



The  
Moonlight Post



WHEEL  
*of the*  
YEAR



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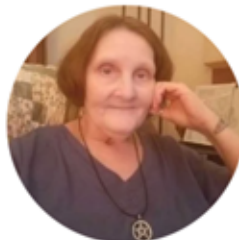


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# WHEEL OF THE YEAR: AN OVERVIEW

A circular diagram representing the Wiccan Wheel of the Year. At the center is a glowing sun with a textured, orange and red surface. This sun is surrounded by a decorative border with a repeating geometric pattern. The entire central assembly is enclosed within a larger circle that has twelve triangular spokes radiating from the center to the outer edge. The spokes are dark and have a slightly weathered appearance. The text 'WHEEL OF THE YEAR:' is arched across the top, and 'AN OVERVIEW' is arched across the bottom, both in a white, serif font.

WHEN YOU WERE NEW TO WICCA, YOU PROBABLY WONDERED IF THERE WERE ALSO MAJOR HOLIDAYS LIKE EASTER OR HANUKKAH. WELL, WE DEFINITELY CELEBRATE SPECIAL DAYS, AND THEY HAPPEN EVERY SIX WEEKS OR SO!

## THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

**F**or an easy guide on all the Wiccan holidays, get yourself a Wheel of the Year. A kind of Wiccan calendar, the Wheel of the Year is a yearly cycle of seasonal festivals called Sabbats. Sabbats acknowledge and honor the Earth's journey around the Sun.

These festivals are celebrated by modern Pagans, including us Wiccan practitioners.

The Wheel consists of eight days - four major solar events (solstices and equinoxes) and their midpoints. We call the solar events quarter days and the midpoint events cross-quarter days.



## THE STORY BEHIND IT

Wiccan mythology about the Wheel of the Year centers on the Sun's cycle of death and rebirth. In this cycle, the Goddess gives birth to the God during Yule, grows during Ostara (spring equinox), mates with the Goddess during Beltane, reaches the summit of his power during Litha (summer solstice), starts to weaken during Lammas, and dies during Samhain. These points of the year comprise the Sabbats. And, like the Sabbats, the Esbats are connected to the lunar cycle.

Other Wiccan traditions also include the Celtic story of the Holly King and the Oak King. The Holly King rules over the waning year, while the Oak King takes charge of the waxing year. Throughout each year, the two kings battle it out to see who would rule over the seasons. The Holly King defeats the





Oak King during the summer solstice and starts his reign. However, the Oak King slowly loses his power come autumn equinox, while the Holly King regains his. The two figures may be archenemies, but in the end, they are two parts of a whole. One cannot exist without the other, as they are the light and dark aspects of the same God.

## **CELEBRATING THE SABBATS**

If you're a member of a coven, you and the other members will have certain rituals that you've agreed to follow for every Sabbat. But, if you're a solitary witch, it pays to really devote time to learning about each of the eight Sabbats, so you'll know how best to celebrate it.

Here is a rundown of the eight Sabbats:

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**YULE,  
WINTER SOLSTICE:**  
December 19, 20, 21, 22, or 23

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**BRIGID, IMBOLC, CANDLEMAS,  
IMBOLG, OR BRIGID'S DAY:**  
February 1 or 2

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**EOSTAR, SPRING EQUINOX,  
OSTARA, OR OESTARRA:**  
March 20, 21, 22, or 23

p 21

**BELTANE, MAY EVE, BELTAINÉ,  
BEALTAINE, OR MAY DAY:**  
April 30 or May 1

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**LITHA, SUMMER SOLSTICE,  
OR MIDSUMMER:**  
June 20, 21, 22, or 23

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**LUGHNASAD, LUGHNASADH,  
OR LAMMAS:**  
August 1

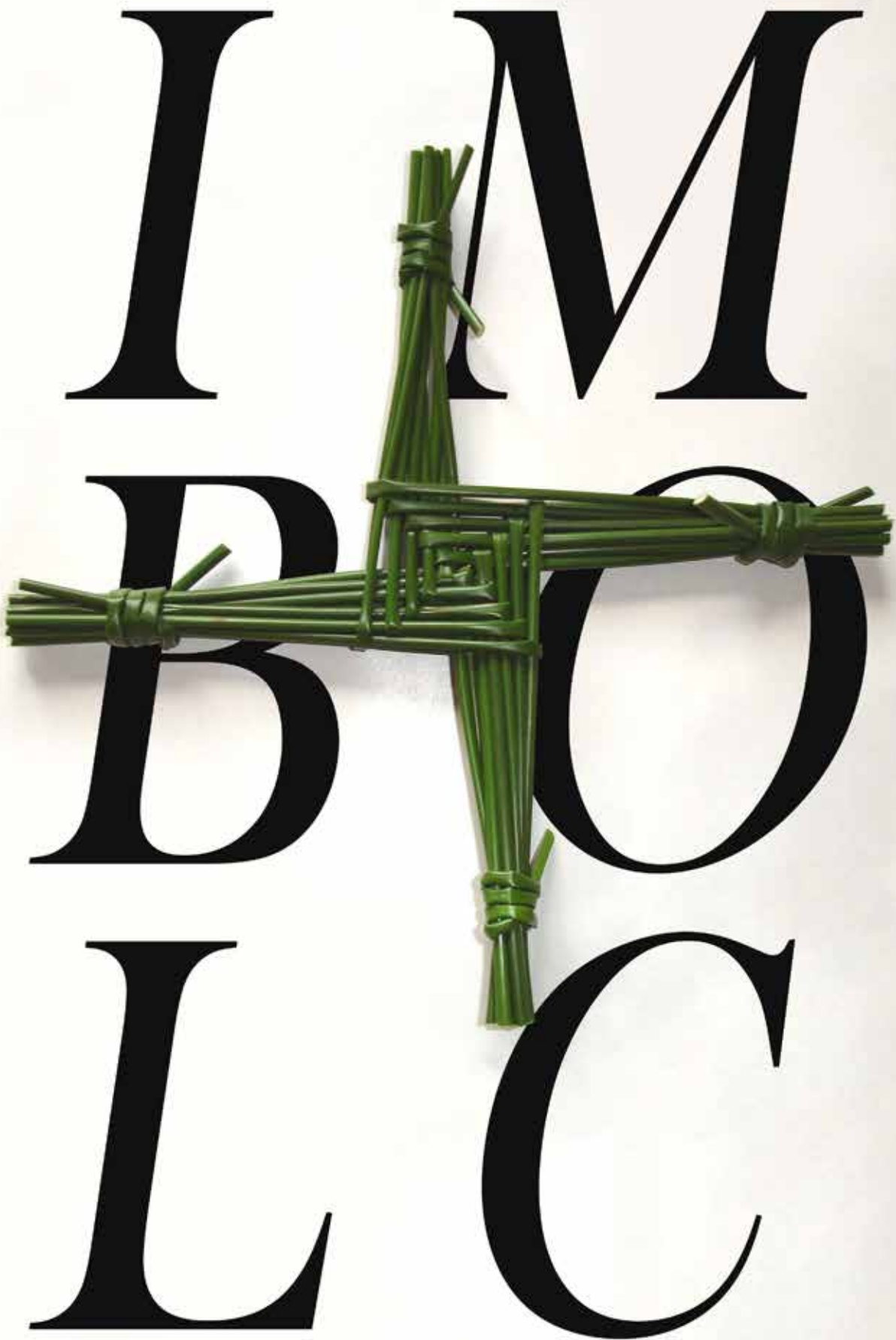
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**MABON, FALL EQUINOX,  
OR HARVEST HOME:**  
September 20, 21, 22, or 23

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**SAMHAIN, ALL HALLOW'S EVE,  
HALLOWMAS:**  
October 31 or November 1





*Date: February 1st and/or 2nd*  
*Other Names: Oimele, Candlemas, St. Brigid's Day, St. Brigit's Day*



We come to the first *cross-quarter day* of the Wheel of the Year, one commemorating the midpoint between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Imbolc heralds the changing of seasons, and symbolizes growth and abundance.

During this Sabbat, Wiccans and pagans honor the Celtic goddess Brigid, who oversaw fertility, poetry, and prophecy.

## THE HISTORY OF IMBOLC

Imbolc has its roots in pre-Christian times in the group of islands off the northwestern coast of Europe, popularly known as the British Isles.

The celebration was first mentioned in the 10th century,

when Irish literature referred to ewe's milk. This is why Imbolc is a preparation for springtime. In early February, ewe and other herd animals have already given birth for the first time that year, or their wombs are round and their milk is full in their teats and udders. This time also marked the blessing of the seeds and other tools needed for agriculture.

Ancient Imbolc celebrations began the night before February 1 and involved the celebrants preparing for a Brigid to pay their homes a visit. They made a likeness of the goddess from oats and rushes. On the day of Imbolc, they burned lamps and lit bonfires to give tribute to Brigid. It is said that Brigid was born with flames on her head, giving her the title Celtic Fire Goddess.

## BRIGID AND ST. BRIGID

The spread of Christianity in Ireland brought with it a story about a certain St. Brigid (or Bridget). The Catholic church says that St. Brigid was born in Ireland in 453 A.D., and was known for her vast knowledge of agriculture. She is one of the country's three patron saints, and specifically watches over newborns, midwives, Irish nuns, dairy maids, and cattle.

There is still debate whether or not St. Brigid actually existed. Some scholars point to the stark similarities of the Catholic figure to the pagan goddess. The Catholic church also assigned February 1 as St. Brigid's Day to replace Imbolc, and February 2 became Candlemas.

# WAYS TO CELEBRATE IMBOLC

Modern Imbolc celebrations involve getting ready for the spring. While our ancestors prepared their tools for the coming season, Wiccans and pagans of today clean their homes. You might also want to clear your mind and set yourself up for this time of growth and abundance.

Of course, central to this festival is the goddess Brigid. We thank her for the blessings of the previous year and ask for her good graces for the upcoming spring. Celebrations also involve light, fire, and intense passion.

**DEITIES:** Brigid, Aradia, Aenghus Og, Aphrodite, Bast,

Ceres, Cerridwen, Eros, Venus

**SYMBOLISM:** Growth, renewal, fertility, abundance, "out with the old and in with the new"

**DECORATIONS:** Brideo'gas (corn dolly image of Brigid), white flowers, besoms, candle wheels, Brigid's Crosses, ploughs

**COLORS:** Red, white, pink, yellow, green, brown

**FOOD:** Spiced wines, herbal teas, peppers, raisins, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, muffins, scones, milk, butter, eggs

**HERBS:** Violets, basil, laurel, blackberry, iris, myrrh angelica

**STONES:** Ruby, garnet, onyx, bloodstone, amethyst, turquoise

**INCENSE:** Cinnamon, violet, vanilla, basil, bay, wisteria





# OSTARA

DATE: *MARCH 20 - 23*

OTHER NAMES: *SPRING EQUINOX,  
LADY DAY, ALBAN EILER (DRUIDIC)*

# OSTARA

Date: March 20 - 23

Other Names: Spring Equinox,  
Lady Day, Alban Eiler (Druidic)

There comes a day in March, around the third week, that you'll wake up and notice the air getting a little warmer. You'll see that the sun is a little brighter, and hear the birds singing a little louder. Spring has finally come!

Ostara (spring equinox) marks the equal length of night and day at the equinox. The ground is ready for seeds to be planted. It is a time of growth and abundance. For us Wiccans, this is when the Goddess is in full bloom as the Maiden, while the God has matured into a vigorous young man.



# OSTARA

Date: March 20 - 23

Other Names: Spring Equinox,  
Lady Day, Alban Eiler (Druidic)

## HOW OSTARA CAME TO BE

The coming of spring has been celebrated for thousands of years by many cultures around the world.

In ancient Rome, those who followed the Mother Goddess Cybele celebrated the cycle of birth, death, and resurrection of Attis. He is believed to have been Cybele's consort, and his resurrection fell on the spring equinox.

For centuries, the indigenous Mayans in Central America honored the "Return of the Sun Serpent" during the sunset of the day of the equinox. Even today, large crowds gather to witness an optical illusion on one side of the pyramid called El Castillo. The lengthening shadows cast by the setting sun on the western face of

the pyramid create an image of a large snake crawling down the pyramid's staircase.

In Europe, monk and historian St. Bede documented the feast day of the Germanic Goddess of Spring, Ostara. It is believed that Eostre was her Saxon counterpart. Ostara's feast day was held on the first full moon after the spring equinox, almost the same time as Easter. According to a popular legend, Eostre was walking outside in late winter when she found a wounded bird. She transformed the bird into a hare, but did not do it completely. While the animal looked like a hare, it was still able to lay eggs. So, as a gift to Eostre, the hare decorated these eggs and gave them to Eostre.





THE EL CASTILLO PYRAMID  
AT CHICHEN ITZA, MEXICO



## OSTARA'S SIGNIFICANCE

For our ancestors, Ostara declared the arrival of a new crop season. The spring equinox meant a fresh period of planting seeds and newborn animal offspring, in hopes of having an abundant harvest much later in the year. The young Sun God will take the hand of the Maiden goddess in marriage, and in nine months she will become the Goddess in her Mother aspect. Ostara is a great season of fecundity and fruitfulness.

As with other Sabbats, where Christian holidays take on pagan traditions, a lot of similarities exist between Ostara and Easter. Aside from the shared lore of the Germanic goddess Ostara and Oestre, the Maiden Goddess' conception narrative was adapted as the Feast of the Annunciation. The Greek goddess Aphrodite and her Roman counterpart Venus also had festivals during this time.



THE MOTHER GODDES  
CYBELE

# THE

# CELEBRATING OSTARA

How you celebrate Ostara depends on your particular tradition, and whether you belong in a coven or if you're a solitary witch. The common themes are rebirth and restoration, fertility, and bounty.

You can celebrate your altar using "new beginnings" symbols, such as seedlings, fresh flowers, eggs, rabbit figurines. Use bright, vibrant colors that resemble the Sun that is growing stronger each day.

The type of magick that you can do at this time involves bringing in the new and getting rid of the old. There's serpent magick, egg magick, magickal gardening, and many more!

**DEITIES:** Ostara, Cybele, Asase Yaa, Freya, Osiris, Saraswati

**SYMBOLISM:** Rebirth, the marriage of the Maiden Goddess and the young Sun God, fertility, abundance, planting of seed and grain

**DECORATIONS:** Eggs, hares/bunnies, leafy branches, flowers

**COLORS:** Green, yellow, brown, pastel colors

**FOOD:** eggs, shoots and sprouts, leafy greens, marshmallow Peeps, sunflower or pumpkin seeds

**HERBS:** Olive, peony, narcissus, daffodils, and other flowers that bloom in the spring

**STONES:** jasper

**INCENSE:** rose, strawberry, jasmine, and other floral incenses







# MAGICK

## LEFT TO RIGHT

EXCLUSIVELY ON:

  
THE  
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# B E L

**DATE:** April 30th, May 1st

**OTHER NAMES:** Roodmas, May Day

Maypoles, bonfires, and lots and lots of revelry.  
If you're guessing Beltane, then you're absolutely right!  
Beltane, or May Day, marks the union of the Goddess  
and the God, a time of great fertility and energy.



# T A N E



## BELTANE'S BEGINNINGS

For centuries, Beltane has been celebrated as the beginning of the planting cycle. Our ancestors performed the necessary rituals and festivities to ensure an abundant harvest.

Because Beltane is about the return of passion and vitality, old Celtic tradition would see young men and women spending the night in the woods - drinking, dancing, and 'a-Maying' (to put it politely). Married couples also had their share of fun, as they were allowed one night to take off their wedding rings (and vows). In the morning, they would dance around the very phallic Maypole, until all the ribbons are intertwined. The morning was also a time to indulge in one's health and beauty using water collected from morning dew, rivers, streams, and springs. Aside from the merriment, the Celts also did more serious rituals in the form of sacrifice to the deities of fertility.

In Rome, the first day of May was observed to honor the gods of their household. This solemn commemoration is paired with Floralia - the festival of flowers. Those who took part in Floralia wore flowers in their hair and participated in plays, songs, dances, and sexual activity. Towards the end of the festivities, celebrants scattered seeds to safeguard abundance in the coming months.

# STORIES ABOUT BELTANE

In Wales and England, a belief spread that women who wanted to bear children should go out on May Eve, or April 30th, to find a birthing stone. It is a large rock that should have a hole in the center. If the woman walks through the hole, she will be able to conceive a child that very night.

Over in Ireland, farmers hang a wreath of green branches at their door during Beltane. They believe that this simple ritual will make their cows produce an abundant supply of milk in the summer.

Cattle farmers also drive their cows between Beltane fires to ensure that they are immune from diseases.

Pre-Christian lore of the British Isles tells of a Green Man, who is closely connected with the Celtic God of the Forest Cernunnos. He is depicted as a male entity covered in leaves. The Green Man is a symbol of rebirth.

Aside from Samhain, Beltane is a great time to connect with the spirit world.

Wiccan traditions believe that the wall between the two worlds is very thin, thus making communication with spirits and Fae folk more accessible.





## MAKE THE MOST OUT OF BELTANE!

Beltane is one of the most joyous and light-hearted of all the Sabbats. Celebrants enjoy the energy that the first of May brings. It is a celebration of the God and Goddess' union, as well as a kind of opening salvo for the abundant months ahead.

Dancing around the Maypole is a staple, as well as lighting bonfires. If you're a solitary practitioner, you may do simple rituals at home. Rituals connected to prosperity - like the blossoming of your career or love life - are perfect for this Sabbat.

You can decorate your altar using fresh flowers and fertility symbols. A candle as a phallic symbol and a chalice as a symbol for the womb will do perfectly.

**DEITIES:** Artemis, Bes, Bacchus, Cernunnos, Flora, Hera, Pan, Xochiquetzal

**SYMBOLISM:** Fire, fertility, passion, fecundity, revelry, union

**DECORATIONS:** Maypole, candles, braids, ribbons, bird, bee, or butterfly images, fertility symbols (antlers, seeds, acorns, cauldron)

**COLORS:** White, dark green, red, yellow

**FOOD:** Dairy foods, such as eggs, milk, and butter, honey, oats, fruits, custard, cakes

**HERBS:** Roses, hawthorn, birch trees, rosemary, lilac, primrose, angelica, daisies, marigolds

**STONES:** Bloodstone, emerald, sapphire, rose quartz

**INCENSE:** Rose, vanilla, passion flower, lilac





## LITHA

Date: June 20th - 22nd

Other Names: Summer Solstice, Midsummer Sabbat, Alban Heruin (Druidic)

The longest day of the year is marked by bonfires, barbecues, and rituals to honor the Sun! We call this celebration Litha, and it is our last hurrah to the warm seasons before they give way to the colder months.

# LITHA



## ***THE HISTORY OF LITHA***


There is a particular day in June where the Sun is unmoving - high above in the sky - as if it's flaunting its full strength before it wanes. This date is around June 21st or 22nd, and it is called the summer solstice. As a matter of fact, the word solstice comes from the Latin words "sol", meaning sun and stitium, meaning still or stopped.

As you may have noticed now, the ancients celebrated the Sabbats according to agricultural progress. That is, they observe these holidays to give thanks or to pray for a good growing season or a bountiful harvest. Litha is no exception. Around this time in the Northern Hemisphere, the grains and crops have already been planted and are steadily growing. Flora and fauna are flourishing. There is abundance all around!

This is the reason why summer solstice festivities in ancient cultures are closely connected with the Earth. In ancient Greece, for instance, the solstice held a festival to honor Cronus, the god of agriculture. Everyone participated in the merriment, even the slaves who could temporarily enjoy the freedoms deprived of them on regular days.

Also, a few Greek calendars identified the summer solstice as the start of the new year. The Greeks also started their countdown to the Olympics once the sun reached its peak in the sky.

The Romans also revered Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, around this time. Vestalia is a festival centered on fire, family, and the household.



And speaking of fires, pre-Christian peoples of North and Central Europe celebrated the solstice with large bonfires. For them, the flames would further strengthen the Sun's power to carry it through the growing and harvest seasons. The bonfires were also important because it was thought to bear magick, driving away evil spirits and helping maidens find their future husbands.

## SUMMER SOLSTICE INSPIRED BEAUTIFUL STRUCTURES!

According to historical documents, as well as the structures themselves, archeological wonders were built by the ancient peoples as part of the summer solstice celebrations. This is similar to how the Mayans were believed to have constructed the pyramid El Castillo to create a wonderful shadowplay when the



sun sets at Ostara.

Every summer solstice, the setting sun can be seen exactly between the Great Pyramids of Khufu and Khafre with the Sphinx as a viewing point.





celebrate this outdoors!  
Take a solitary walk,  
have a picnic in the park,  
or plan a barbecue with  
Wiccan friends and soak  
up the sun before the  
colder months come around!

**DEITIES:** Apollo, Hestia,  
Vesta, Helios, Sol, Zeus,  
Prometheus, Thor, Lugh, Ra,  
Ares, Aphrodite, Astarte, Freya,  
Hathor, Ishtar, Venue, Athena,  
Venus, Artemis, Diana, Kali,  
Isis, Juno

**SYMBOLISM:** Sun, fire,  
strength, vitality, radiance,  
positivity, bounty, good harvest

**DECORATIONS:** Images of  
fire, the Sun, oak trees, Sun  
wheels, faeries, bees, dragonflies,  
flowers that bloom in the  
summertime, fruits that are  
in season

**COLORS:** Golden yellow, gold,  
red, green, white, brown, blue

**FOOD:** Fresh fruits and vege-  
tables from the garden or field

**HERBS:** Oak, pine, roses,  
chamomile, elder, laurel,  
lavender, lemon, mugwort,  
St. John's wort, sandal-  
wood, thyme, wisteria

**STONES:** Emerald

**INCENSE:** Lemon, rose,  
myrrh, pine, wisteria

Archeologists and historians have also put forward theories that Stonehenge played a big role during summer solstice celebrations thousands of years ago. It may have well been, because the large monument is aligned with the orientation of the sunrise during Midsummer.

## **CELEBRATING LITHA**

Litha is a jubilant Sabbat in honor of the Sun God, who has reached the peak of his power. It is only natural to





*DATE: JULY 31ST - AUGUST 1ST*

*OTHER NAMES: LUGHNASADH*

# LAMMAS





The Wheel of the Year once again turns, and we come to the first harvest festival. Lammas is a cross-quarter day between summer and autumn, a time when the first fruits of the planting season can be harvested. It also marks the day the Sun God's power begins to decline. For some Wiccans and pagans, this is the time the Celtic Sun God Lugh pours out his energy to the grain. For them, once the grain is gathered and made into bread, the circle of life has been completed.

## HOW LAMMAS ORIGINATED



Lammas is a day to honor Lugh, the Celtic god of the Sun, kings, justice, and rulership. This many-skilled god is a master of all arts, and is also known as the Celtic craftsman god.

This day marks the beginning of the autumn season, when the Sun God starts to age and lose his power. The Sun wanes in vibrance each day, as it gives way to the long nights.

It is said that Lughnasadh refers to Lugh's funeral games in honor of his mother Tailte. Christian lore



also points to "loaf mass", which is related to the pre-Christian Lughnasadh, and involves placing freshly baked loaves of bread on the altar.

# LAMMAS LORE

In some parts of the British Isles, farmers waited until Lammas to start picking the fruits, or else bad luck would come to them and to the community. Farmers in Shetland only harvested grain during a waning moon, otherwise the yield would not be plentiful.

Then and now, warrior games and mock battles are held during Lammas. Games and competitions are organized for young men to display their strength and skill. Artisans and craftsmen also look forward to this festival, as they can show off their handiwork.

A known Lammas tradition is for people to give each other gloves. Of course, the practical reason is that winter is approaching. But it also comes from an old custom in which landowners gave their tenants a pair of gloves once the harvest is done. The gloves, they believed, symbolized both authority and generosity.

## HOW YOU CAN HONOR LUGH THIS SEASON

Lammas is all about looking forward to a bountiful harvest season. It is reflecting on the generosity of the Sun God, who has given his energy to the blooming fields. This time is a good time to reflect on what you have planted, and the corresponding fruits that you will gain very soon. Rituals relating to change, abundance, and "reaping what you have sown" are most powerful.

**DEITIES:** Lugh, Adonis, Attis, Ceres, Dagon, Demeter, Parvati, Osiris, Mercury, Pomona, Tammuz

**SYMBOLISM:** Early harvest, abundance, generosity, wisdom, weakening of the Sun, old age

**DECORATIONS:** Sickles, scythes, vines, grapes, that are in season during autumn,



dried grains, bread, corn dolls, vegetables that are in season during autumn, apples, berries

**COLORS:** Gold, yellow, white, red, green

**FOOD:** Bread, grains, berries, fruits that are in season during autumn

**HERBS:** Dried or powdered grains, grapes, blackberries, pears, sloe, heather

**STONES:** Carnelian

**INCENSE:** Rose, sandalwood





# M A B O N

**MABON**

**DATE: SEPTEMBER 20TH - 24TH,  
DEPENDING ON THE YEAR**

**OTHER NAMES: AUTUMN EQUINOX,  
SECOND HARVEST**



Also called the Second Harvest, Mabon is a Sabbat of thanksgiving. Many cultures also observe the autumn equinox as a time for being grateful for the abundant harvest, when fruits, vegetables, and grain are already gathered. This is the day where night and day are equal, and the first day of autumn begins.

For Wiccans, Mabon marks the time where the Goddess transitions from Mother to Crone. The Sun God is almost depleted of his power, and is on the brink of death. The bounty of summer is giving way to the quietness of winter. From now on, the nights will grow longer as the days grow shorter.

## THE FALL EQUINOX: *A HISTORY*

Festivals honoring the harvest have been held for thousands of years by cultures from all over the world. To give thanks for the harvested grapes that they'll turn into wine, the ancient Greeks celebrated Oschophoria.

You may be familiar with Oktoberfest, or the Bavarians' version of merrymaking in time for the harvest season. It started as early as the 18th century, and is still being held today, beginning in the last week of September.

Over in China, the appearance of the Harvest Moon - or the full moon that's nearest to the start of the autumn equinox - heralds the grand festivities of the ancient Chinese. The rituals offered to the Harvest moon began during the Shang dynasty, and many families still observe this tradition by giving offerings of rice and wheat, and by holding feasts with moon cakes.

Before Americans celebrated Thanksgiving every last Thursday of November, it originally fell on October 3rd. Agriculturally speaking, this was more logical because it coincided with the harvest season. The final date of Thanksgiving was passed in Congress in 1941.



# THE MYTHOLOGY OF MABON

*One of the most popular stories about the harvest season is that of grain goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone. When Hades took Persephone into the Underworld, Demeter became very distraught that the crops on Earth died. The goddess eventually got her daughter back, but without striking a deal with Hades to let Persephone spend six months a year in the Underworld. According to this story, this is the reason why the Earth lies in desolation for half a year before being 'reborn' again in the spring.*



*Another story is about the Sumerian goddess of fertility and abundance, Inanna. Journeying to the Underworld where her sister, Ereshkigal, ruled, Inanna gave up her garments and material possessions. When she arrived in the Underworld, Ereshkigal used several plagues to kill Inanna. During all that time, the Earth which Inanna left behind also started to die. Thankfully, a high-ranking official brought Inanna back to life, and she was sent back to Earth. Upon her return, life on Earth resumed its normal state.*



## WICCA AND MABON CELEBRATIONS

While the harvest festivals are joyous in nature, Mabon is also a time of slowing down and deep reflection. This Sabbat calls on you to reflect on the year that's about to end, allowing you to give thanks and celebrate the abundance all around. As a modern Wiccan, you may thank the gods and goddesses for the breakthroughs in your work, family, relationships, and more!

**DEITIES:** Persephone, Modron, Mabon, Morgan, Epona, Pamona and the Muses, Thoth, Thor, Hermes, The Green Man

**SYMBOLISM:** The second harvest, equality, abundance, winding down

**DECORATIONS:** Cornucopia filled with fruits or vegetables, wine, pine cones, acorns, corn, apples, gourds

**COLORS:** Orange, red, gold, maroon, brown

**FOOD:** Fruits and vegetables that are in season, breads, nuts, cakes

**HERBS:** Grains, ferns, acorn, honeysuckle, marigold, myrrh, rose, passionflower, sage, tobacco

**STONES:** Sapphire, lapis lazuli, yellow agates

**INCENSE:** Myrrh, sage

THE  
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MUG FOR ALL

*Sabbats!*



# SAMHAIN

DATE: OCTOBER 31ST OR NOVEMBER 1ST,  
DEPENDING ON THE TRADITION

OTHER NAMES: NOVEMBER EVE, FEAST OF  
THE DEAD, HALLOW'S EVE, ALL HALLOW'S EVE

Many Wiccans consider Samhain to be the most important Sabbat, as it marks the New Year and the final harvest. It is a time to look back on the year that's been, and look forward to the incoming one.

This is also the period where the God dies, while the Crone Goddess is pregnant with the God to be reborn at Yule. The cycle will begin again, just as the Wheel of the Year will turn once more.

Like Halloween, Samhain is a Sabbat centered on the spirit world. The wall between the living and the dead is almost nonexistent during this time, making communication with spirits very accessible. During Samhain, Wiccans and pagans connect with their ancestors and ask for their guidance as another year begins.

In terms of witchcraft, Samhain is considered by many practitioners to be the best time to do magick.

## HOW SAMHAIN ORIGINATED

Throughout Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man, Samhain was celebrated as the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the year's "darker half" It was celebrated from October 31st to November 1st, as the Celtic day began and ended at sunset.

According to historians, Samhain has Celtic pagan roots, and point





to ancient drawings and literature that show major events that happened around the autumn equinox. Like Beltane, which is another Sabbat with Celtic roots, bonfires are lit on this day to protect and cleanse the community. Many spirits, not all of them good, roamed the Earth during Samhain.

The predecessor of trick-or-treating also has its roots in the Celtic Samhain. People went door-to-door in costume, reciting poems or prose in exchange for food. It was believed that the tradition of going around in costume was to hide from the mischievous spirits.

Around the 8th century, the Catholic church assigned November 1st as All Saints Day, very near the pagan Samhain. They called the mass that was held on All Saints' Day 'Allhallowmas', so October 31st or the night before became known as All Hallows Eve. Today, we call this night Halloween.





## SAMHAIN AND SPIRIT WORK

Like Beltane, communicating with spirits is easy during Samhain. Those who practice divination also use this time to hone their skills, as the spirits and spirit guides are generous with their knowledge.

The Celts originally called this day the "Feast of the Dead", and left offerings on altars and home passageways for the dead who wandered Earth. Candles were lit on windowsills of homes to help the family's ancestors and guide them back home. Also, they set up extra chairs and dining

utensils, believing that their dead would dine with them that night.

Originally known as the "Feast of the Dead" this sabbat was celebrated in Celtic countries by leaving food offerings on altars and doorsteps for the "wandering dead". Today a lot of practitioners still carry out that tradition. Single candles were lit and left in a window to help guide the spirits of ancestors and loved ones home. Extra chairs were set to the table and around the hearth for the unseen guest. Turnips were hollowed out and carved, much like the jack-o'-lanterns of today, to resemble the spirits that roamed.



Different types of divination can be done during Samhain. Reaching out to those who passed on can be done through a seance, a scrying activity, using an Ouija board, or hosting a Dumb Supper.

**DEITIES:** Persephone, Cernunnos, Dionysus, Morrigan, Aradia, Hecate, Osiris, Isis, Hela, Attis, Horned God, Pan, Tammuz, Thor

**SYMBOLISM:** Third/Final Harvest, the cycle of death and rebirth, endings and beginnings

**DECORATIONS:** cornucopia, jack-o'-lanterns, besoms, black cats, apples

**COLORS:** Orange and black

**FOOD:** Grains, mulled wines, poultry

and beef, pumpkin pie, turnips, ale, apples, breads, cakes, cider, muffins, gourds,

**HERBS:** Catnip, allspice, hazel, mandrake, mint, mugwort, nutmeg, sage, thistle, wormwood, calendula, chrysanthemum, hazel, heliotrope

**STONES:** Obsidian, aquamarine, jet

**INCENSE:** Sage, mint, nutmeg, heliotrope



# YULE

**DATE:** December 20 - 23, depending on the year

**OTHER NAMES:** The Winter Solstice

On the longest night of the year, the Goddess in her Mother aspect gives birth to the God. And, like how the Earth hibernates during winter, the Goddess rests.

This is Yule, and it is a celebration of the Sun's return. It's a time of hope and new beginnings, where Wiccans and pagans welcome the light and the coming of longer days.

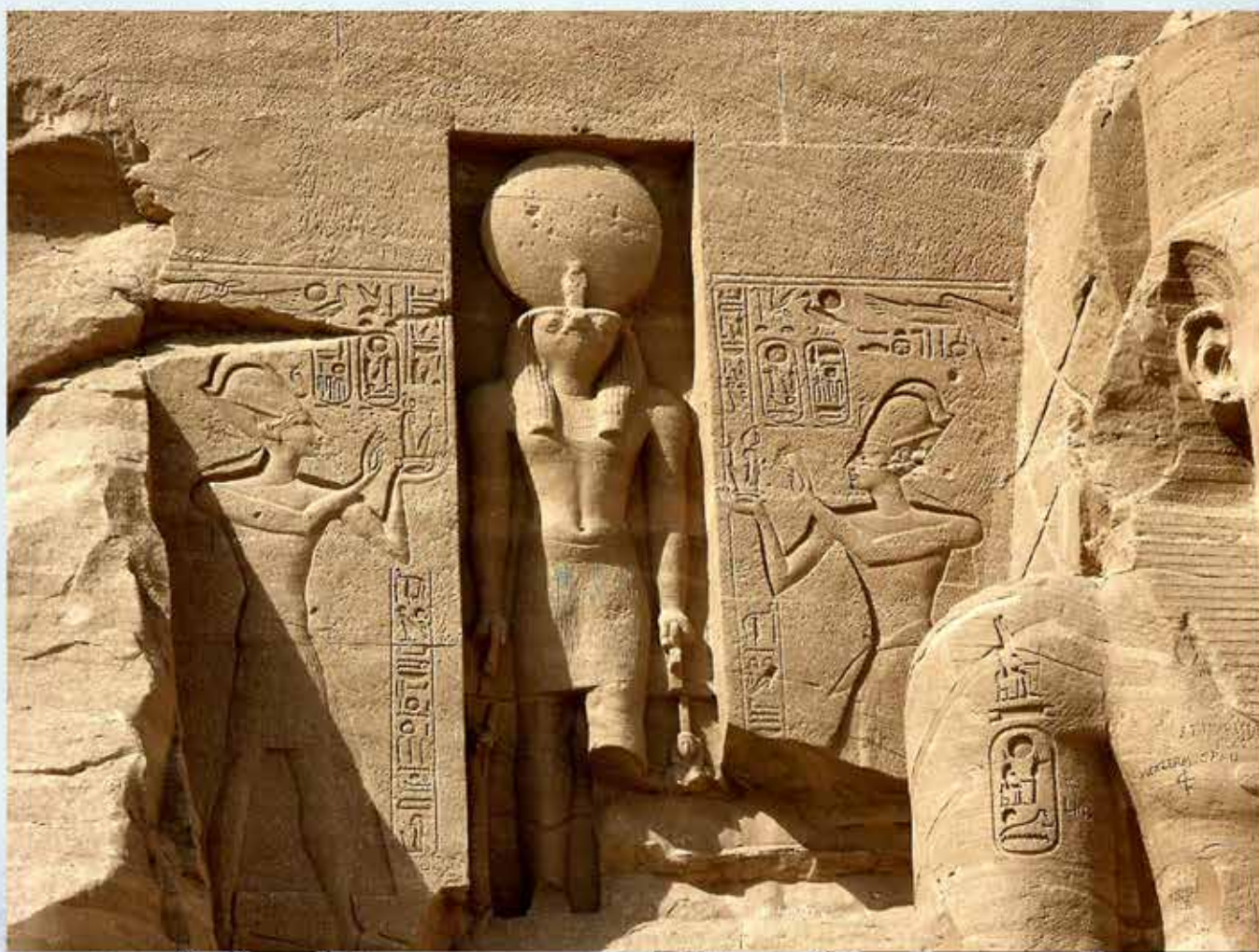
## THE ORIGINS OF YULE

The way we celebrate Yule

today comes from roots stretching as far as ancient Egypt. The Egyptians honored the daily rebirth of Ra, the Sun God. This tradition spread as Egyptian culture thrived throughout Mesopotamia (now largely known as the Middle East). The peoples of this region celebrated the return of the Sun after a period of cold, darkness, and the dying of crops.

In ancient Rome, our ancestors liked to party all week long. Saturnalia was a celebration of the agricultural god Saturn, and was held around the winter solstice. It involved a lot of food, sacrifices, gift-giving, and walking and singing around the streets naked (yes, naked).

You would think that a week-long celebration was enough, but here come the Norse peoples of pre-Christian Scandinavia. They called the celebration Jul, and had been celebrating it for thousands of years. Our European ancestors considered the winter solstice as a time of feasting and merriment. This is because as winter (and the famine that came with it) drew near, hunters slaughtered cattle so they wouldn't have to feed them. There was an abundant supply of meat, and so much time on their hands. We credit our ancestors from Northern Europe for traditions like the burning of the Yule log, decorating a tree,





GLÆDELIG JUL.



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YULE

Then until now, we welcome Yule as the time when darkness and cold give way to light and warmth. After the longest night of the year, the Sun will rise a little higher and will stay longer as each day passes. We celebrate the resurrection or rebirth of the Oak King, the Sun King, the life-giving solar energy that will revitalize the sleeping Earth.

For our ancestors, who mostly relied on agriculture for a living, Yule marked the budding of a new time. Pretty soon, spring will come and the land will be fertile. This is a time of hope, renewal, and looking forward to the future. During this holiday, Wiccans and pagans of today engage in merrymaking, exchanging gifts, and bountiful feasts.

If Yule sounds a lot like Christmas, this is because many of Christmas



traditions have Pagan roots. Before it was known as caroling, pre-Christian peoples used to go around door-to-door to drink to the health of their neighbors. They also traveled to their fields and sang to drive away evil spirits that might ruin the healthy growth of the crops. Other customs, like kissing under a mistletoe and having a Yule log, also come from Pagan practices.

## HOW YOU CAN CELEBRATE YULE

Because this is a Sabbat honoring the Sun, use lots of candles, lights, and bright colors. You can even build a bonfire. Welcome back the light and warmth into your home and into your life.

You can perform rituals and decorate your altar and home using the following Yule traditions.

**DEITIES:** Apollo, Ra, Odin, Lugh, The Oak King, The Horned One, The Green Man, The Goddess in her Mother aspect, Brighid, Isis, Demeter, Gaea, Diana, The Divine Child, Mabon

**SYMBOLISM:** return of the Sun, light, hope, new beginnings

**DECORATIONS:** Yule log, evergreen boughs, holly boughs, mistletoe, candles

**COLORS:** Green, red, white, gold, yellow, silver, orange



**FOOD:** Pork and turkey dishes, wassail, cookies, cinnamon buns, fruits, nuts, eggnog, ginger tea, spiced cider

**HERBS:** Holly, evergreen, mistletoe, frankincense, oak, pine, sage, yellow cedar

**STONES:** Emerald, garnet, ruby, bloodstone, diamond

**INCENSE:** Cinnamon, pine, cedar, bayberry







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