each approximately 6 1/2 weeks apart. They include the quarters: Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, Fall Equinox and Winter Solstice and the cross-quarters which fall on Feb. 2, May 1, August 1 and October 31. The cross-quarters are considered "Greater Sabbats" while the quarters are considered "Lesser Sabbats."

YULE

Yule, pronounced "you all", or jol is the Winter Solstice, the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Yule, in Old Norse means, Wheel. As the Wheel of the Year is significant in pagan culture, it is important to note that Yule of the year means wheel. Which, if having read the previous article, Samhain, in the 99, October issue of The Seeker, it was noted that Samhain, may not have been the Celtic New

Year, but rather Yule. Yule, starting with the birth of God, and a celebration of beginning of longer days, makes sense as the beginning of the New Year.

Yule, of all the Sabbats, is the one that causes the most confusion among those who follow the pagan path. Specifically those who are new to the path and are breaking away from their Christian faith and way of life. Yule, is, has, and always will be a pagan holiday. With that said, I guess I need to further elaborate.

Yule has many pagan elements and more pagan history in it's foundation and pagan rites than Christian has. Yule has been celebrated since the beginning of time in the Northern Hemisphere. Many of the cultures located in the Northern Hemisphere celebrate Yule, all with a common theme, the birth of a God. Most of these Gods are associated with the Sun or with death and re-birth. Yule, like Christmas, celebrates the birth of God. Several pagan Gods, have Yule as their birth date:

Ra

Cronos

Lugh

Mirthra

Odin

This list is my no means complete, but does give you a general idea, that more than one God has celebrated his birthday during Yule. However, the Roman God Mirthra plays a most important role in the preservation of Yule, and it's other name, Christmas.

Approximately in the year 312, Constantine, Emperor of Rome, declared Rome Christian. This however was not done because Constantine was Christian, he was not baptized until 337, it was more do to the fact, that Rome was declining, and Constantine saw in Christian religion, what Rome lacked, moral fortitude and the ability to self organize. To attempt to persuade his fellow pagan Romans, he choose Mirthra's birthday (Yule) as the same a Jesus', and from there just let human nature take its course. It didn't hurt that after many hard fought battles, of which he won, had all armor and shields painted with Christian symbols, and that he told the populace that the

Christian God granted Rome these Victories. In Rome, whoever controlled the Army controlled Rome. Which raises the question of confusion again. Did the Christians steal Yule, or did they preserve it for us? It is important to understand that while historical facts and data are important, they are not necessary to enjoy the Sabbat. If one believes that Yule is a celebration of the coming of light, warmth, and the birth of (insert god of your choice) that whether we call it Christmas, Yule or the Winter Solstice is unimportant. Yule is the one Sabbat that allows us to celebrate with other faiths without compromising our own. There are many pagan/pre-Christian customs that are still part of the Christmas celebration. The giving of gifts was first founded in Rome to celebrate Saturn's Festival. The use of jingle balls is an Old Norse custom to drive away the evil spirits, in a time and place where night was longer than day. Mistletoe is an old Celtic custom and is commonly part of every household during Yule. The wreath, the complete circle, representing the Wheel of the year, is also still a custom.

Which brings us to the Yule tree. The tree of choice is the Fir, Evergreen or Pine. The reasons these particular trees were probably used is because that these were the only trees that were considered to be still alive, eternal. According to McCoy, these trees were sacred among the Druids, as they were the trees that didn't die. The Druids would decorate the trees with images that represented their wants and desires for the coming year.

It should be noted that while Yule is considered a primarily Christian Holiday, it does not do anyone any good, declaring their theft. Rather we should be thankful that they have done such a great job of preserving it for us, and relish the fact that you know, and understand, why they decorate the tree, give gifts, and use bells. It might make Yule at the homestead easier on those families of mixed religion philosophies. So when someone wishes you a "Merry Christmas", don't tell them I am not a Christian but rather say, "Merry Yule to you also", and know that Jesus wasn't a bad guy, but rather in a very elite group of Gods, who all celebrate their Birthday on Yule.

RitualThe Yule ritual of course would involve a Yule log. As stated earlier, Yule logs are best made of Pine, Fir or Evergreen. The custom of lighting a Yule log is the classic representation of the birth of a God from the fire of the Mother.

Tools:

Boline

Chalk

Myrrh oil

Sea Salt

Wine

One candle- green

Wood matches

First, one needs to say a prayer of thanks to the spirit of the tree before cutting it down. (It is always best if you can cut down your own tree if possible.) After you cut down the tree, cut approximately 1-2 feet for the log. From the bottom, leave the rest intact to decorate.

Depending upon which ritual tools you have, you can either take a piece of chalk, and draw the symbol of the sun on the log. Or take you Boline and carve a representation of the sun.

Place the log in your fire place or burning pit. Open a circle around it, calling the four corners, starting with the

South: (air) rub the oil onto the carved sun figure, saying: "The Wheel has turned, full circle, we call you back to warm us."

West: (water) pour the wine on the log, saying: "You, who have died, is now reborn."

North: (earth) sprinkling salt over the log, saying: "Since time began we celebrate the birth of God. The darkest of nights, gives birth to the new sun."

East: (fire) Taking the wood match light the fire, saying: "I light this fire in honor of all, Thank you God for the light you will bring us, thank you mother for the warmth of you son. Live within us."

"So mote it be!"

Close circle. This ceremony can be conducted using candles, either by themselves or by placing the candles on top of the Yule log. Though

the latter can be a fire hazard and the usual precautions should be taken.

FOODS

EASY YULE LOG

1 Package commercial cake mix, preferably chocolate

2 cans (24 oz.) pre-made frosting in a dark brown color

Several tubes of cake decoration frosting in green, red and white

Several toothpicks

Preheat oven to 300 F. Grease and line a jellyroll pan with waxed paper. Mix the cake according to package instructions and pour a thin layer-no more than 1/4 inch thick-into the prepared jelly roll pan. Bake the cake until just underdone. If you can't tell by looking then use the knife test. When the knife emerges not quite clean from the center of the cake, and when a light touch does not bounce back easily, it needs to come out. Check the cake every 7 minutes and then every 2 minutes after that. Do NOT over-bake or the dough will be dry and hard to work with. Remove the cake from the oven and let it cool slightly. Then remove the cake from the pan by lifting out the wax paper. With the dark frosting, coat the top of the cake with toothpicks and let it cook for about 5 more minutes. Cool the cake for 30 minutes, and then frost it with the dark brown icing. Next, take the tubes of colored cake decorating frosting and make holly and mistletoe over the top. You can also use artificial greenery until it is time to eat the cake. To finish, take a toothpick and etch lines into the frosting to resemble tree bark. (McCoy, page 70)

SPICED FRUIT NOG

12 eggs, separated

1 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon ground allspice

2 cups apricot nectar

2 cups half-and half

1 (12-ounce) can evaporate

2 teaspoon rum flavoring

Grated orange rind (optional)

Combine egg yolks, sugar, and spices in top of a double broiler. Place over simmering water and cook, stirring constantly with a wire whisk, until mixture reaches 165. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Combine yolk mixture, egg whites, apricot nectar, half-and half, evaporated milk, and rum flavoring: beat at medium speed of an electric mixer until well blended. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled. Pour chilled into serving cups and sprinkle with orange rind, if desired. Yield: 2 quarts

LEG OF LAMB

1 Leg of Lamb

Salt, pepper

1 cup heavy cream

2-3 tablespoons flour

Put the leg of lamb on a grid in a roasting pan and pour (2 pints) of water into the pan. You can also put the Leg of Lamb in a roasting bag without a liquid. Place into oven. Heat oven to 150-175 de. C (280-325 de. F) And roast for one hour for each kilo (2 lb.) of weight. Baste occasionally with the stock from the roasting pan. For the last half-hour of cooking switch on the grill, (US broiler) and grill the Leg of Lamb on both sides. If you use a roasting bag, remove it from the bag for the last half-hour and grill in the same way.

Strain the stock into a casserole and skim off the fat. Thicken the sauce with flour, or your favorite thickening, season and color with gravy browning. Add the cream and remove from the heat. Serve with your choice of vegetables and caramel potatoes

Imbolg

Imbolg/Imbolc is pronounced EM-Bowl-ig or ic, it also known as Midwinter, Candlemass, Oimeic, Lupercus, Lupecal, Disting, Brigatia (Brigid's Day), Lady Day and Groundhog Day. Imbolg translates, according to McCoy, to ewe's milk. Though McCoy does not say from which language this translates from, she does say it is because the ewes at this time of the year were pregnant and would start lactating. (McCoy, page 88) Like the other Great Sabbats of the Witches' year, Imbolg celebrated on it's astrologically determined by the sun's reaching 15-degrees Aquarius. This date varies from year-to-year. Though it usually falls with in the first week of the month.

Imbolg has become to be known as a time for ritual purification, and is one of the four major Celtic Fire Festivals. It is thought to have gained the name Candlemass, due to the poor weather at this time of year, making it almost impossible to have a Bonfire festival. Candles were thought to have been used as replacement to move the ritual indoors. Thus it gained the name Candlemass. (McCoy, page 88-89) However, there is no evidence to back up this claim and while it makes a better story than the truth, it is false.

Another name for the holiday is "Brigit's Day" or Lady's Day after the Irish Goddess Brigit. The kindling of sacred fires chiefly marked Brigit's holiday, since she symbolized the fire of birth and healing. The Catholic Pope, Sergius I (reigned 687 to 701 AD) was not happy with the Goddess worship that still thrived in many Catholic communities. Unable to stamp out the holiday, Sergius incorporated it with the Church. Renaming Brigatia to the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary or Candlemass. It was believed that women were impure for six weeks after giving birth. Since Mary gave birth to Jesus (historically) on the Winter Solstice, she wouldn't be purified until February 2nd. Pagans can translate this as the Great Mother once again becoming the Young Maiden Goddess. This allowed the Church another foothold in and already shrinking religion by not only making their choice become the focus of the holiday, but by replacing the Mother, with the Mother of God. Subtlety, changing the focus of Goddess worship with that of God. (Henes, page 27)

Imbolg is the halfway point between winter and spring. A time when animals are stirring from their hibernation and plants are beginning to bud, even much of the earth is still under a blanket of snow. This concept of waking, and of being noted as a halfway point is further emphasized by the USA custom of Groundhog's Day.

Groundhog Day tells us that if the Groundhog, also known as Punxsutawney Phil, sees his shadow we will have six more weeks of winter, if he don't, spring will be here in six weeks. Thus connecting, this holiday to weather lore. This custom is very old. An ancient Scottish rhyme tells us that:

If Candlemass day be dry and fair,
The half o' winter to come and mair
If Candlemass day be wet and foul.
The half o' winter gane at Yule

This says that if it is nice on Candlemass, expect six more weeks of cold weather, if it isn't nice on Candlemass, the weather will be a little nicer. (Henes, page 28-30)

RITUAL

Items needed:

3 Candles: 1 White, 2 Yellow

Milk

Chamomile

Olive Oil

Jasmine Incense

Parchment paper.

Divination tools, Runes, Tarot Cards, etc, which ever you feel comfortable with Other ritual items, cauldron, chalice, and bell.

As Imbolg has some association with forecasting, i.e.: Groundhog Day, we will have a ritual to forecast.

To begin start by extinguishing all candles and other lights in the house. Decorate the altar with early spring flowers. Chamomile and Jasmine are on the altar and the Cauldron is nearby. The bell is on the altar, as is the Chalice filled with milk. Divination tools placed in front of the White candle, making sure that they are face down. White candle in the center, flanked by two yellow candles. Rub the oil into the candles.

Open circle per your tradition.

Sit in front of the altar, speaking aloud light the white candle.

SAY: From darkness the Goddess is stirring, waking from frozen dreams, She brings her promise of coming Spring. Ring bell one time.

Lighting the Yellow candle on your left

SAY: I call upon your guidance to assist me. To help me maintain my focus, energy and alignment for your divine purpose and work. Ring bell one time.

Lighting the yellow candle on your right.

SAY: I have come to honor the fertility of the Maiden. I honor the Mother and the Crone for sharing their wisdom. I give thanks to the time of renewal.

Ring bell one time.

Lighting incense express needs out loud, gently spreading the smoke over your choice over divination tools. Taking the parchment and write down your question, and repeat it aloud. Take a pinch of Chamomile herb and place it in the cauldron. Take parchment and light each corner of it with the yellow candles, place in cauldron along with the herb.

Meditate for a period of time that is comfortable for you.

After mediating reach and take a rune, card etc, Focus on its meaning and how it relates to your question. If necessary mediate while focusing on the object.

Taking the chalice, take a sip, thanking the Goddess for her wisdom.

SAY: I thank the Goddesses, for watching over this ceremony of Imbolg. I thank you for your guidance and your wisdom. I honor Thee, Maiden, most blessed Bride. As your candle burns through this night
And thank you for the renewed life you offer us all

As you emerge from the dark to the light.

Close circle. Take white candle to light other candles in the house.
Leave white candle to burn throughout the night.

FOODS

Traditional foods are from dairy products and spiced with onion, leek, garlic, shallot, and/or olives. The wine may be spiced and the food may contain raisins. Bread puddings and creamy soups are typical.

FAERY WINE

1-1/2 cups milk per serving

1 tsp. honey

1/4 tsp. vanilla extract

cinnamon

Warm milk, being careful not to boil. In each glass or mug, add honey and vanilla. Sprinkle tops with cinnamon.

MAGICKAL CREAM PUFFS

For the puffs:

1 cup water

1/2 cup butter or margarine

1-1/4 cups flour

4 eggs

Bring water to a boil in a saucepan. Lower heat and add flour. Stir on low heat until batter forms a ball shape. Remove from heat. Add eggs and beat until smooth. Drop, using a tablespoon, onto greased cookie sheet. Bake for 30 minutes until golden brown at 375 degrees.

For the filling:

1/2 cup sugar

2 Tbl. cornstarch (ruled by the Sun, brings health and wealth)

1/4 tsp. salt

2 cups milk

2 egg yolks

2 Tbl. butter or margarine

2 tsp. vanilla extract

Confectioner's sugar

In a saucepan, slowly bring sugar, cornstarch, and salt to a boil, stirring constantly until thick. Add milk, egg yolks, and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add butter and vanilla. Let cool. Fill puffs with cream and sprinkle with Confectioner's sugar.

IMBOLG FEAST LAMB STEW

2- 1/2 lb. lamb neck chops

1 tbs. lamb fat

4 medium onions

1 tbs. butter/margarine

4 medium carrots

2 1/2 cups water

4 medium potatoes

1 tbs. parsley, chopped

1 tsp. each salt & pepper

1 tbs. chives, chopped

Don't let the butcher trim the fat off of the lamb chops. Shred some of the excess fat and cook it down in a large pot or Dutch-oven. Peel the onions, carrots, and potatoes. Cut the onions and carrots into quarters, and put all the vegetables aside. Cut the meat into 8 pieces, and trim away the rest of the excess fat. The bones need not be removed. Place the meat in the hot fat and brown. Repeat with the onions and carrots. Add water, salt, and pepper carefully. Put whole potatoes on top. Cover pot and simmer gently until meat is cooked, approx. 2 hours. Remove from heat. Pour off the cooking liquid into a separate saucepan, allow cooling for a few minutes, skimming off grease, and reheating. Add butter, chives, and parsley to the reheated liquid in the saucepan. Pour heated liquid back over the stew. Serve hot.

Makes 4-6 servings

Ostara

Ostara (pronounced Oh-star-ah) is also called Eostre, Easter, Vernal Equinox, Spring Equinox, and the First Day of Spring. This is the time of year when day & night are equal, and heralds the return of longer days. Signifying when light triumphs over darkness.

In countries that are located in the Northern Hemisphere this is a time when seeds are planted. This relates to the neo-pagan philosophy of planting new ideas for the coming year.

Ostara/Eostre is the German Goddess of the Dawn/Spring. Ostara is one of the most important of all the Germanic holidays. Eostre symbols are the egg and the rabbit. The story behind this is that a white rabbit fell in love with Eostre and to demonstrate his love, he laid colored eggs everyday.

The rabbit symbolizes innocence and continuing fertility. The egg symbolizes birth and rebirth. Estrogen's root word is Eostre. The legend of the egg hunt comes from the fact that birds (chickens) were not as domesticated as they are now and in the spring our forefathers would literally have to hunt for the eggs.

The neo-pagan version of Ostara is a celebration of birth and new life. The time of year when death holds no power over the living. It is the return of the Goddess after her winter hibernation. It is the time of the year when the Goddess and God consummate their love. Many of the neo-pagan Ostara rituals have fertility implications and are largely sexual in nature.

Two other cultural Ostara celebrations are Greek and Christian: The Greek myth of Persephone also has it relates to Ostara. When Persephone returns in the spring, her mother's joy brings forth life once more to the world. Easter, which is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon falling after Ostara. The Christianity version of Eostre also follows the rebirth pattern.

Ostara is mainly a day to celebrate new life and new beginnings. It is a time to plant new ideas and seeds for the future, both literally and figuratively.

RITUAL

There are many versions of this ritual, many of which can be found in RavenWolf, Buckland and Starhawk. This version is one of my more original ones, thus being more personal, though this is the Readers Digest version, and some of it's elements have been left out purposely. Now you can decorate your altar with wildflowers and with eggs, etc. Though the following ritual has none of the above. It follows more along the lines of a fertility ritual, though it is not a Great Rite.

TOOLS: Sheathed Athame, Cauldron, earth (dirt), seed (of your choice, though we use Sunflowers), water, smudge stick, chalice, four yellow candles. Open circle per your personal tradition. Have altar face towards the East, as Eostre is the Goddess of the Dawn. Place candles in the four directions, place cauldron and seed to the East, place earth to the North, water in chalice to the West, Smudge stick to the South.

SAY: (Facing East, take sheathed Athame in both hands raise above head.) We welcome you Mother of Life and Light.

ALL SAY: We welcome you Mother

SAY: (Removing Athame from sheath) Mother who comes once more from the darkness to the light, we welcome you. (Place Athame to the right of the East Candle, sheath to the left.)

ALL SAY: We welcome you

SAY: (Lighting candle to the East.) You, whose light gives us life, we too give life. We welcome you.

ALL SAY: We welcome you.

SAY: (Taking seed and raise it above your head) Mother teach us through you warmth and love to accept all living things and my teaching us, we honor you. (Take seed and place in cauldron)

ALL SAY: Mother teach us.

SAY: Let us give thanks

ALL SAY: (Silent moment of thanks)

SAY: (Moving to the North, place cauldron before the North candle) We seek your bounty through the Earth. (Light candle) We ask permission to enjoin with you to give life for our future. (Place seed in earth)

ALL SAY: Mother give us your bounty.

SAY: Let us give thanks

ALL SAY: (Silent moment of thanks)

SAY: (Moving to the West, place cauldron before the West candle) We seek your life's blood. (Light candle) We ask your grace to give life to our seeds, you children. (Take the chalice with water and more over the earth in the cauldron)

ALL SAY: Mother give us your blood.

SAY: Let us give thanks

ALL SAY: (Silent moment of thanks)

SAY: (Moving to the South, place cauldron before the South candle) We seek your gentle breath, and guidance. (Light candle) We ask for your winds to direct to your path. (Take smudge stick and light from candle, wave over the cauldron.)

ALL SAY: Mother direct us.

SAY: Let us give thanks

ALL SAY: (Silent moment of thanks)

SAY: (Moving to the East, place cauldron before the East candle, take sheath in left hand athame in right) Mother who births new life. (Lift sheath above head) Young God who fertilize her. (Lift Athame above head) Let us join you. (Return Athame in Sheath)

ALL SAY: Let us join you.

Close circle per your tradition.

RECIPES

Dandelion Wine

Recipe from Wine Art - Recipe Booklet - 1992

Recipe for 4 litres and may be multiplied. All teaspoon measures are level.

INGREDIENTS

Dandelion Petals 8 cups

White Grape Concentrate 10 oz

Water 1 gallon

Corn Sugar 3lb

OR

White Granulated Sugarg 2 1/2 lb

Vinacid R 3 tsp.

Yeast Nutrient 1/2 tsp.

Campden Tablets (crushed) 2

Grape Tannin 1/2 tsp.

Wine Yeast Lalvin

Acid 4 g/l

METHOD

Use only dandelion petals. The green pieces will impart a bitter flavour. Put all ingredients except Water and Wine Yeast in primary ferment. Add 1/2 quantity of Water hot, stir to dissolve sugar. Add balance of Water cold. Cover with plastic sheet. When must is 21 - 23o C (70 - 75o F) add yeast. Stir must daily. Ferment 4 - 5 days or until S.G. is 1.030. Strain out pulp through nylon straining bag and press. Siphon into carboys or gallon jugs and attaches fermentation locks. Rack in 10 days and again in one month. If necessary, fine with recommended Finings. When wine is clear and stable, bottle.

Spinach (or Broccoli) Quiche

1 9-in pie crust, unbaked

3 eggs, beaten

8 oz pkg. of Swiss cheese slices

1/2 tsp. salt

2 tbs. flour

dash pepper

1 c milk

dash nutmeg

1 small onion, sliced and sautéed lightly

10 oz pkg. frozen spinach (chopped) or broccoli, cooked and drained
Cut cheese in strips. Toss with flour. In piecrust, alternate layers of onion, spinach (or broccoli) and cheese, ending with cheese layer. Mix milk, eggs, and spices. Pour into crust. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour or until toothpick comes out clean.

Hot Cross Buns

Hot Cross Buns are traditionally served on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter) and during the Lenten season, but they are good anytime. This recipe will make 2 1/2 dozen buns.

2 packages active dry yeast

1/2 cup warm water

1 cup warm milk

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup softened butter or margarine

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

6 1/2 to 7 cups all-purpose flour

4 eggs

1/2 cup dried currents

1/2 cup raisins

2 Tablespoons water

1 egg yolk

1 recipe Icing (below)

Have the water and milk at 110-115 degrees F. In a large mixing bowl; dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Add the warm milk sugar, butter, vanilla, salt, nutmeg, and 3 cups of the flour. Beat until smooth. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating the mixture well after each addition. Stir in the dried fruit and enough flour to make soft dough.

Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 6 to 8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl and turn over to grease the top. Cover with a damp towel or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size (about 1 hour).

Punch the dough down and shape into 30 balls. Place on greased baking sheets. Using a sharp knife, cut a cross (or X) on the top of each roll. Cover again and let rise until doubled (about 30 minutes). Beat the water and egg yolk together and brush over the rolls. Bake at 375-degrees F. for 12 to 15 minutes. Cool on wire racks. Drizzle icing over the top of each roll following the lines of the cut cross.

ICING: Combine 1 cup confectioners' sugar, 4 teaspoons milk or cream, a dash of salt, and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract. Stir until smooth. Adjust sugar and milk to make a mixture, which flows easily.

Easter Crown Bread

To decorate this pretty Easter crown, you will need 5 colored eggs but they must be UNCOOKED. Be sure to use non-toxic dyes as you color them. 3 to 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour (divided use)

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1 package active dry yeast

1 teaspoon salt

2/3 cup warm milk

2 Tablespoons softened butter or margarine

2 eggs

1/2 cup chopped mixed candied fruit

1/4 cup chopped blanched almonds

1/2 teaspoon aniseed

5 uncooked eggs

Non-toxic egg coloring

Vegetable oil

In a large mixing bowl, combine 1-cup flour, sugar, yeast, and salt. Add the milk and butter and beat with an electric mixer for 2 minutes

on medium. Add the eggs and 1/2-cup flour and beat on high for 2 minutes.

Stir in the fruit, nuts, and aniseed, mixing well. Stir in enough remaining flour to form soft dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic (about 6 to 8 minutes). Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size (about 1 hour).

Meanwhile, color 5 eggs (leave them uncooked) with non-toxic dyes. When dry; lightly rub them with vegetable oil.

Punch down the risen dough. Divide in half. Roll each half into a 24-inch rope. On a greased baking sheet, loosely twist the two ropes together. Form into a ring and pinch the ends together. Gently split the ropes and tuck the 5 colored uncooked eggs into the openings. Cover and let rise again until doubled (about 30 minutes). Bake in a 350-degree F. oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until a golden brown. Remove from the baking sheet and cool on a wire rack

Beltane

Beltane is celebrated on May 1st and is one of the original Celtic festivals, Samhain being the other one. Beltane or May Day is also known as the Lovers holiday. Beltane is pronounced bel-tene, "a goodly fire" or bel-dine, the offering of cattle, dine to the God Bel. Though the latter, is thought to somehow been connected to the Celtic god Belus, though this has not been proven. (MacCulloch, page 264-68) Beltane is one of the four Celtic Fire festivals, and is probably the second most important festival next to Samhain. Beltane is primarily a sun festival and was performed during the day.

The most important part of Beltane was the kindling of the fires. The Irish Celts would extinguish their fires, the night before and would eat a cold meal to insure that all fires were out. Then would attend the ceremony, returning with an ember to once more start their fires. The fire festival later evolved into the Celts driving their cattle through two fires to purify the herd. This was done to insure good health of the cattle for the coming year. Modern day pagans will jump over the Beltane fires, though very few actually no why they do so.

Beltane role in fertility rites is not as old as some people think. They were however a natural extension of the planting season. May Day

being the time when the crops planted earlier would begin to sprout. The story goes that Beltane marks the wedding of the Goddess and God, and that their coupling brings new life to the earth. The awakening of spring and marks the end of winter. It is also the custom that this is the day of hand-fasting. The use of the May pole also has sexual implications, the pole representing the phallus and the ribbons that are tied to it connect oneself to the Goddess. As they dance around the Pole, the wreath (the Goddess) would descend down the pole, thus consummating their marriage.

Beltane is also a Tree festival, many of the fires were light under a sacred tree. For the Celts, this use of the Tree represents the death and rebirth. The tree, appearing dead in the winter, would begin to spout new branches and leaves during this time, thus signifying the coming of summer. This use of the tree later evolved in the May pole festival. It should be also noted that The Celts would also tie rags and pieces of personal articles to the tree in attempt to connect themselves to the spirit of the tree.

The other myth that is tied to Beltane is that of Shape-shifting. Beltane, like its counterpart, Samhain, has mystical implications. Once more the veil to other world is thinned and thus strange doings happen on this day. One of them being, in Ireland Hags, or witches are given to shape shift into hares and steal all the butter from the cattle. Even in Ireland today, the men hunt down and kill all the hares in the fields with the cattle. The epic chase of Ceridwen and Gwion, which resulted in producing Taliesen, is a prime example of the changes of seasons and consummation of the Goddess and God.

FOOD

MEADE

1/2 gallon water
1 1/2 cups raw honey
1/4 cup lemon juice
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon allspice

Heat all ingredients together over medium heat in a large pot. As the honey melts, an oily crust forms at the top. DO NOT REMOVE. When in is well blended, remove from the heat, stirring occasionally as it cools. This is the non-alcoholic version. (McCoy, page 136)

FARLS

3 cups real mashed potatoes
2 cups dry oats
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
Pinch of pepper
Pinch rosemary

Soak oats in warm water for 15 minutes until soft and swollen. Mix them with all other ingredients in a large bowl. Knead till mixture is like thick dough. Make patties, fry in hot oil until brown. Serve immediately. (McCoy, page 137)

BELTANE CREAM PIE

1 cup milk
1 cup cream
1/2 cup butter
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/4 teaspoons vanilla
Ground nutmeg

Prepared piecrust, already cooked. Melt butter in pan over medium heat. In separate bowl add milk to cornstarch, making sure it is fully dissolved. Add this and all other ingredients to pan, except vanilla and nutmeg. Stir till mixture becomes thick. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Pour mixture into piecrust and sprinkle with nutmeg. Serve chilled. (McCoy, page 134)

OATCAKES - IRISH

6 ounces Oatmeal (preferably fine)
2 ounces flour
1-teaspoon Salt
10 fluid ounces warm water

Mix flour and salt together. Slowly add warm water. Roll out on a floured board to 1/4 inch thick. Cut into triangles. Cook on a pan or griddle until golden on both sides. Dry out in a cool oven (300 degrees) until crisp. These cakes are eaten buttered, with a glass of milk, for supper, but are also terrific with wine and cheese.

OATCAKES - SCOTS

1/2 cup Shortening
1 cup Oats or quick-cooking oats
1 cup All-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon Baking soda
1/4 teaspoon Salt
2 - 3 Tablespoons Cold Water

Cut shortening into next four ingredients until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Add water, 1 Tablespoon at a time, until it forms stiff dough. Roll until 1/8 inch thick on lightly floured surface. Cut into 2-inch rounds or squares. Place on un-greased cookie sheet and bake at 375 until they just start to brown - 12 to 15 minutes. Bake on a hot griddle or frying pan until the edges begin to curl. Turn over and cook the other side. Do not let the oatcakes brown; they should be a pale fawn color. Put on a wire rack to cool. They are delicious served with cheese.

IRISH SODA BREAD

1 1/2 cups All-purpose flour -- unbleached, enriched
1 1/2 cups Whole wheat flour -- stone-ground
1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon Baking soda
1 1/4 cups Buttermilk

Set the baking rack in the center of the oven and place a baking stone (if available) on the rack. Preheat the oven to 375. In a mixing bowl, combine the dry ingredients. Mix to incorporate. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the buttermilk. Mix quickly to incorporate the milk evenly. It may be easier to mix with the hands than with a spoon. Form the dough into a loaf shape and place in a nonstick 8 1/2-x 4 1/2 x 2 1/2" loaf pan. Place in the preheated oven and bake for 50-55 minutes, until well browned and a skewer inserted in the center comes out dry. Remove from the oven and the baking pan. Place on a wire rack to cool.

SAND TARTS (OLD GERMAN STYLE)

2 1/2 cups Sugar
2 cups Butter
2 each Egg, well beaten
1 each Egg white

4 cups Flour
Pecans
Cinnamon

Cream the butter and sugar together. Slowly add the flour, working it in well. Add the well-beaten eggs and mix thoroughly. Chill over night. Roll out thin on lightly floured board; brush cookies with the egg white which has been slightly beaten, sprinkle with sugar and a little cinnamon and press 1/2 pecan into center of cookie. Bake at 350-F about 10 minutes.

THE CEREMONY

The following was created using poems by John Herrick and Caitlin Matthews plus parts of a Ceremony found in The Book of Druidry. This ceremony is designed to be generic and for the use of those who do not have a specific God or Goddess to call upon, but nonetheless feel connected to the Celtic festivals. Some of the poems have been altered to fit the general concept of Beltane the original lines are bracketed.

The ceremony shall be as follows:

First: All will enter from the East in honoring of this being a solar festival. All holding an unlit candle.

Second: Everyone who is participating will pick up a ribbon. Those who are playing parts of East, South, West, and North will stand in their perspective positions.

Third: The leader will open up the ceremony by lighting the fire and say the following:

LEADER:

In the beginning gleaming fire was I
Grant, O Spirits of our Celtic ancestors, [O God/dess] thy Protection,
And in protection, Strength
And in strength, Understanding
And in understanding, Knowledge
And in Knowledge, Knowledge of Justice
And in Knowledge of Justice, the Love of it
And in the Love of it, the Love of all Existence

And the Love of all Existence, the Love of Ourselves [the Love of
God/ess and all [Goodness]

ALL MOVE ONE FULL TURN CLOCKWISE

ALL SAY: MAY THERE BE PEACE IN THE EAST

EAST:

We will go as wren in spring,
With sorrow and sighing on silent wing,
And we shall go in Our Ancestors names [Our Lady's name]
Aye, til we come home again

Then we shall follow as falcon's gra[e]y
And hunt thee cruelly for our prey
And we shall go in your good names [in the Good God's name]
Aye, to fetch thee home again

ALL MOVE ONE FULL TURN CLOCKWISE

ALL SAY: MAY THERE BE LOVE IN THE SOUTH

SOUTH:

Then we will go as a mouse in May
In fields by night, in cellars by day,
And we shall go in Our Ancestor's name [Our Lady's name]
Aye, til we come home again

Then we shall follow as black tom's cats,
And hunt thee through corn and vats,
And we shall go in your good names [in the Good God's name]
Aye, to fetch thee home again

ALL MOVE ONE FULL TURN CLOCKWISE

ALL SAY: MAY THERE BE HARMONY IN THE WEST

WEST:

Then we shall go as an autumn hare,
With sorrow and sighing and mickle care
And we shall go in our Ancestors names [Our Lady's name]
Aye, till we come home again

Then we shall follow as swift gra[e]y hounds
And hunt thy tracks by leaps and bounds
And we shall go in your good names [in the Good God's name]
Aye, to fetch thee home again

ALL MOVE ONE FULL TURN CLOCKWISE

ALL SAY: MAY THERE BE TRUTH IN THE NORTH

NORTH:

Then we shall go as winter trout
With sorrow and sighing and mickle doubt
And we shall go in Our Ancestors names [Our Lady's name]
Aye, till we come home again

Then we shall follow as otter's swift
And snare thee fast ere thou canst shift
And we shall go in your good names [in the Good God's name]
Aye till we fetch thee home again

ALL MOVE ONE FULL TURN CLOCKWISE

LEADER:

Come; let us go while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time.
 [We shall grow old apace,
And die before we know our liberty.
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun;]
And, as a vapor or a drop of rain
Once lost, can ne'er be found again
So when or you or I are made A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight Lies drowned with us in endless night.
Then while time serves and we are but decaying
Come, my friends, come, let's go a-Maying!

ALL SAY:

WE SWEAR BY PEACE, LOVE, HARMONY AND TRUTH TO STAND
HEART TO HEART AND HAND IN HAND
MARK, O SPIRIT, AND HEAR US NOW
CONFIRMING THIS OUR SACRED VOW

All exit West by jumping over the fire and lighting their candle

Litha

Litha is also known as the summer solstice, Midsummer, All Couples Day, and Saint John's Day. Litha is one of the fire festivals and occurs on the longest day of the year. This is the time of year when the sun reaches its highest apex, at the Tropic of Cancer. It is the day when light overcomes darkness, a day of power. Litha also is one of the "quarter days" or the Lesser Sabbats.

Litha, as a Wiccan holiday, has the Sun/God reaching full power, and the Goddess pregnant with child. She holds promise of the bounty of the harvest yet to come. Litha's name, depending which author you read, has its roots in Greco-Roman, (McCoy, page 149) or according to Our Lady of the Prairie Coven, Litha means opposite of Yule. This may possibly have Saxon roots, though that is pure speculation. No others authors that were researched for this article offered any explanation as to the origins of Litha other than it is name for Midsummer.

Midsummer traditionally marks the beginning of summer (i.e. schools out). Actually midsummer marks the actual middle of the Celtic summer, falling between Beltane and Lughnasadh. Midsummer is known also as a night of magic, made famous by William Shakespeare with his play Midsummer's Nights Dream. As a Quote from Puck can attest to:

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!
(Shakespeare, Act 3, Scene 2)

June in Europe and America is historically the busiest month for weddings, hence All Couples Day. This tradition begins because this time of the year was a time of rest for the Ancient Celts, the time between planting and harvesting. June allowed time for the wedding festivals and rest. This is best described in an English child's nursery rhyme.

"...marry in the month of May
most surely you will rue the day.
Marry in June when roses grow
And happiness you'll always know..."
Author Unknown (McCoy, 167)

Saint John's Day celebrates the birth of St. John exactly six months before the birth of Christ as he foretold of Christ's coming. The Celts, as was their way, easily adopted this day and incorporated into their summer solstice festivities just as they did with Beltane/May Day. A poem demonstrates how the Celts and other cultures were able to incorporate the various pagan meanings of Litha with a Christian one.

In praise of St. John--
May he give health to my heart.
St. John comes and St. John goes,
Mother, marry me off soon!
Author Unknown (Henes, page 61)

Litha's celebrations are as varied as the authors who write them are. The times that the ritual should take place are also varied. McCoy suggests that the ritual take place on the eve before June 21. (Pages 163-66) McCoy further states that during the ritual one should jump over or walk in between two purifying fires. (Pages 153-54) Author of Celestially Auspicious Occasions: Seasons, Cycles and Celebrations, Donna Henes, says that Midsummer is a sun festival and is best done during the daylight hours between sunrise and high noon. (Page 56)

Litha rituals as all ritual should be personal. Several of the authors give basic outlines some for covens, some for the solitary. Most of the authors used for this essay are Wiccan. This particular point of view uses a very pregnant Lady and a Lord at the height of his powers. This ritual, no matter what the tradition or the Gods/Goddesses involved should include either the sun or a fire, or both.

FOODS

Litha's foods vary, depending upon the author and tradition you adhere to. Cunningham suggests fruits, Buckland, cakes and ale, and Starhawk, bread and drink. However, given that this is a day to celebrate the sun, foods should be of yellow (gold), orange or reds.

BAKED TOMATOES

Serves 6-8

3 whole fresh tomatoes
1, 12-oz bag of shredded cheddar cheese
Fresh parsley

Pre-heat the oven to 350 F. Slice the tomato 1/2-inch thick, place on tin foil. Liberal spread cheddar cheese on the tomatoes. Baked for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle parsley over tomatoes.

SUMMER SQUASH

Serves 6-8

1 summer squash
1/4 cup of butter
Black pepper

Need one medium size sauce pan, set flame to medium. Place butter in pan. Slice squash approximately 1/8-inch thick, layer into pan, sprinkling pepper to taste on each layer. Stirring occasionally, cook to taste. Takes 20-30 minutes.

Mom McCoy's Lemon Chess Pie

(Makes one nine inch pie)

1 unbaked pie shell
2 cups granulated sugar
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon corn meal
4 eggs
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
1/2 cup real lemon juice
1/4 cup grated lemon peel

Preheat oven to 375 F. Place unbaked pie shell in a deep-dish pie pan. Mix the sugar, flour, cornstarch and cornmeal, then add eggs, milk, butter, lemon juice, and lemon peel. Beat until smooth. Pour mixture

into the pie shell and bake for about 40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

ZUCCHINI CASSEROLE

(Serves 6-8)

5 zucchini
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup sour cream
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, grated
2 cups mozzarella cheese, grated
1 teaspoon basil
1/2 teaspoon ground oregano
3/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon ground rosemary
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 cup fresh mushrooms
1 small chopped tomato
1/2-cup bacon bits
2 cups prepared croutons
1/2 cup of Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix all ingredients together in a large mixing bowl. Place the mixture in a lightly greased 9 X 13 baking pan and bake for 30 minutes.

THE RITUAL

The following is a mixture from the following authors, Shakespeare, Buckland, RavenWolf, Starhawk, Cunningham and McCoy.

Altar should reflect the colors the colors of midsummer and face the east. Bonfire should either be in the middle of circle or to the west.

Time: Sunrise

All enter from the west to face the rising sun. Those playing the parts of the God and Goddess take their position on the east most side of the circle. The Leader takes his/her place in the middle the rest form a half circle, from west to south to north, facing towards the east.

Leader should cast the circle. After Circle is cast leader begins.

LEADER: God of the Sun, we have gathered here to day to honor you, for now is the day of your greatest strength.

ALL SAY: We honor you.

LEADER: Goddess, mother, we gathered here today to honor you, for today is the day you are full of bloom.

ALL SAY: We honor you.

LEADER: Today is the day we mark the end of the Oak Kings reign, and the beginning of the Holly Kings.

GOD: (Facing the Goddess) Farewell to thee, my love. For my power grows less with passing of the year.

GODDESS: (Facing the God) Farewell to thee, my love. For your son grows strong within my womb.

ALL SAY: We honor you.

LEADER: Lord and lady, come into our hearts, and purify us. Smite the darkness from our souls with your light.

GOD and GODDESS: (To jump hand and hand over the fire.) Come join us children in the light. Let our fire purify your souls and make your spirit bright.

LEADER: (Jumps over fire in the waiting arms of the God and Goddess) We thank thee for your love and light.

ALL SAY: We honor you (Jumps over fire)

LEADER: (Closes Circle) We dedicate ourselves to the God and Goddess, Lord and Lady, whose union formed another life. We give ourselves with these ancient vows. Standing firm upon this earth you have blessed.

ALL SAY: We honor you.

All leave towards the west

Lughnasadh

Lughnasadh, pronounced Loo-nas-ah, also written as Lugnasadh, and Lughnasa, and is celebrated on August the first and is the first harvest festival of the year. Lughnasadh is also known as the First Festival, and Lammas. Lughnasadh still survives in Modern Celtic societies, Ireland calls the month of August Lunasa, Scotland, Lunasad , and those who live on the Isle of Man, Luanistyn.

Lughnasadh is named after Lugh, and Celtic Deity who is generally credited with freeing Ireland from the Firbolg, by defeating their King, Bres. However, even though the Lughnasadh, is named after the Tuatha De Dannan God Lugh, it is not his festival. Lughnasadh is actually a festival to celebrate Lugh's foster mother, Tailtiu. After defeating the Firbolg, Lugh became fostered to Tailtiu, she was a member of the Firbolg royal family. It was common practice for warring peoples to foster to each other, to ensure peace. The legend goes, that after the Tuatha De Dannan defeated the Firbolg, Tailtiu was obligated to clear vast tracts of land for planting. She supposedly died of exhaustion from this endeavor.

Tailtiu was buried by her foster son, Lugh, whose grief was so great that he threatened to take his vengeance out upon the crops of the very fields Tailtiu died clearing. Thus, they harvested the crops before Lugh could do so, and celebrated with a feast honoring his foster mother. She was buried beneath a great mound, named for her, Tailtiu. This mound is where, supposedly the first feast of Lughnasadh was held. At the feast games of skill and contests of athletic prowess were held. Also included in the activities were contests of poetry, singing and storytelling. This was considered one of the first Olympic events ever to be held.

Lughnasadh also means Oath Fair, Lugh meaning Oath in Gaelic and nasadh, meaning Fair or gathering. After the harvest was in, it seems that many contracts would be made for the coming season, such as labor and marriage contracts. These contracts or oaths were formed and renewed at the Lughnasadh. Many of the festivals of Lughnasadh were more for the forming of partnerships and marriages than for the traditional games form which it started. Though what better way to check out a prospective spouse or someone to work for you than to observe them in a contest of physical or mental skill.

The First Harvest is still recognized in many of today's agricultural societies. Many a state or county fair is held during this time. In the

state of Michigan, besides a few dozen county fairs, there is also the Renaissance festival, which begins in August. In the Americas, corn is the first crop harvested and the native Americans also celebrated with feasting and games. The First harvest is a grain festival and grain is often the choice of sacrifice by both native Americans and European cultures on this day. No matter, which grain is used the First Harvest is a day of feasting. Lammas is the Christianized version of Lughnasadh, meaning loaf-mass, though it is also attributed to mean lamb-mass, a day set-aside for those to make tribute of lambs to their liege lord. In Ireland today Lammas is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lunasa (August). Traditionally the first grains would be blessed by the Church and used in communion. Lammas first appeared sometime during the 11th or 12th centuries, the church in a move to tighten its control on the general populace allowed its priest to dedicate the first Sunday of August to Lammas.

No matter if the 1st of August is called Lughnasadh, First Harvest, or Lammas, it is a festival to feast, renew old oaths, and make new ones. It should be regarded as a day of peace among warring factions, as with Firblog and Tuatha De Dannan, and as day to celebrate the accomplishments of the dead, Tailtui, and honor them. It is time pagans should embrace those who they believed have wronged them and to move forward with their lives.

FOODS

Foods of Lughnasadh should be primarily of grains, such as breads, corn, cakes and ale's. There are many more dishes that would be considered appropriate to Lughnasadh than listed here, such as corn on the cob, lamb, Wheat Bread, and any dish with a grain, or wheat.

CORNBREAD

Pre heat oven to 425 F. Sift flour with sugar, baking powder, salt, and cornmeal. Add eggs, milk, and shortening. Beat till smooth. Pour into greased pan 9X9X2. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

1/4 cup of sugar

4 teaspoons of baking soda

3/4 teaspoon of salt

1 cup of yellow corn meal

2 eggs

1 cup of milk

1/4 cup of shortening

1 cup of all purpose flour

LENTEN CAKE [EGGLESS]

Preheat oven to 350 F. Melt butter, add molasses and milk, and cool. Sift together flour, sugar, allspice, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir raisins and mix well. Pour into buttered pan, 13X9X2, baking for 30 minutes.

1/2 cup butter

3 tablespoons molasses

1 cup milk

4 cups all purpose flour

3/4 cup sugar

3 teaspoons ground allspice

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoons baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup raisins

BROWN RICE SALAD

Cook rice according to package directions. Put in next 5 ingredients into large bowl and let stand for about 10 minutes. Add salad oil, then stir in hot rice, celery and parsley. Sprinkle with crumbled bacon bits and serve warm.

1 cup raw brown rice
1 small onion, minced
3/4 teaspoons of salt
1/8 teaspoon of pepper
1 teaspoon of sugar
1/2 cup of cider vinegar
3 tablespoons of salad oil
1 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
3 tablespoons minced parsley
4 slices of bacon, cooked until crisp

COUNTRY STYLE BUCKWHEAT GROATS (Makes 4 Servings)

Combine buckwheat groats, milk, and salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Spread evenly in an 8-inch square pan; chill. Unmold; cut into 2 inch squares; dredge with flour. Brown on both sides on lightly greased griddle, turning once. Serve with buttered maple syrup.

1/2 cup buckwheat groats
3 cups milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
All purpose flour
Buttered maple syrup

RITUAL

It keeping with the tradition of Lughnasadh, and the fact that while it became a religious holiday, it didn't start out that way, the ritual will

include a more non-traditional approach. As Lughnasadh started out as festival of feasts and contests, it fitting that the ritual includes many of these elements. How is this to be done you ask?

1. You will need a calendar of local events in your area. This can include Renaissance festivals, local, city, county or state fairs, Highland games and much more. There are also various ethnic festivals that can be incorporated into the ritual.
2. You will need to plan your meal. It should include at least one grain, breads are the most convenient, because they can be found at any of the above.
3. You will need to spend at least 5 minutes to honor those who provided you with you meal. This can be done with a group of friends or by you. After all, Lughnasadh was started to honor Tailtiu, who sacrificed her life for peace and to allow others a place to grow food.

A suggested thanks is as follows.

As our ancestors have done before us, and our children will do on the morrow. Lets us honor Lugh's foster mother, and understand his sorrow.

4. Then enjoy yourself, watch the contests, spend money in the midway, and enjoy the crafts. Honor the hard work that went into creating them, honor those who still know how to reap the harvest.

You must remember something's can just be enjoyed, not everything has to be a major production

Mabon

To Autumn

O Autumn. Laden with fruit, and stained
With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit
Beneath my shady roof, there thou may'st rest,
And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe;
And all the daughters of the year shall dance¹
Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

-William Blake-

Mabon, (May-bon) is known as the Autumn Equinox, Harvest Home, Second Harvest, the Witches Thanksgiving and Siring Fate. (Mabon in Welsh mean son.) This reference usually refers to the son of the Welsh goddess Madron, Mother and Son.

The Mother and son aspect is the most common among the neo-pagans, and fits well with in the Wiccan perspective of the Holly King mythology. It should also be noted that McCoy (page 185) claims that the Celts did not call Mabon by this name but rather it was originally a Norse festival. Though adopting other cultures festivals and Gods fits in with the Celtic adaptability and mentality.

Autumn Equinox refers to a time of the year when day and night are equally balanced. The sun is in the process of crossing the equator and in astrological terms is entering the sign of Libra. The sun is the focal point of energy (along with the moon) and such; its life force pushes us to discover more about ourselves. This movement into the Libra puts a congenial, cooperative outlook on that time of year, just what was needed by the communities, as they all worked together to complete the harvest.

Harvest Home is an Anglo-Celtic version of the original Mabon, and fell in-between the First (Lugnasadh) and the Third (Samhain) Harvests. Harvests festivals were a very important part of the pre-industrialized culture. It was a time of relief and of rest. Relief that the crops were in and rest to catch their breath before the work of preparing for winter began. This was a time to give thanks.

The Witches Thanksgiving, according to McCoy is one of the oldest holidays known to Europe. On this I will have to disagree, first the author mentions that Mabon is actually a Norse holiday, then contradicts herself with the above statement. Actually I believe she is trying to draw comparisons between the Witches Thanksgiving and the American Thanksgiving. There are similarities, though the reason she states about the time differences are not the same. The American Thanksgiving is celebrated at the time of year it is, not because the Puritans choose that date to distant themselves from the Pagan Mabon, but rather because they had a late harvest and an early winter. Thus celebrating it when they could, survival being more important then distancing themselves European witches Thanksgiving. (McCoy page 185-189)

Autumn is over the long leaves that love us,

And over the mice in the barley sheaves;
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.

The hour of the waning of love has beset us;
And weary and worn are our sad souls now;
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,
With a kiss and a tear and dropping brow.
> W.B. Yeats (page 14-15)

Siring Fate according to King, are claims that this is the true name of Mabon. Using Greek Mythology, the story of Persephone and Madron and Mabon. Claiming that the name Mabon is the son's name, not the Sabbats. He basis his claim on the fact that, Mabon, mates with his mother Madron, thus siring the new season. He using the story of Persephone to back up his assertion, stating that when Persephone leaves her mother to be with Hades, the new season begins. While there may be similarities to these myths, King is making the common mistake of associating cultures based on similarities rather than the uniqueness of each myth, or culture. Claiming as did Caesar and others that the Celts, Gods, heroes, Legends and Myths, were in actuality Greco-Roman.

. Mabon is a celebration of life and death, and giving of life again, the cycle of the s claimOe setuher kisfc2LTw -1.ituniquag ord, were in Yelo anwinter. Not

1 clove of garlic

Set oven at 325 F, for 3 1/2 hours for well done. Sprinkle roast with seasonings, take knife and make several small insertions, place pieces of garlic in Roast. (Remove cloves before serving.) Place lamb, fat side up, on rack in shallow roasting pan. Roast till desired pink(ness). 7-9 lb.: rare: 15-20 minutes, Medium: 20-25 minutes, well: 25-30 minutes per pound.

New Small Potatoes

Wash potatoes lightly and leave whole. Heat 1 inch salted water to boiling. Add potatoes. Cover and heat to a boil; reduce heat. Boil to tender, 20-25 minutes; drain, and butter.

Citrus Salad

1 1/2 cups of boiling water

1 package (6 ounces) lemon flavored gelatin

2 cups ginger ale, chilled

4 oranges

2 grapefruit

Pour boiling water on gelatin; stir until gelatin is dissolved. Stir in ginger ale. Refrigerate until slightly thickened.

Pare and section oranges and grapefruit. Cut sections into 1-inch pieces; stir into gelatin mixture. Pour into 8-cup mold. Refrigerate until firm, about 4 hours; unmold. Garnish with additional orange sections and salad greens if desired.

Rum Cracker Torte

6 eggs, separated

1/2 cup sugar

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 tablespoon rum flavoring
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup all purpose flour
1 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup fine graham crackers
1 cup of finely chopped nuts
1 square (1 ounce) unsweetened chocolate, grated

Rum-flavored Whipped Cream

Heat oven to 350 F. line bottoms of 2 round pans, 8 or 9X1 1/2 inches with aluminum foil. Beat egg whites in 2 1/2-quart bowl until foamy. Beat in 1/2 cup of sugar. 1 tablespoon at a time; continue beat until stiff and glossy. Beat egg yolks, oil and rum flavoring in 1 1/2 quart on low speed until blended. Add 1/2 cup of sugar. Flour baking powder, cinnamon and cloves; beat on medium speed 1 minute. Fold egg yolk mixture into egg whites. Fold in cracker crumbs, nuts and chocolate. Pour into pans.

Bake until top springs back when touched lightly, 30-35 minutes. Cool ten minutes. Loosen edge layers with knife; invert pan and hit sharply on table. (Cake will drop out) Remove foil; cool completely.

Split cake to make four layers. Fill layers and frost torte with Rum Flavored Whipped Cream. Refrigerate for at least 7 hours.

Rum-flavored Whipped Cream

Beat 2 cups of chilled whipping cream, 1.2 cup powdered sugar and 2 teaspoons of rum flavoring in chilled bowl till stiff.

RITUAL As Mabon is a time of giving thanks there are several suggested rituals. The first involves those more fortunate helping out those less fortunate. This can involve helping out at a shelter, volunteering at a hospital or working for the Homes for Humanity project. There are many more ways to help; the point is to give to those who can't help themselves. It may also involve teaching them a skill (reading and writing) to helping them find a job.

A more formal ritual involves candles, a meal and being surrounded by those who love you and those whom you love. It is actually a very simple ceremony, after opening up the circle around the table, the Leader starts by reciting the following and passing on the flame to light the candles stationed on each of the corners. Pass flame clockwise. As each person receives the flame to light their candle they also recite a section of the blessing, until the flame returns the flame, the leader then close the circle and all eat and enjoy the harvest as it is meant to be enjoyed. The recommend blessing is the Charge of the Goddess.

Leader:

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess;
She in the dust of whose feet are the hosts of heaven,
and whose body encircles the universe:
I who am the beauty of the green earth,
and the white moon among the stars,
and the mystery of the waters,
call unto they soul:

South:

Arise, and come unto me.
For I am the soul of nature,
who gives life to the universe.
From Me all things proceed, and unto Me all things must return;
and before My face, beloved of gods and of men,
let thine innermost divine self be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite.

West:

Let My worship be within the heart that rejoices;
for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals.
And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and
compassion,
honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you.

North:

And thou who thinkest to seek Me,
Know that thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not,
unless thou knowest the Mystery:

that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee,
thou wilt never find it without.

For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning;
And I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

Leader:

And so Mote it be!

Samhain

Samhain (pronounced Sowain, Sah-uin, or Sahm-hayn) is also called the Celtic New Year, The Third harvest, All Hollows Eve, the Day of the Dead, and of course Halloween. There are many more names for Samhain, but rather than having a different meaning, they are actual different variations of the same name. For example: All Hollows Eve is also equal to All Saints Eve; the Day of the Dead is also the Feast of Spirits; and Samhain is also called Samhuinn. McCoy claims that there are many possibilities for the name Samhain, one being that it is named for the Aryan God of the Dead, Sama. The second, is that is Gaelic for summers end, Samhraidhreach. The third one, and the more likely, is that it is Irish Gaelic for November (McCoy page 23).

Samhain along with Beltane is one of the original fire festivals. Beltane is the Sabbat to celebrate the beginning of life (planting), Samhain to celebrate death (harvest). This continuing circle is very much part of the Celtic way of viewing things. In Wiccan tradition this Sabbat is to celebrate the death of the Oak King, and is followed with six weeks of mourning by the Goddess.

Samhain has been, at least for the modern neo-pagan, the Celtic New Year. However there are at least two writers that dispute this, Pliny the Elder, and the Athenian. Both of these writers claim that the Celts began their New Year in July-Midsummer to Midsummer, the highest point of the Sun (King, page 106). Modern Neo-pagan writers should note. If one really thinks about it, it would make sense to start and end the year on the longest day.

The Third Harvest was a time to collect the last sheaves of wheat from the fields, pick the last apple from the tree. In Celtic cultures it was the custom to have all the crops in by October 30. After that all the crops in the field, fruit on the tress, became property of the fairies. It was considered to be taboo to do so after, bring the wrath of the fairies upon you, and the possibility of a lifetime of bad luck. One of Samhain's many traditions is to leave a bit of food by your door to

feed the little folk, and in some parts of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland this tradition is still observed (McCoy, page 38-39).

All Hollows Eve (October 31), All Saints Day (November 1) and the Day of the Dead (November 2) was the Catholic Church's answer to Samhain. As with many of the other pagan holidays, the Church, when confronted with a pagan ritual it could not abolish, adopted it. Approximately in the 9th century the Abbot of Cluny- in France established Michaelmas. A day to celebrate the Saint Michael. This day was later changed to Hollowmas in the 10th century, soon to be followed by All Saints Day and the Day of the Dead. The Hollowmas was a day to celebrate the dead; All Saints Day called for sinners and saints to be restored to heaven; with the Day of the Dead, the dead redeemed or otherwise, was celebrated. This change of the names but not the holiday allowed the pagans to accept the holidays as Christian ones. The pagans already believed this to be a time when the dead and the living were allowed to both dwells in the same place. When the veil separating the two dimensions was at it's weakest. On All Souls Day many would make cakes to feed the dead (some traditions never die, pardon the pun), as demonstrated by the following song, the predecessor to trick or treat.

Soul! Soul! For a soul cake!
I pray you, good missis, a soul cake!
An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,
Or any good thing to make us merry.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Them who made us all.
Up with the kettle and down with the pan.
Give us good alms, and we'll be gone.

Halloween, the Witches New Year, the personal favorite of many modern pagans, including this author, first was and always will be a Christian creation, as was mentioned in the previous paragraph. Halloween, or those who celebrate, have taken it back from the Christians and have returned it to it's rightful place, that being one of the most celebrated pagan holidays. McCoy states that Halloween use of masks is a practice that begin in the Burning Times, claiming that Witches used masks not to be identified when traveling at night. I dispute this,

1). Without going into a treatise on the Burning Times, witches rarely worked in covens, thus having no reason to disguise themselves from others.

2). The use of masks is very old. Given the fact that many pagan cultures believed this to be a day when the dead were able to cross over, many wore masks to disguise themselves and frighten away evil spirits. One of the other carryovers from both the Christian and pagan influences, the use of the carved pumpkin, they liked masks were design to confuse and frighten away evil spirits.

However you choose to celebrate Samhain, or whatever name you wish to call it, it is a fun day. A day to become something other than what you are, to become closer with the spirits, and to celebrate the passing of your ancestors.

RITUAL

As was discussed Samhain is a when the Spirit world is at it's closest to our world. One of the many ways to honor this fact is:

- 1) to leave an offering by your back door.
- 2) Leave an empty place setting for a departed loved one and your dinner table.

As was stated earlier, Samhain is one the favored of all the Sabbats by pagans, and non-pagans alike, and as such should be celebrated with others. The following ritual is designed with that in mind, with very liberal borrowings from Starhawk and McCoy.

The following items will be needed:

1. One white candle
2. One black candle
3. Chalice (wine if appropriate)
4. Cakes (enough for all participants)
5. A list of those whom you wish to honor. Each person involved would have their own list, to be shared at the proper time.
6. Four pumpkins to be used to make the four corners.

First purify and cast your circle according each particular tradition. Then invoke the God and Goddess. Begin ceremony.

LEADER: (Enters the circle from the East, lighting the black candle.) Merry Meet and Welcome. The Circle is open, yet unbroken. This is a time that is not a time, in a place that is not a place, on a day that is not a day. We stand at the gate between the living and the dead on this night when the veil between the two worlds is the thinnest. We are here to witness the death of the Holly King, the waning Sun God, the lover and husband of the Crone Goddess. We, the (insert name here), welcome the Holly Lord

ALL: We welcome him. Lead us, Lord.

HOLLY KING: Follow me, I am here. (Group follows him in)

LEADER: Be our Guide

HOLLY KING: I am the Guide, the Way is open.

ALL: Be our Guide.

HOLLY KING: I am the Guide, the Way is clear.

ALL: Be our Guide.

HOLLY KING: I am the Guide, Death is no barrier.

ALL: Be our Guide.

(Pass cakes and wine.)

HOLLY KING: Follow me, for time is near. (Passes Chalice with wine. At this time, each person, or those who want to, can read their own passage of remembrance.)

HOLLY KING: What is remembered, lives.

ALL: What is remembered, lives.

HOLLY KING: What is forgotten, dies.

ALL: What is forgotten, dies.

HOLLY KING: What is remembered, lives.

ALL: We remember.

HOLLY KING: Death is a truth as is life, and just as life cannot last forever, neither can death. You shall see me again, reborn, gaining in strength and vibrancy. When it seems that the darkest has come, as the Yuletide fades, under the stars, when it is my time again, you shall see me born. Through me, all passes out of life. (Holly King extinguishes black candle)

CRONE: (Enters, lights white candle) But through me, all may be born again. The Holly King has shown me the way. Now, on this night of Samhain, at this place and time between the veils.

ALL: Everything passes, changes.

CRONE: Seed becomes fruit.

ALL: Fruit becomes seed.

CRONE: In birth, we die.

ALL: On death, we feed.

CRONE: For my womb is the cauldron of rebirth. (Passes cakes)

ALL: In us, the circle is ever turning.

(Turn to our neighbors and say, "Blessed be.")

CRONE: Take me as yours, for winter is my time. We thank you, blessed spirits and ancestors, for joining us. You shall not be forgotten any time soon. (Extinguishes candle)

ALL: So do we accept you. So Mote it Be!

LEADER: The circle is closed.

Ceremony is over. All leave to the west.

FOODS

CAKES FOR THE DEAD

Makes about 3 dozen, dough must be chilled several hours to overnight.

1/2 c veg. oil

4 sq unsweetened chocolate (4 oz) melted

2 cups granulated sugar

4 eggs

2 tsp vanilla

2 cups pastry flour (not hard, sifted or cake flour)

2 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

1 cup confectioner's sugar

Mix oil, chocolate, and granulated sugar. Blend in one egg at a time until well mixed. Add vanilla. Measure flour by dipping method or by sifting. Stir flour, baking powder, and salt into oil mixture. Chill several hours to overnight. Heat oven to 350 degree F [175 degree C]. Roll about a tablespoon of dough into a ball (yes, it's messy). Drop balls into confectioner's sugar & roll around until coated. Place about 2 inches apart on greased baking sheet. Bake 10-12 min. They will be a little soft but should not be mushy. Edges should be firm.

HOT APPLE CIDER 1 1/2 gallons Apple Cider

2 whole cinnamon sticks

5 cloves

1 large orange, sliced thin with peel left on

1/2 lemon, sliced thin with peel left on

1/2 cup sugar

Directions: In large pot, combine cider, cinnamon sticks, cloves, orange and lemon slices, and sugar to taste. Serve hot.

American Traditional Pumpkin Pie

3 eggs 1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup packed brown sugar

2 cups pumpkin mush*

2 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. ginger

1/2 tsp. cloves

1/2 tsp. salt

1- 12oz can evaporated milk

1 pie shell

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a large non-metal bowl combine sugars and eggs. Add in the pumpkin mush, the spices, salt, and evaporated milk. Pour the filling into the pie shell. Bake for 10 minutes, and then reduce heat to 350 and bake for another 50 minutes, or until pie sets. Make 6-8 servings.

*Pumpkin mush: cut a medium pumpkin in half. Prick the skin several times with a fork, and place on a cookie sheet, cut-side up. Bake for 50 minutes or until very soft when poked with a fork. Let the pumpkin cool, then scoop out the seeds with a spoon. Scoop out the pumpkin meat, and throw away the skin. Mash the pumpkin meat with a potato masher or puree in a blender/food processor. Makes about 4 cups

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