

The Controversial Cauldron

Samhain 2009

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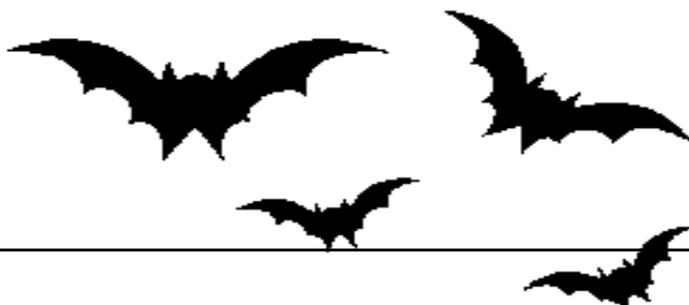
Welcome to the Email Witches Newsletter

Email Witches is a pagan friendly email group attracting people from all walks of life, from all spectrums of society and from all around the world. Most are individuals seeking a personal practical religion that can be adapted to their own needs and criteria, and Wicca is a wonderfully diverse religion that meets these needs. Email Witches, a Yahoo! Group, is set up as a place where those of same interest can meet, discuss, share and gain more information about their chosen paths. All visitors to my website Controverscial.com are welcome, so feel free to join us and make new friends.

Best Wishes

<http://www.controverscial.com/>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Email_Witches/



Group Information:

- Members: 727
- Founded: Jul 17, 2002
- Language: English
- Representing:

Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, England, France, Greenland, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Nova Scotia, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Tenerife, USA and Wales.

Welcome Samhain

Written and compiled by George Knowles

Samhain is one of the greater Sabbats of the Witches' calendar and in the Northern Hemisphere is celebrated on the night of 31st October (In the Southern Hemisphere Beltane is the equivalent Sabbat). Samhain literally means 'Summer's end', but is known by many other names, including: November Eve, Hallowmas, All Hallows Eve, Feast of Apples, Night of Spirits, Feast of the Dead and perhaps most commonly as Halloween. Depending on location, Samhain is also pronounced differently; in Ireland it is pronounced as 'sow-in', in Scotland as 'sav-en' and in Wales as 'sow-eeen'. In the Gaelic language of the ancient Celts, in Ireland the festival is known as *Oíche Shamhna*, in Scotland *Oidhche Shamhna* and in Wales *Nos Calan Gaeaf*.

Samhain marks the seasonal change from Summer into Winter, which of old was the traditional time to bring in the animals from their summer grazing. A cull would then be made and some animals slaughtered, the meat from which is preserved to provide food for the winter. As the animals were slaughtered to provide for the people, in mythology so too does the 'King of the Hunt' die in an act of sacrifice. As the summer daylight faded and the darkness of winter approached, a 'Feast of the Dead' was celebrated as a farewell tribute to the Sun God. The Goddess mourns the death of her son and begins her descent into the underworld, there to search for him again.

Samhain is one of the most popular and widespread pagan festivals in the Celtic calendar and was traditionally regarded as the Celtic New Year. In modern times it is a night of fun and celebration, of glowing Jack-O'-Lanterns, trick-or-treating, and dressing up as Wicked Witches. It is also a night for divination, for attending séances, tarot card readings and for scrying by various means. To our ancestors Samhain was considered a night of occult power, when the veil between the unseen world and ours is at its thinnest, a night when the spirits of the departed are free to roam.

Samhain therefore is a time to honor our ancestors and other departed souls. In times past it was customary to place lights along roadways to help guide familiar spirits out from the dark, or to leave open a door or window in the home with a candle or other light burning to lead them back from whence they had left. This was the beginning of the ever-popular Jack-O'-Lantern custom in which lighted candles were placed in hollowed out turnips, gourds or pumpkins.

Another old custom was to leave out food offerings on

doorsteps, a welcome invitation to the spirits of family members, ancestors, friends, pets and other loved ones to cross the threshold of their home and revisit. After all the hard work of collecting in the harvest, it was also a time for family reunions when all members of the family came together to celebrate a feast before the winter privations set in. At the feast an extra place would be set at the table for absent members, while bards re-told stories about those long gone. During the evening traditional songs would be sung, poetry recited and dances performed in their honor.

Bonfires symbolizing light for the New Year played an important part in the festival. On the night of Samhain each household would extinguish their hearth-fires and wait for the druids to light the village bonfire. Torches lit from the common fire would then be used to re-light their own fires. Often two fires would be lit side by side and during the evening's celebrations villagers leading their animals would pass between them in a ritual act of purification.

Candles also play an important part in Samhain celebrations, their hypnotic glow creating the right mood for the occasion. Ever since fire was discovered the naked flame has been regarded as sacred, and in ancient times lighted touches were used to invoke the Goddess and Gods. Similarly today the naked flame of lighted candles are used to aid divination, to commune with deities and more particularly at this time, to connect with ancestors and other departed souls.

To our ancestors, winter was a time of famine and hardship, more so for the old and feeble when many would fail to survive the coming winter months. Samhain at the start of the winter season and the beginning of the Celtic New Year was therefore a poignant time to honor those who had passed before them. To pagans and witches alike, Samhain is a celebration in honor of our ancestors, much as they honored us in the days before we were born. As the wheel of life continues to turn so will they honor us again, for time will come when we too cross the divide and take up our place beside them once again.

In more recent times the association of death with Samhain has been maligned to include the assumption of evil, and today is often portrayed as a night when evil forces combine to create all manner of baneful harm. Such could not be further from the truth, for while it may be possible for negative forces to cross the divide, it is not in any way a night of hostile intent. Even though the holiday has changed over the years, its intent is still clear – it is a celebration of respect for the dead and of a new beginning to come. It is a holiday that commemorates both life and death, and recognizes the need to exist in harmony with the past, present and future.

07th October 2009 © George Knowles

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<http://www.controversial.com>

Samhain Ritual

By Crone

The altar should be set with a black cloth, a smoldering cauldron, black votives at the corners or at direction altars, with a single white taper at the center. Adorn the central altar and direction altars with arrangements of dark dried flowers, reeds, and grasses. A figure of the goddess as crone should be present. (This can easily be made from a black scarf or cloth.) Wear a dark robe with a hood. If a loved one or beloved pet has made the transition to the Summerland during the year, you may choose to include a small photograph on the altar. Near the cauldron, have a bowl with a few short sturdy twigs and dried leaves.



From: <http://clubs.users.cnu.edu/peso/Holidays.htm>

Grounding and Centering: Focus on your altar and the meaning of this season with these words:

“Within the cycle of life, there comes a time when the light is dim and energy has retracted.

It is a time to honor our dead and those in their declining years.

It is a time to look forward to the life that grows ever out of death.”

Cast the Circle deosil with athame or wand extended, repeating this chant:

“Crone and sage, crone and sage,
Wisdom is the gift of age.
Hoof and Horn, Hoof and Horn
All that dies shall be reborn.”

After returning to the altar, invoke the spirits of the directions, lighting the black votive on the direction altar or on that corner of your main altar with these

words:

“Spirit of East I do invite
To join my circle in dark of night.
Your Air now brings me winds so chill.
My rushing life becomes quite still.
My thoughts and words in somber quest
Invoke you now with all the rest.

Spirit of South I need your light.
I need your warmth on this dark night.
I beg you, make the shadows go.
I seek creative passion so.
Be with me on this night so black
With fire and heat which now I lack.

Spirit of West, of water clear
Please join me; bring your presence near.
I need your insight as I strive
To reckon death, then be alive.
I need your feelings deep and strong
To move me like a sacred song.

Spirit of North, of sacred Earth
Be here through death and through rebirth.
Nurture me in this awesome task
Here in the dark, is what I ask.
As darkness deep within is found,
Please join me on your hallowed ground.

Goddess, Crone of the dying light, of the death of the year,
Be with me as I honor the close of a cycle.
Bless me with your wisdom as the end draws near.
I request your presence and your reassurance
That the end is but another beginning;
That as the light goes, yet it will come again;
That death brings with it the promise of life to come.
Guide me that I might know your gift for my loved ones,
That they will rest and be reborn, refreshed and renewed.

I am now in that place,
In that sacred space between the worlds.
I am where my ancestors have gone.
I am where my loved ones watch me.
I am in a world beyond time
Where the goddess guides me
Where I am one with the world
Where I open my heart and mind
Where I love and learn.
Blessed be.”

Honoring those who have gone on to the Summerland. If you have a photograph on your altar, hold it close, or hold in your heart a loved one who has made the final transition. If you have no one in your life who has made this transition, honor the many lives wasted in war and crime. Say these words:

“Do not stand at my grave and weep
 I am not there, I do not sleep
 I am a thousand winds that blow
 I am the diamond glints on snow
 I am the sunlight on ripened grain
 I am the gentle autumn rain
 When you awaken in the morning's hush
 I am the swift uplifting rush
 of quiet birds in circled flight
 I am the soft stars that shine at night.
 Do not stand at my grave and cry
 I am not there. I did not die.” *

Magickal Working

Samhain marks the New Year. You have looked back at losses of the past. Now look ahead. As you look to the new year, you must look within.

Take a twig from the bowl and holding it in your hands focus on a strength you have which you would take with you into the New Year. Say these words as you drop the twig into the cauldron:

“I am strong and empowered by my _____. As this twig adds power to the flames I know my _____ adds to the strength of those I touch.”

Take a dry leaf from the bowl, and holding it in your hands, focus on something of yourself you would leave behind with the passing year. Say these words as you drop the leaf into the cauldron:

“Be gone from me, _____. I have no use for you in my life. As this leaf turns to ash in the flame, so _____ burns and is gone.”

Light the white candle while focusing on an attribute or skill you wish for yourself in the coming year. Look into the flame as you say these words:

“My wish is for _____. I know a wish alone will not bring this to me. I am empowering myself here and now to take steps in the new year to create for myself this _____.”

I face the New Year with joy and love.
 Things to keep, to acquire, to be free of.

To insure that the magick will come true
 I will help it happen in all that I do.”

Opening the Circle.

“Thank you Goddess Crone for your presence here.
 I ask you always to be near.

On this night and in this hour
 I have felt your magick power.

I thank directions spirits all
 For coming with my opening call.

You are of the goddess; go with her now.
 My thanks for your presence during my vow.

Thanks for her sweet breath which is air,
 And thanks for the fire, her spirit fair,
 Thanks water which fills her place of birth,
 And thanks for her body, our sacred Earth.

I go forth from this sacred space
 Into the New Year
 Empowered to be more
 Than I have been.

So mote it be and blessed be.”

* “I Am Not There” by Gwydion Pendderwen of the
 Faerie Wicca Tradition (1946-1982)



Crystal ball collection by George Knowles

To look back at past lives and forward to new beginnings, all types of divination are used on this night.

© October 2009 Darkhairedcrone
 Crone is an active member of the UU (CUUP's)
 and has been a member of Email Witches since 2004

Legacy

Cauldron Magick (Vessel Magick)

By *Ardriana Cahill*

“Every hollow holds a hallow.”¹

This essay began as an essay on cauldron magick but it was impossible for me to not see the comparison of certain kinds of magick and divination that can also be done where chalices or bowls are employed, such as in my family magickal tradition. So although it is primarily regarding cauldron magick, I will touch on other vessels.

The cauldron’s life began as a simple cook pot. It was a practical well of nourishment to a family. To the herbal wise woman or man, that definition was extended as a vessel for boiling healing brews and poultices. To the witch, its use moved a step away from the practical to the magickal where potions were brewed. The lines over the centuries have blurred trying to define when it took on magickal properties.

At its very essence the cauldron is made of metallic earth, heated by fire, cooled by air and tempered by water. It is a vessel of the elements. In contemporary Witchcraft, a cauldron will be a pot made of cast iron which stands on three legs and has a handle. For safety’s sake, it should also have a lid.

In modern witchcraft, the very shape of a vessel evokes the feminine divine, the sacred womb and the origins of life. This tradition is evoked and repeated from many cultures.

“This nine-fold power of the goddess, known as the *Toradh* of Ana, is especially potent in wells, springs and sacred vessels, such as cauldrons. The specific components of the *Toradh* are described in:

“Nine Gifts of the Cauldron”:

*The Cauldron of Life-Work
gives and is replenished,
promotes and is enlarged,
nourishes and is given life,
ennobles and is exalted,
requests and is filled with answers,
sings and is filled with song,
preserves and is made strong,
arranges and receives arrangements,
maintains and is maintained.
Good is the well of measure.”²*

Cauldron Lore

More than just a symbol of the goddess, the cauldron and its contents have specifically represented abundance, poetic inspiration (i.e. knowledge, wisdom and eloquence), physical restoration, regeneration, alchemical transformation, spiritual or psychic awakening or vision and the ability to discern truth.

In Celtic mythology, these abilities were gained from being near or in the cauldron or eating or drinking the contents mixed in a cauldron. Similar stories can be found using a chalice, a bowl or a horn.



Welsh bards called themselves *Cerddorion* (sons of *Cerridwen*). The Celtic bard *Taliesin*, founder of their craft, was said to be born of *Cerridwen* and to have tasted a potion from her magick *Cauldron of Inspiration*. In her cauldron she made a potion called *greal* (from which the word *Grail* probably came). The potion was made from six plants associated with inspiration and knowledge.

The most commonly known stories of the cauldron can be found in Celtic mythology. In Irish lore, *Eochaid Ollathair*, also known as the *Dagda*, possessed a cauldron that was one of the four sacred objects brought to Ireland by the *Tuatha De Danaan*. Its name was *Undry* and it had the magical capability of providing infinite sustenance doled out by each man’s merit. In *Tara*, the home of the *High Kings* of Ireland, this was used to magically grant a royal claimant the authority of divine kingship after eating a meal prepared within it. Sacred vessels of the goddess often bestowed sovereignty and kingship in the myths of Irish *High Kings*.

In Welsh lore, *Cerridwen*’s cauldron, *Amen*, bestowed knowledge and inspiration. *Bran the Blessed* had the



The Gundestrup Cauldron is thought to have been crafted in Gaul circa. 100 BCE. It was discovered in a peat bog in Denmark in 1891, where scholars suggest the Druids may have placed it as an offering to the deities of Nature. One of the cauldron's 13 panels clearly shows the Celtic horned God known as Cernunnos.

Cauldron of Rebirth which resurrected slain warriors. His legend may be the forerunner to the Keeper of the Holy Grail, the chalice of Jesus. On the Gundestrup cauldron, a Celtic horned God popularly believed to be Cernunnos, is depicted being reborn after having been torn apart and boiled in a cauldron. In Norse mythology, a draught which bestowed poetic inspiration and knowledge was brewed in the kettle/cauldron, Odhroerir. In Greece, even today, every four years the modern Olympic flame is lit in a cauldron during a ritual at the site where the Greek temple of Hera used to stand. The great flame that oversees the games is carried by a torch but the vessel that holds that overseeing flame is called a cauldron.

Other forms of a cauldron with identical or similar lore include fire pots which have historically symbolized the god himself and were special pots made for the protection of a sacred flame. Censors are another form of cauldron used as a fire pot or bowl to hold either sacred fire or sacred incense.

Magickal Vessel uses

The modern use of a witch's cauldron is to represent the God on an altar or on the ground representing the element of Fire within the ritual circle. Placed on an altar or on the grass one must make sure it sits on a fireproof ceramic tile or hotplate.

Pour rubbing alcohol over the salts until the alcohol is about an inch higher than the salts. Hold a lighted match just above the alcohol. The liquid will light and produce a strong orange flame. The flame burns cool, unlike a wood fire, and is difficult to burn things in. When the flame gets low, cover to snuff out completely. Add more rubbing alcohol to the cauldron and relight carefully. The warmer the rubbing alcohol, the quicker it ignites. This fire recipe leaves a significant amount of sediment in the cauldron.³

Other times the cauldron is filled with soil or sand to hold a small charcoal brick which is lit for loose incense to be burned upon. Cone incense can also be simply placed on the sand or stick incense is stuck into the sand and burned that way.

Letters to the divine or the ancestors, burnt spells and burnt offerings are often lit and place in the cauldron to burn.

Divination is one of the key uses for the cauldron given its historical nature to impart vision and truth. Several forms of cauldron divination can be done with fire or dry ice. Create the cool alcohol fire as above and look into the flames for images and their symbolic meaning.

In a cauldron filled with sand, (or as in my tradition use a sand-filled ceramic bowl) we do smoke divination. We judge the curl of the smoke from dried herbs or incense burnt on a charcoal brick placed in sand. Blow the smoke softly away from you as you concentrate on a question. Smoke twisting to the deosil (clockwise) means NO. Smoke twisting to the widdershins (counter or anti-clockwise) means YES. Burn dried Rose or Cherry blossoms for divinations of love. Use Pecan for questions of employment. Burn Mugwort to ask about prophetic dreams and Lilac for questions concerning the ancestors. Use Mint, Clove or Basil for money questions. Use Cinnamon or Sandalwood for questions of success. Try Carnation, Apple, Bayberry or Cedar for insights into health issues.

You can also fill the cauldron or a bowl with warm water and, with a pair of tongs, drop many small pieces of dry ice into it. (Dry ice can be purchased from a grocery store.) Keep adding warm water and more ice as needed to create a steady rise of mist. As the mist rises, look for images and their symbolic significance that may reflect your hidden desires.

Scrying with a cauldron or bowl filled with water or wine is an ancient practice. It is a meditation device whereby, if you can relax your mind and eyes, you may see images or get impressions of those things you need to attend to or might be calling to you to investigate further. If meditation is more difficult for you, add a teaspoon of olive oil or other sacred oil to the water. Stir with your finger and watch how the oil merges and separates to mesmerize or form symbolic pictures.

In my tradition, we never used a cauldron. We use a ceramic bowl on the altar for sympathetic or small burnt offerings such as herbs or flower petals. (Cauldrons were way too witchy for witches in hiding. A magickal bowl could be left on a table unnoticed.) I often place glass enclosed spell candles dressed with oils in the bowl then surround them with stones and sprinkle appropriate herbs. Here, I place written spells under the candle at the beginning of a spell or burn them before or after the completion of the spell. The bowl becomes a magickal altar unto itself, much like the cauldron which is used for many sacred purposes with or without an altar. Like the cauldron, the bowl is feminine in nature but is largely used with element of Fire in the tradition of Helios, the sun god, who completed his daily rounds "floating" back to his Eastern palace in a golden bowl.

Bowls called Phiales were also used by the ancient Greeks for oil or wine libations, poured into the ground or river to honor the dead or the gods. The Patera, a broad, shallow dish was used for ritual drinking and was thought to impart blessing. Much like the food or drink from the sacred cauldron, these vessels were first designed for material sustenance and later interpreted for use in spiritual sustenance. The cauldron or bowl can also be used filled with water for a floral offering to celebrate joy or to burn flowers in to denote sorrow.

Chalices of oil were burned on ancient Greek and Roman altars. In modern witchcraft, the chalice is another vessel of the goddess or feminine divine and not often used with the element of fire, but it could be with the same precautions of sand and fireproofing that metal cauldrons and ceramic bowls use. However, never try this with glass chalices. Chalices may also be placed on an altar or on ritual ground as a symbol of the element Water. Magickal chalices evolved in history much the same way cauldrons did, imparting the gifts of transformation, healing and immortality.

The most famous chalice is the cup of Christ as told in Authurian lore which bestows immortality to anyone

who drinks from it. The Cup of Jamshid, was a cup of divination and also bestowed immortality in Persian mythology. In Greek mythology, the cup of Circe brings Ulysses under her control. Apollo had a magickal cup called Crater. And Dionysus had a magickal cup called a kantharos, that like so many magickal vessels, would never empty.

What is stated in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* is a long established tradition that "every hollow hold a hallow." These "hollows", be they cauldron, bowl or cup, have been used throughout mythology as magickal tools for divination, transformation and rejuvenation. Let these serve you this Samhain, to evoke abundance, poetic inspiration, restoration, regeneration, transformation, spiritual or psychic awakening or vision and the ability to discern truth. Or if not these, use them to connect you to the history of your magickal heritage.

End notes:

1. *Finnegan's Wake*, James Joyce p.25
2. *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom* ~ By Caitlin Matthews, and Matthews John, p. 229
3. *Circle Round: Raising Children in the Goddess Tradition* ~ by Starhawk, Anne Hille and Diane Baker

Other References:

- Wikipedia
Celtic Religion in Roman Britain ~ By Graham Webster
Giants, monsters, and dragons: an encyclopedia of folklore, legend, and myth ~ By Carol Rose
The Sacred Bee in Ancient Times and Folklore ~ By Hilda M. Ransome
Wake Rites: The Ancient Irish Rituals of Finnegan's Wake ~ by George Cinclair Gibson



Ardagh Chalice, c. 800-899 AD. Found in 1847 by a small boy digging for potatoes

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On the Rocks



Opal

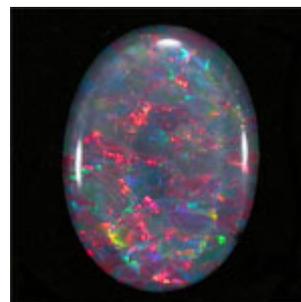


By Pari

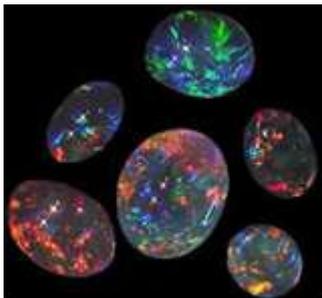
Opal, a Water and Fire stone and the birthstone for October, can be quite a useful and valuable tool to use at Samhain, not to mention throughout the long winter months. It is a stone of "happy dreams and changes", a stone of communion, revelation and vision, and a bringer of love and understanding. And so, as we move solidly into the realm of Autumn and prepare for all the changes that Winter brings (just as those in the Southern Hemisphere are welcoming the change to Spring and looking forward to Summer), and as we seek to reunite with the Old Ones and family and friends beyond, let Opal be our guide!



A very interestingly structured stone, Opal is actually a hydrated Quartz containing minute spheres of silica and oxygen bonded by up to 10% water within its form. For this reason, Opal is considered a mineraloid and not truly crystalline. But a precious stone it is! In fact, the name Opal derives from the Greek "opalios" meaning "all-seeing gem" and earlier from the Sanskrit word "upala" meaning "precious stone". This beautiful but sometimes brittle gemstone has been



well sought after for centuries, especially what they call the Precious White or Black varieties. Unlike Common Opal whose tiny internal spheres are unorganized, the Precious varieties contain fiery flashes of color due to various wavelengths of diffracted light emanating from their own internal spheres which are stacked and uniform! These flashes are called "fire" and appear in bright confetti-like hues of blue, red, pink, yellow, orange, green and purple in varying combinations. The Ancients, though, believed that Precious Opal came into its true being when the Storm God, jealous of the beauty of the Rainbow God, shattered the rainbow to bits which then fell to the earth and were captured within the Opals.



Perhaps because of its association with the beautiful Rainbow God, Precious Opal is believed to give its wearer an incredible charisma and charm. It is said to increase and enhance our personal power and self-esteem and help us to take assertive action whenever needed. All Opal can alleviate shyness, timidity and dispel lackadaisical attitudes, creating a joyful atmosphere during exploration and acknowledgement of the Higher Self and other realms.



These silky and milky translucent opalescent stones were revered by ancient Romans who mined them in the area of what is now the Czech Republic. The early Aztecs mined the Mexican lands as did the Spanish Conquistadors who brought Opal back to Europe with them. Today, 90% of Opals come from Australia (the most beautiful fiery black variety found in New South Wales, and other precious varieties hailing from South Australia and Queensland), with other significant sources being the United States, Mexico, Honduras, Peru and



Chile. Opal deposits occur in masses, veins, nodules, stalactites, and at times within petrified wood. Its environment is either volcanic, deposited from hot springs, or in sediments.



Pink Opal

Aside from the Precious Opals of either black or white, there are many other colors and kinds of Opal, including the more common Pink Opal, Blue Opal, White Opal (containing no fire), and Brown, Black or Clear Opal. There is also an orange variety called Fire Opal, clear Oregon Opal and Water Opal, Andean Opal with a pattern of swirling colors, brown Boulder Opal with or without fire, Cherry Opal, and a "jelly" type Opal exhibiting a gelatinous blue color. There are many synthetic Opals on the market, so care should be taken when opting to buy the real thing.

Magically, Black Opals open up our Third Eye, allowing for our own flashes of clear insight and revelation to spring forth. It can help us peer into the true heart of another. Just as the Australian Aborigines and Native American shamans used Opal to invoke visions during Dreamtime ceremonies and vision quests respectively, so too can we use this powerful stone during Astral travel, for accessing vital past-life information, meditation, trance work or divination. Metaphysically, Black Opals encourage a stronger connection to the spirit world, helping us to more fully experience the Divine and bringing us to a welcomed state of high spirituality. Often used in Tantric sex, this Opal helps one achieve a divine and extremely connected sexual experience - one that takes us beyond the ego so that we can more fully merge with the cosmos. Opals, of any kind, activate matters of the heart by promoting love, loyalty, attraction and the fiery passion that comes when those three traits are combined. It can be quite an exciting and explosive stone!



Boulder Opal



Fire Opal

Precious White Opal does much the same as the Black, but is known to help diminish any anger, fear or negative emotions. It helps us release old patterns that no longer serve us, and then sweetly pushes us along to welcome in the new and improved path or relationship it has attracted to us. In ancient France, it was believed that Opals could make one "invisible" and thus help one steal - a quality that most likely played a part in giving Opals a bad reputation back then for being "unlucky". But this characteristic of "invisibility" - what I call donning an "invisibility cloak" - can be used for much better purposes. It can allow us to more stealthily move through situations or times when we wish not to be noticed, and it can also allow us to move more readily between realms.

Additional properties of various other types of Opal are:

~ Common White Opal brings productivity and helps us to get things accomplished efficiently. It calms and soothes the emotions.

~ Pink Opal heals emotional trauma and allows love to flourish once again.

~ Boulder Opal helps us wade through any "muddy" areas of our lives.

~ Boulder Matrix Fire Opal, so named because it is found within the fissures of massive boulders and contains brilliant flashes of light refracted colors of the highest intensity of all the Opals, is noted for helping us know what we *truly* desire and, in turn, bestows us with a greater creativity, inspiration and intuition on how to go about attaining it.

~ Orange Fire Opal enhances sexuality and heightens passion.

~ Blue Opal gives us the courage to voice what we desire.

~ Gray or clear Opal helps bring about the "invisibility" factor.

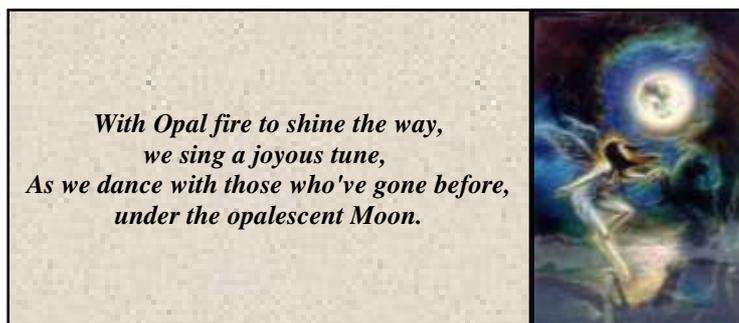
~ Jelly Opal releases our resistance to going with the flow.

Physically, all Opals help stimulate circulation and purify the blood, help clear and strengthen eyesight, keep kidneys healthy, and help break up infections in the body and move them more quickly through the system.

Opal is associated with the astrological sign of Libra, but also with Cancer, Pisces and Scorpio. It is medium hard as stones go, registering between 5.5 and 6.5 on the Mohs Scale, and is best cleansed under softly running water or under the light of the Moon. It is important to keep Opals out of sunlight where their water content can dry out and cause cracking or loss of iridescence. In the Northern Hemisphere where sunlight has now waned, it is time to work with Opal!

As brightly colored Autumn leaves herald change, so do the flashes of color in this precious opalescent and iridescent gemstone. And as those sudden colors are revealed within the cloudy matrix of Opal, the veil is pierced. With the veil thinnest now...

...a blessed Samhain and a happy reunion to all!



Sources:

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Love Is In the Earth, Melody

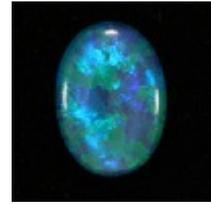
Opal, itself.

All photos by Patricia J. Martin

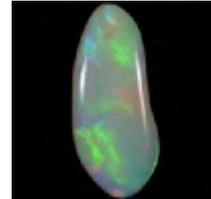
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<http://www.peacefulpaths.com>



Blue Opal



Gray Opal



Jelly Opal

The Herb Garden

Fumitory

By Lyric Moonshadow

There are many herbs and plants associated with Samhain, among them: Acorn and Oak, Rosemary, Mugwort, Rue, Calendula, Sunflower, Pumpkin, Turnip, Apple, Sage, Dittany of Crete, Wormwood, Passionflower, Mandrake, Hemlock and many more I'm sure. The Samhain herb I will be sharing with you is one of the lesser-known, yet very interesting herbs: Fumitory. *Fumaria Officinalis* is the botanical name, but it is more commonly known as Earth Smoke and I have found this to be the preferred name in many books and articles; although it is also known as Hedge Fumitory, Wax Dolls, Beggary, Fumus, Vapor and Kapnos.

Fumitory is native to Africa and Europe, but grows as a weed in Asia, North America and Australia. It is usually found growing near or in fields and by roadsides. It can grow up to 3 feet tall with droopy, hollow stems that offer up a delicate tubular shaped, crimson, pink and purple tipped flower. The leaves, which are almost "frilly" looking and gray-green in color, look like curls of smoke rising up from the Earth...thus the name Earth Smoke.

The plant should be harvested for medicinal purposes when it is in flower, which is most of the summer. Although the dried flowers are often used in making teas and tonics to treat liver and gallbladder ailments, the leaves which are succulent-like yield a juice that has medicinal properties as well. The leaves have no odor and are said to taste "bitter and saline". A syrup made from the juice of the leaves is believed to enhance liver function, clear the body of impurities and clear up certain skin conditions, most notably eczema and acne. It is also used as an eye wash to treat conjunctivitis. To make an infusion, pour 1 cup of boiling water into 1-2 teaspoons of dry herb and allow to infuse for 10-15 minutes. This can be taken as often as needed, but for skin problems the infusion should be taken at least 3 times a day.



To say that Fumitory has been around for a long time is a true understatement. In 77 CE, Pliny the Elder, who referred to Fumitory by the Greek name Kapnos which means smoke, called Fumitory "medicine of the eye" as it was safely used to soothe eye ailments. It was fashionable for the Greeks and Romans to pluck eyelashes and eyebrows. Later Culpeper in his *Complete Herbal* of 1653 wrote, "the juice of Fumitorie, doth take away unprofitable haire ... growing upon the eye lids ... first plucked away, it will not suffer others to grow in their places"!! If you are interested in other historical medicinal anecdotes and uses of Fumitory, you may want to visit one of my favorite sites: *Mrs. M. Grieve's A Modern Herbal*, first published in 1931: www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/f/fumito36.html

Mrs. Grieve states that "According to ancient exorcists, when the plant is burned, its smoke has the power of expelling evil spirits it having been used for this purpose in the famous geometrical gardens of St. Gall. There is a legend that the plant was produced, not from seed, but from vapours arising out of the earth". This statement brings us to the magickal qualities of this endearing plant. Its gender is female. It is ruled by the planet Saturn. It is associated with Elemental Earth and with the deities Aine and Dagda. Its powers are associated with money and exorcism. The character of this plant is interesting in its waxing and waning aspects – it attracts money and dispels unwanted entities from a person or place. Use Fumitory as a smudge to increase mental discipline, concentration and focus, prosperity, purification, protection and divination.

To attract money, make an infusion of Fumitory and boiling water. Add tincture of benzoin after it has cooled. Wash your hands with this solution before major financial transactions. This will protect and increase cash flow. You can also sprinkle some over your bank statement or wallet. Hoodoo practitioners encourage salesmen to put the dried herb in their shoe to bring luck and financial gain. Use Fumitory to smudge your sacred space at Samhain in particular to banish and protect yourself from any evil "meanies" that may be lurking about. Smudging with Fumitory or putting some in your pre-ritual bath will increase your focus and divination abilities. An interesting use of Fumitory is as an incense prior the Great Rite. It is said to improve natural tendencies and attractions toward the sensual, thus allowing for better mental discipline and increased spiritual focus.



Whatever your plans for Samhain are, you will most definitely do well to add a little bit of Fumitory to your ritual. This shrinking violet of an herb really packs a surprising punch, both medicinally and magickally. Next time you're walking in a field in the summer keep your eyes open for Fumitory, I'm sure you'll see it, it's everywhere!!!

Happy Samhain!!!!

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An original drawing by Lyric

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The Pagan Kitchen

By OwlOak

MM Folks....The Wheel of the Year has again turned. For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere Samhain is upon us, while our Southern Hemisphere brothers and sisters are celebrating Beltane.

Here in Western Massachusetts there is no doubt that Persephone is all packed and ready to leave the building to head south for the winter. The days are growing shorter and are more damp, raw and overcast rather than crisp, bright and invigorating. At night the temperatures are hovering at or just above freezing with a killing frost having already occurred in many areas. The foliage has passed its peak and the leaves of brown are falling to the ground to form a protective blanket for the vegetation against the snow that is on its way.

As we all know, Samhain is a time of sadness and joy. A time of sadness as we reflect on, and pay our respects to, our ancestors and friends who have passed to the other side. And, a time of joy since the year's labors are over, the larders have been filled, and our family and friends have gathered with us in celebration of this. Please remember to set a place at the harvest table for your departed ones so they can join in too.

In this issue, to celebrate the harvest we have an interesting cocktail, a tasty stick-to-your-ribs meal, and a decadent dessert; so, without further ado, let's get on with the party...

The first offering is a cocktail called:

Salem Witch Cocktail

Originator Unknown

Ingredients:

1/2 oz Vodka
1/2 oz Raspberry schnapps
1/2 oz Midori melon liqueur
Lime juice
Grenadine
Sour Mix
Club Soda or Seltzer



Directions:

Pour the vodka, Midori, and raspberry schnapps into a Collins glass filled with ice.
Add a splash of lime juice.
Fill the glass 2/3-full with the sour mix and the rest of the way with the club soda.
Stir gently, and top with a splash of grenadine.

The next offering is a hearty stew:

Fall Stew

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1/2 pound lean beef - cut into cubes
1/2 pound lean pork - cut into cubes
1/2 pound lean lamb - cut into cubes
1 10 oz can onion soup - undiluted
1 10 oz can brown gravy - undiluted
1 1/2 cups apple cider – not apple juice
4 potatoes - peeled and cubed
4 carrots - peeled and cut into 1/2" thick rounds
1 large parsnip – peeled and cut into 1/2" thick rounds
1 medium rutabaga (purple top yellow turnip) – peeled and cubed
2 tablespoons. cooking oil, or bacon grease (my favorite) – more can be added if needed
Pepper - to taste
Flour - as needed
Salt – as needed

Directions:

Combine the flour and pepper and coat the meat with the mixture.
Add the oil to a large pot and brown the meat over medium heat.
Next, add the onion soup, brown gravy, and apple cider; being sure to scrape the bottom of the pan to release all the flavor morsels there.
Cover, lower the heat, and allow to simmer for 2-3 hours, or until the meat is tender - stirring occasionally.
Remove the lid, add the vegetables and continue simmering until they are fork tender and the taste and consistency are to your liking – additional water and/or salt may be added if needed.

Serve sprinkled with fresh chopped parsley and/or a dollop of sour cream and crusty bread and butter. Or, for a more elegant meal, it can be served in hollowed out mini-pumpkins or bread bowls.

The final offering is a delicious and decadent dessert:

Pumpkin-Gingersnap Cheesecake with Caramel Rum Sauce

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

Crust:

1 1/2 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs (about 3 dozen)
1/4 cup granulated sugar
3 tablespoons real butter – melted

Cheesecake:

3 pkgs. (8 oz. each) cream cheese - softened
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 (15 oz.) can pure pumpkin – not pumpkin pie mix
2/3 cup evaporated milk
2 tablespoons cornstarch
3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Topping:

1 (16 oz.) container sour cream - at room temperature
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup crumbled gingersnap cookies
Caramel Rum Sauce (recipe follows)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F (177 C).
Lightly grease the inside of a 9-inch springform pan and tightly wrap the outside bottom and side of it with 2 pieces of aluminum foil to prevent leakage.

For the Crust:

Combine the gingersnap crumbs, granulated sugar, and butter in a medium bowl then press this onto the bottom and 1 inch up side of the prepared pan. Place the pan in the oven and bake for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and cool on a wire rack for 10-15 minutes.

For the Cheesecake:

Beat the cream cheese, granulated sugar, and brown sugar in large mixer bowl until fluffy.
Beat in the eggs, pumpkin and evaporated milk.
Add the cornstarch, ginger and cloves and beat well.
Pour the mixture into the pan over the crust.
Place a large roasting pan on the oven rack and center the cheesecake pan on it. Fill the roasting pan with 1-inch of hot water and bake for 65 to 75 minutes or until edge is set but center still moves slightly.

For the Topping:

Combine the sour cream, granulated sugar and vanilla extract in a small bowl and mix well.
Remove the cheesecake from water bath but leave the water bath in the oven.
Spread the sour cream mixture over the top of the warm cheesecake.

Return the cheesecake to the water bath and bake for 5 minutes longer.

Remove the cheesecake from the water bath to a wire rack and run a knife around the edge of the cheesecake.

Allow it to completely cool, then remove the foil and place in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight.

To Serve:

Top the cheesecake with the crumbled gingersnaps, remove the sides from the pan, slice, and drizzle each piece with the warm Caramel Rum Sauce.

Caramel Rum Sauce

Adapted from a Domino® Sugar Recipe

Ingredients:

1/2 cup whipping or heavy cream
2 sticks butter
1/4-cup dark brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 tablespoons dark rum

Directions:

Combine all the ingredients in heavy saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and continue to boil for 1 minute, then uncover and boil for 3 to 4 more minutes without stirring. Remove from the heat, stir, and allow to cool slightly before using.

There you have it folks. A cocktail before, a great meal, and I wouldn't blame anyone who has a nap after. May you all have a happy and blessed Samhain. Until the next Sabbat, best witches from my Circle to yours.

Huggs & B*B ~ OwlOak

© 2009 James Rancourt, aka OwlOak
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How to Build a Ghost

A Metaphysical Guide to Things that go Bump in the Night

By Tamra L. Consbruck

“Energy is neither created nor destroyed, it just changes form.” Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Remember when we were children with open minds equipped with incredible imaginations, and such innocence to believe in all that which we envisioned? Our free floating transcendental fabrications were well oiled engines propelling our little minds in so many directions. We were like sponges eagerly soaking up all of our environmental influences, whether we understood them or not. We didn't need facts or eyewitness accounts to back us up. We just let our imaginations run away with us. The monsters we sometimes glimpsed in our peripheral visions were all the proof we needed to know without a doubt such creatures exist.

Our childhood memories are littered with ghost stories told around summer-camp fire pits, at home under bed covers lit from within by emergency flashlights, or in back yard tree houses and makeshift forts right before being called in for dinner. It is a shame so many of us grow out of this natural ability to glimpse beyond the veil between dimensions.

By the time we reach adulthood, society has conditioned us to conduct our lives reasonably, rationally and respectively; focusing our efforts on home, family, work, medical insurance, and if we are productive enough, perhaps a vacation now and then. Once we've settled ourselves into our current “grown-up” positions, we transform these “Things that go bump in the night” into various money making multi-media amusements; such as books, movies, and haunted theme park attractions. Personally I prefer a good zombie flick, but that's just me.

Haven't we all, at one time or another, pondered the existence of such alleged mythical creatures as the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot, aliens and goat sucking chupacabras? We may have misplaced our childhood ability to see through the veil, but not our capacity for conjecture regarding these ostensible critters. My own personal paranormal experiences notwithstanding, seeing and believing just isn't enough. I need explanations and validation. I need plausibility if nothing else. It has to make some kind of sense; otherwise I'll suspect my mental state has in some way been compromised. And to be honest, this is not such a farfetched possibility.

So; in keeping with the spirit of Samhain, or Halloween if you prefer the more widely used commercial name, let's take a brief, simple look at what constitutes the creation of these lost souls. The concept of earthbound spirits has been around since the beginning of recorded time. We find myths, legends and symbolism associated with this longstanding ethereal anomaly in just about every culture, past or present, in all corners of the world. So let's give a little recognition and credit to this world renowned paranormal superstar, “The Ghost.”

In order to better understand the mechanics of ghostly manifestations and what they are made of, it may help to contemplate on the causation of physical life and animation within the human body. This same miraculous, indestructible essence is also the catalyst in the continued existence of the mind and/or soul consciousness after the body's physical death; energy.

The human heart is believed by many to be the command center of this life affirming essence, working like a generator, sending bioelectric pulse to the brain with each beat. In turn, the brain, an electro-chemical organ, capable of producing its own energy, then delivers these pulses to the cells, distributing bioelectricity throughout the body via the nervous system. But what determines the initial spark that activates the human heart into generating this bioelectricity?

Elementary thermodynamics, say hello to metaphysical Spirituality. Oh boy.

(For the sake of rationing the time and space allotted for this essay, and the possible spontaneous combustion of my personal brain cells, I will refrain from getting us all hopelessly discombobulated in the complex labyrinth of the more perplexing scientific details...[Hold on while I catch my breath]...of the thermodynamic and metaphysical conditions; contributing to the creation of earthbound spirits. I repeat; oh boy.)

Have you ever heard the saying, “The heart is the seat of the soul?” One theory is that the unlimited life-force,

in and of the soul is the conduit that delivers from the universal source, the initial power surge to the heart, resulting in the physical, biological genesis of physical life. Now that we have an idea how bioelectric energy might enter and animate the physical body, let's work our way back towards our original focus.

When we reach the other end of our human experience, and the physical body shuts down, the contributing corporation of energies once encased within, is released through biological decomposition. Once free from its human component, the mind/soul energy emanates out from the body into the atmosphere, and is reunited with the universal source. However, in the event of physical death under tumultuous circumstances, the otherwise routine transformation and re-absorption of this energy is interrupted. In this heightened emotionally charged atmosphere, combined with a sudden unexpected evacuation from the physical body, via an acute, calamitous termination of life... [Taking another breath] ...the shock and confusion of the traumatic episode, can often restrict the energies of the mind/soul consciousness from reuniting with the universal source.

In a desperate attempt to reconnect to anything familiar, the displaced energy will attach itself to its home environment, or any object within said environment which may hold a particular significance to its previous biological existence. In some situations the termination of the physical body is so instantly executed, whether by accident or foul play, the suddenly displaced mind/soul energy does not have the opportunity to register the death. One possible result of this misfortune could be the semi-aware, slightly confused state of the energy, which may manifest in an ethereal duplicate of its pre-death form; no doubt annoyed and frustrated at its surviving family member's blatant refusal to acknowledge its presence. The family pet, on the other hand, will not stop staring at it.

Another possible result of a highly charged violent death, whether quick or excruciatingly drawn out, can result in a very dark disgruntled energy mass just dying to act out. Under this particular circumstance, the abused energy mass, being so unjustly banished from its living host, will attempt to harness and manipulate any intense electric or bioelectric energies emanating from its surroundings in order to make contact. This could be attempted by manifesting in the guise of its former self, or by knocking or making a noise, moving an object, tugging on your arm, or even breathing in your ear while whispering a message in the need to get the attentions of the living. Or perhaps this dark energy did deserve to be executed with the most extreme prejudice, as punishment for a most unimaginably gruesome evil act; but just decided to stick around in case another opportunity for malevolent mischief presents itself.

For a good many of us; child and adult; still physically living and breathing on this side of the veil, nothing could be more enjoyable than a good, safe, properly supervised, pulse racing, blood-curdling-scream inducing delirious night of entertainment, topped off with delicious mouth watering treats, sticky with fresh-made memories. But before you retire at the end of the night, be sure to leave a generous offering to that one creepy great-aunt with the unblinking glass eye, who just recently passed through the veil.

Sweet dreams little ones



Halloween Party Pics by Tamra

© Copyright October 14, 2009 by Tamra L. Consbruck
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Bats

Written and compiled by George Knowles

“Suspensions amongst thoughts are like bats amongst birds, they ever fly by twilight”
Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Of all the creatures associated with the night, perhaps the most misaligned and misunderstood is the Bat. Fictional characterisations in modern culture, in movies and on TV, have given the bat an evil and sinister reputation, but such could not be further from the truth. In Tonga and ancient Babylonia bats were considered physical manifestations of the Souls of the Dead. In China and Poland they were symbols of Happiness and Long life, and to the ancient Mayans they symbolized Transformation and Rebirth. So what better time than this Samhain to consider the characteristics and teachings of the Bat?

Bats are mammals of the order Chiroptera of which there are 17 families divided into 2 suborders – the larger Megabats and the smaller Microbats. Only one of these families includes Megabats (of which there are more than 150 species); the other 16 families are all Microbats containing another 850 species or more. Bats are the only mammals capable of sustained flight, and are so prolific that the two orders together make up nearly one-quarter of the world’s mammal population.

Bats are the most widely distributed group of mammals in the world. The ability of flight has enabled them to disperse and take up residence in most all countries, except for the Arctic, the Antarctic and a few isolated oceanic islands. Bats are more prolific in warmer countries however, such like Indonesia, home to about 175 species of bats, Venezuela to about 154 and Mexico to some 137. Central and South America is thought to be home to almost one third of the world’s total bat population. Sadly, as widely distributed as bats are, some species have drastically declined and many are now endangered.

The Megabat family includes some of the largest bats known; one such is the Giant Flying Fox of Africa, India and Malaysia (so called because of its fox-like face). The biggest Flying Foxes are found in Java and achieve a wingspan of 1.8 m (6 ft), a body length of 55 cm (22 in) and weigh up to 1.5 kg (3.3 lb). Flying Foxes are also known as Fruit Bats, because their main diet consists of fruit and flowers. Of the Microbat families, the smallest bat is the Kitti’s Hog-nosed bat (also called the Bumblebee bat), which is found only along the River Kwai in western Thailand. It measures only 3 cm (1 in) long and weighs about 2 g (0.07 oz), making it one of the smallest mammals living today.



Giant Flying Fox - Kitti’s Hog-nosed bat

Aside from their size, Megabats and Microbats are different in many ways. Megabats have large eyes and mostly fox-like faces; while Microbats have small eyes and often elaborate facial structures. There is a myth that all bats are blind, but this is not true. Megabats see relatively well and rely on smell and vision to find their food, while Microbats have poorer eyesight and use a unique method of echolocation to orient and detect their food and prey. Echolocation is a high-frequency pulsing sound emitted by the bat that bounces back to its ears from surrounding surfaces thus giving away the location and relative distance of objects and prey within its environment. It’s a bit like the way sonar works in submarines. In this way bats are able to manoeuvre and navigate at night in almost total darkness.

Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight. Their wings consist of a thin, fleshy membrane supported near the leading edge by the greatly elongated bones of the forelimb and second finger, and towards the tip and rear by the third, fourth, and fifth fingers. It is further attached along the bodyline of the trunk and extends back between the hind limbs and tail. The thumb of the hand is free and has a sharp hooked claw to help in climbing. Their feet have five digits or toes, which are also equipped with sharp hooked claws, but these are used to help suspend the bat upside-down when roosting.



Most all bats are nocturnal. During the day they roost and rest in a variety of places, but commonly in dark caves and crevices, hollow trees or in shaded foliage, beneath rocks or bark and in abandoned buildings. Some Megabat species in warmer countries roost in more exposed areas where large colonies of bats can be seen hanging upside down from branches of trees. Being nocturnal gives bats many advantages, like reduced competition for insects and other food, freedom from attack by predators, and protection from overheating during the day which bats are especially susceptible to due to the size of their wings in relation to their body size. In countries where winters are cold bats will migrate to warmer climates or hibernate.

Female bats birth only one pup a year, which when born clings to the mother bat during flight and feeds from her milk. After approximately four months the pup learns to fly on its own. For many bat species mating takes place before hibernation, during which time the female stores the sperm in her genital tract throughout the winter and on awakening in spring uses it to fertilize her eggs.

For their diets, most Megabats feed on fruit, flowers, pollen and nectar, while Microbats also feed on insects, fish, frogs and other small creatures. A single Microbat can eat something like 3,000 insects in one night, and there is one species, the Vampire bat, that also feeds on the blood of other mammals. It is the Vampire bat, perhaps more than any other bat, that is responsible for fuelling the imagination of writers and film makers with fear and revulsion, and as a result, given the whole bat population such an evil and sinister reputation (more on this later).

Bats perform a vitally important ecological role in nature. Many rainforest trees depend on bats for pollination and seed dispersal, which is particularly important in facilitating regrowth after forest clearances. Similarly, many tropical plants depend on bats for the distribution of their seeds. It is estimated there are some 300 bat-dependent plant species yielding more than 450 economically valuable products. Some of these products include: Chewing gum, tequila, sisal, medicines, dyes and fuel. Even the bat's waste matter, 'guano', is utilized as a valuable fertilizer. Some bats are the keystone species on which whole ecosystems depend for their survival.

Vampire Bats

Perhaps the most influential source for popularising contemporary fears and dread about bats was the fictional best selling book called "Dracula" (written by the Irish author Bram (Abraham) Stoker (1847-1912) and first published in 1897). In it, he personalized the characteristics of the Vampire bat into what are now the traditional scary blood sucking Vampire legends. Such did his book inspire the imaginations of other writers; it led to a whole plethora of similar stories and films on the subject.

In truth, there are only three species of Vampire bats that feed on the blood of other mammals (usually cattle, horses and large birds such as fowl). However, despite what popular legend would have us believe, bats do not suck blood. Bats have very sharp needlepointed teeth with which they make small incisions on the backs of large prey, and then lap at the resulting blood droplets. Most Vampire bats are quite small, commonly only 7 to 9 cm (2.75 to 3.5 in) long, and at best could manage to take only a tablespoon of blood each night from its prey, hardly enough to cause death by doing so.

One of the biggest fears people have concerning bats is Rabies. Rabies is a virus transmitted among animals, and sometimes humans, when bitten by an already infected carrier. However, a study conducted by the University of Florida has shown less than one-half of 1 percent of all bats have rabies. So in truth, the

conclusion is that a human is more likely to be bitten by an unvaccinated rabid dog than by a Vampire bat. Far from being monsters, Vampire bats in general are sociable creatures, caring towards other members of their colony. They take part in mutual grooming, and will even take care of another's abandoned young when unable to feed, this they do by regurgitating and sharing the blood they have collected for themselves.

Interestingly, new medical studies of a clot-dissolving substance found in Vampire bat saliva, could soon be used to benefit human Stroke victims.

Myths and Folklore

Perhaps because of their nocturnal habits and ability to navigate in the dark, or simply because they appear to be both animal and bird at the same time, bats have long been associated with deity, supernatural forces and the occult. In the mythologies of differing cultures bats symbolize both good and evil, life and death. In China many legends associate bats with good fortune. To them, a group of five bats represented the five causes of happiness: wealth, health, long life, virtue and a natural death.

In South America among an ancient Mayan cult of the Quiche, located in the jungles of what is now Guatemala, Camazotz was a minor deity associated with bats. He was the God of the Caves and is described as having the body of a human with the head and wings of a bat. According to the Mayan sacred book of initiation rites *Popul Vuh*, he resided in the Bat-house located in the Underworld, a labyrinth of caves through which huge bats flew. While legends differ, he was responsible for the seventh test of initiation undertaken by the Mayan Hero Twins, the mythical Mayan ruling deities.



Mayan artefacts of Camazotz

In ancient Greece and Rome, it was thought that sleep could be prevented either by placing the engraved figure of a bat under the pillow, or by tying the head of a bat in a black bag and keeping it near to the left arm. On the Ivory Coast, even today, many think that bats are the spirits of the dead, and in Madagascar, they are assumed to be the souls of criminals, sorcerers and the unburied dead. In medieval Europe, bats were commonly thought to be witches' familiars. In France 1332, Lady Jacaume of Bayonne was publicly burned simply because bats were seen to fly about her house and garden.

Also in Europe, in the Tyrol regions of Austria, it was believed that if a man wears the left eye of a bat on his person, he may become invisible, and in areas of central Germany, if he wears the heart of a bat bound to his arm with red thread, he will always be lucky at cards. It was commonly thought that witches used the blood of bats as an ingredient when making flying ointment, and further, to boost the powers of their magickal brews and potions. To the Gypsies, who were equally ostracized as witches, bats were seen as the bearers of good luck; they even prepared small bags containing dead bat bones for children to wear around their necks as charms.

In folklore, to wash your face in bat's blood will enable you to see more clearly in the dark. To keep a piece of bat bone in your pocket will ensure good luck. Powdered bat's heart will staunch bleeding or stop a bullet, and bullets from a gun swabbed with a bat's heart will always hit their target. To put bat's blood into someone's drink will make him or her more passionate, and you can stimulate a woman's desire by placing a drop of bat blood under her pillow. To prevent baldness or your hair greying, you should wash the hair in a concoction of powdered bat wings and coconut oil. The list of folklore concerning bats is endless, and even Shakespeare got in on the act. In his famous play *Macbeth*, he had his three witches adding "wool of bat" to their hellbroth, and

in *The Tempest* (Act I, Scene 2) he had Caliban place a curse on his master Prospero, which included the line: "All the charms of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!"

Bat as a totem animal.

The bat as a totem animal is a symbol representative of transition and rebirth. A bat appearing in your life could mean that some aspect of your life is coming to an end, and rather than fear the change, you should embrace the transition and look forward to some kind of new beginning. It's a time for serious self-examination and self-evaluation. This may sound easy to do, but for most people change is a frightening experience. Bat's appearance is there to help you soar above your fears by getting rid of those things in your life that are no longer needed. Only by facing the darkness of your uncertainties can you progress and find light in new beginnings.

To many misinformed people, the bat is a symbol of death, but try to embrace the positive powers of the bat. Bats typically live in deep underground caves, which symbolically is the belly of the Mother (Earth), and from these womb-like caves they emerge each evening at dusk - reborn. To a shaman the appearance of a bat does not signify actual or physical death, but more the death of old fears or the old ways of doing things that no longer serve you. By learning from the bat you can fly through any darkness into the light, be transformed, reborn and free.

"For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all" - Aristotle (384-322 BC).

Sources:

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Bat Clipart from: <http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/index.htm>

Plus to many websites to mention.

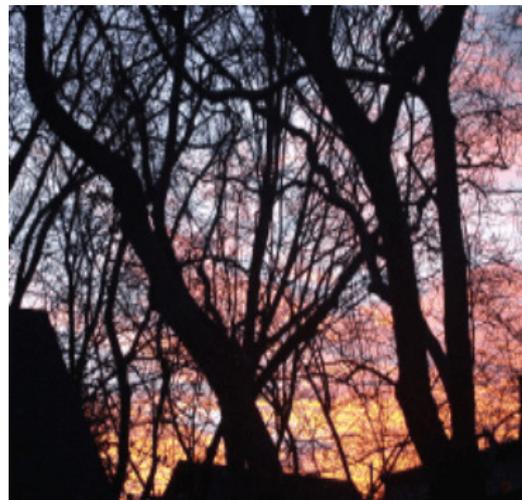
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<http://www.controversial.com>

Nature's Glory

Photos from our members



Samhain night through the trees - photos by Pari

Spider

By Lillian Norman



I've been walking in my neighborhood lately and have been admiring all of the Halloween decorations set about in people's yards. There are, of course, Jack-O'-Lanterns, ghosts, witches on broomsticks, piles of gourds on porches, bats, and spiders in webs and hanging from trees. Spider visited with me much this summer, so what better venue to explore her meanings than this time of year when she is welcomed in the windows, yards and on the porches of neighborhood homes.

There are many depictions of Spider in myth. The most recognizable and the one from which the class of arthropods spiders are named for, arachnid, comes from, is the Greek myth of Athena and Arachne and their infamous weaving contest. Arachne was a talented young peasant girl who Athena herself tutored in the art of weaving. It had been said that nymphs would abandon their play in the forests just to come and watch Arachne's lithe arms and nimble fingers work the shuttles and threads. As the girl's talent and skill grew, so did her pride. Someone once commented that her skill rivaled that of Athena and that she must be one of her pupils. In her arrogance, Arachne denied that Athena had ever taught her and even boasted that she was the better weaver. She put forth a challenge to Athena.

When Athena heard this she was distressed so she came to Arachne disguised as an old woman offering her a chance to redeem herself from her haughty words. She told Arachne that with age comes experience and she invited her to acknowledge the goddess superiority. "Seek all the fame you will among mortal men, but yield place to the goddess." (Athena to Arachne. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.30) All Arachne saw in the disguised goddess was an unknown old woman and she scoffed at her. "It is too long life that is your bane... Why does your goddess avoid a contest with me?" (Arachne to the disguised Athena. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.37)

Athena then revealed herself and the contest began. Both wove with speed and artful skill. In her tapestry,

Athena depicted the gods in their splendor. She also wove scenes of mortals who had offended the gods and the consequences they suffered. She edged her tapestry with olive leaves and branches which to this day, are symbols of peace.

Arachne also wove depictions of the gods, but not in their glory. She wove their lustful seductions of mortal women. She exposed their weaknesses and folly. Her tapestry was framed with flowers and ivy.

When the tapestries were finished, all could see that each one was a masterpiece. No one could find any flaws. Athena was angered by the themes in Arachne's tapestry and she tore it to shreds. She beat Arachne about the head with her shuttle. Arachne, shamed, hung herself in an attempt at suicide. Athena took pity on the girl and did not let her die. Instead, she turned Arachne into a spider so she could live, but continue to hang from the ceiling and weave. In this way, spiders were born into the world.

In Navajo mythology, the People were taught how to weave by Spider Woman. Today, many Navajo weavers will rub their hands in spider webs in order to absorb the skill and wisdom of Spider Woman before they sit at their looms. Grandmother Spider is said to have created the universe. She wove her web and when it was laced with dew, she flung it into the air and the dew became the stars in the sky. Each day as she re-weaves her web, she re-weaves creation and life. Other Native American myths tell of how Grandmother Spider brought fire and the sun to the People. Further, Grandmother Spider is known as the "Keeper of Words." As she wove her web, she brought writing to the People.

Robert the Bruce, King of Scots from 1306-1329, learned a valuable lesson from Spider. After losing many battles and sore from war and toil, he hid in a cave for some rest. He was down-hearted and lacked hope. While there, he observed a spider as she went about weaving her web. She'd spin her silk and jump to attach it to the next spot and she'd fall. Repeatedly she would try and fail. Robert began to identify with the spider because of all the times he'd engaged the king of England and been beaten. Still the spider labored on and finally, she succeeded. This victory for the spider encouraged Robert the Bruce and gave him hope. He went on to gather his troops, win in battle and secure the independence of Scotland from England. Allegedly, this is where the saying, "If you don't succeed, try, try again" came from.

In some cultures, the spider is portrayed negatively. In some eastern cultures the spider is seen as a trickster. Maya, the Hindu Goddess, means weaver of illusion and is associated with the spider.

Spiders have found their way into nursery rhymes and superstition in more recent times. I found the following on a website, spiderzrule.com:

1507

When a man fyndeth a spyder upon his gowne it is a syng to be that daye right happye.

1594

If a spinner creepe upon him, hee shall have gold raine downe from heaven.

1662

When a Spider is found upon our clothes, we use to say. Somme money is coming towards us. The moral is this, such who...Imitate the industry of that contemptible creature... may by God's Blessing weave themselves into wealth and procure a plentiful estate.

Other lore from the site includes:

- *If you step on a spider, you'll bring on rain.
- *Superstitious people probably don't kill spiders because it has been unlucky since a spider spun a web over baby Jesus to hide him from Herod.
- *If a spider crawls into your pocket, you will always have money.
- *If you walk into a spider web, you will meet a friend that day.
- *If there is dew upon the spider web in the morning, it will be a beautiful day.
- *If you wish to live and thrive, Let a spider run alive.

Spiders are arthropods: arthro->joint, pod->foot. As above, they are arachnids. Arachnids are a class of arthropods with a duo-sectioned body, the head/thorax, which are fused, and the abdomen. Unlike insects, they have eight legs and pincers around their mouths with which they inject venom into their prey. Most spiders spin round webs, resembling wheels. They re-spin their webs every day just as Grandmother Spider re-spins the universe and life every day. After they spin their webs, they lie in wait for their prey. They are very agile creatures, able to balance themselves on the thinnest silk thread they spin.

When we look at a spider's web, we see that it is circular, resembling a spiral and/or a wheel. In the study of symbols, the circle represents infinity, the universe, the All. In Egyptian Hieroglyphics, the spiral represents the process of creation and is a symbol of cosmic energy. The wheel represents the wheel of life, the wheel of the year, cycles of life waxing and waning, giving birth and dying, and giving birth again.

The number eight has also been associated with spiders. They have eight legs and their duo-sectioned



body resembles the numeral eight. The number eight laid on its side is the infinity symbol. Eight in numerology represents patience, perseverance, goals and earthy wisdom.

When Spider appears in our lives we need to ask ourselves some questions. Is a cycle of our life beginning or ending? Are we about to give birth to something new, or is something in our lives about to die? Are we too much in a hurry and is that leading to failure? Do we need to sit back and wait? Do we need to persevere, or is what is happening in our lives the end of a cycle? Where do we need to create? What do we need to create? What do we need to communicate as Spider has given us words?

Or, are we being deceived, by our own selves, or by others? What is our truth, my truth? Do we need to set new goals and work towards them, or reaffirm goals that have already been set?

Spider was with me a lot this summer. As I was painting my house, I had a clean brush that I'd brush the spiders out of their crevices with. Not ten minutes later, if I hadn't painted there yet, the spiders would be back.

This summer we opened a new nursing unit at the hospital where I work. Before we opened I was touring the unit with one of the pharmacists. We went into a patient lounge area and there on the window were three spiders, a sign of new beginnings. New beginnings for the hospital, and a new beginning for me.

Perhaps the closest you'll get to a spider this season is the one in a neighbor's window or a plastic one that someone sneaks into your lunch as a Halloween joke. Pay attention, though. Spider speaks softly, but has much to teach.

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Samhain Rune



Sowilo

“The victorious rune of the Sun”

Sowilo is a rune of power, life force, wholeness and higher self. Drawing this rune is an omen that most often indicates success in achieving one’s goals, and furthermore, overcoming the obstacles and difficulties of achieving said goal.

Last month’s rune was Isa or “ice” where we had to still ourselves in the cold icy gateway in order to organize our lives through rearranging our thoughts and actions.

This month’s rune is a positive one indeed, for it indicates the warmth of the sun which melted our previous gateway and we are basking in the success of our inner selves.

Moreover, this year in November should be a time when we recognize our achievements, and feel our own worth and power, and doing so without shame or humility, but on the same token, without egomania to consume us.

With this very special reading, I would like to personally share with you all a small prayer that will remind you of your success and vigor:

*“Before the sun, I am naked.
Before myself and others I am whole.
Hardships, my strength
I am victorious, courageous, and bold”*

Bíodh Sé Amhlaidh
(Irish Gaelic for – “So Be It”)

Rune Reading by: Diancécht Óndulfr Pálsson - aka Rune Man
Background Photo from Pari

Rune Man joined Email Witches - Aug 17, 2009

Nature's Glory Photos from our members



Photo from Pari



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**“Autumn burned brightly, a running flame through the mountains, a torch flung to the trees.”
Faith Baldwin (1893-1978)**



Photo from Pari

**“Autumn is a second spring
when every leaf is a flower.”
Albert Camus (1913-1960)**

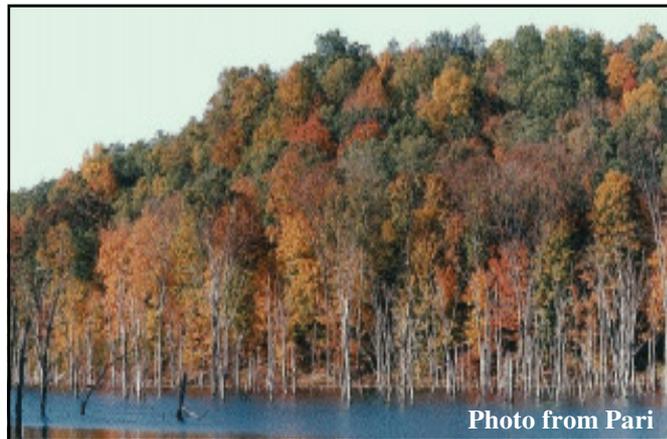


Photo from Pari

**Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's
peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The
winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms
their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.
- John Muir**



Photo from Pari



Photo from Ardriana

**“The apple on its bough is her desire,
Shining suspension, mimic of the sun.”
‘Garden Abstract’ (1926)
by Hart Crane 1899–1932**

*Bards Corner
Samhain*

~~~

*Samhain is a time to think about our ancestors that have died.  
Also a time to take stock of issues far and wide.  
The powerful sun so bright begins to fade to grey.  
The sunlight has reduced its power on this Samhain day.*

*The fruit, the grain, and all the meat are skilfully prepared.  
The duties that they carry out are dutifully shared.  
For when they need to feed themselves from the winter hoard.  
They know that they have done their work and got their food well stored.*

*Ancestors are honoured at this special time of rites.  
As the veil between them and us becomes thin upon this night.  
Our parents and our dear ones are remembered up above.  
The thoughts of all our past times fill our hearts with love.*

~~~

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*Halloween Fun
Photos from our members*

Photo from Tamra



Photo from Tamra

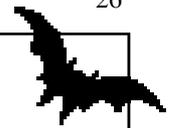


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The Controversial Cauldron is published each Sabbat



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| <i>October (Samhain)</i> | <i>May (Beltane)</i> | <i>Next Issue:</i> |
| <i>December (Yule)</i> | <i>June (Litha)</i> | ~ |
| <i>February (Imbolc)</i> | <i>August (Lammas)</i> | <i>Yule</i> |
| <i>March (Ostara)</i> | <i>September (Mabon)</i> | <i>(December 21st)</i> |

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The Controversial Cauldron Staff

Publisher:
George Knowles

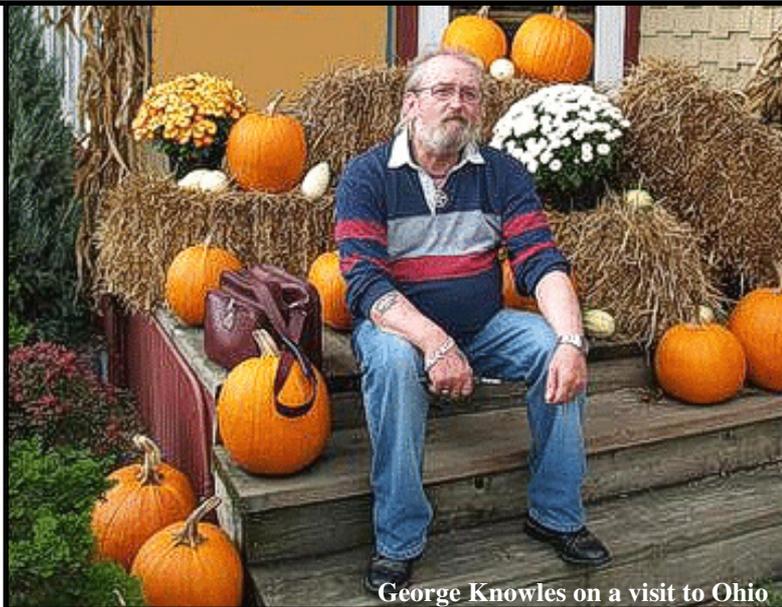
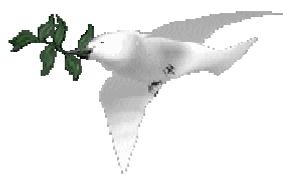
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George Knowles on a visit to Ohio

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