

# The Controversial Cauldron

## Yule ~ The Winter Solstice 2008



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Best Wishes,  
Georges Knowles

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##### Group Information:

- Members: 705
- Founded: Jul 17, 2002
- Language: English
- Representing:

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

## Yule

### The Winter Solstice



Written and compiled by George Knowles

Yule, or the Winter Solstice, is one of the lesser Sabbats of the Witches' calendar, and this year in the northern hemisphere is celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. Yule is a celebration marking the death and rebirth of the Sun in Midwinter, and is the second of two annual solstices dividing the year (the first being Litha, which celebrates the Sun at its peak in Midsummer).





The word “solstice” is derived from two Latin words: “sol” (the sun) and “sistere” (to stand still). The Winter Solstice therefore means, “Sun stands still in Winter”. Yule marks the longest night and shortest day of the year, when the Sun ceases its decline in the sky, and for three days thereafter seems to stand still and lie dormant on the horizon. After this it once again begins its ascent into the northern skies and the days grow longer.

Yule celebrates the rebirth of the Sun God, born of the Goddess after her return from the Underworld. Fires and candles are lit to welcome the return of the Sun God’s light while the Goddess rests after delivery and the hardships of her winter in labour. Yule or the Winter Solstice is known by various other names, including: Alban Arthan (Caledonii or Druid), Jul (Norse), Yuletide (Teutonic), Feill Fionnain (Pecti-Wita), Gwyl Canol Gaeof (Welsh), the Longest Night, Midwinter and of course Christmas from Christianity.

The Yule celebration was particularly important to our ancestors, occurring at a time when many (the poor, the old, the feeble) were not expected to live throughout the winter. It was a time when their very survival depended on preparations they had made during the previous nine months. Starvation was a constant threat for many throughout the winter, (indeed January through April were known as “the famine months”). For many, the Midwinter festival was their last great feast before the deprivations of deep winter set in. Any cattle left not needed for future breeding would have been slaughtered to provide fresh meat, and any left-over produce from the last harvest fermented and made into wine and beer for drinking.

Traditionally for the festivities, streets, homes and churches would be decorated using natural resources, such like Mistletoe, Holly and Ivy. Their use brought colour and life into the home and acted as a means of contact with the spirits of nature at a time when such has been threatened by the declining light of the Sun. The Druids especially prized mistletoe that grew in the sacred Oak trees, and on the Eve of the Winter Solstice would harvest the plant with a Golden Sickle. The white berries of the Mistletoe represented the male aspects of the Sun God, and were used to invoke fertility and the awakening powers of the Sun.

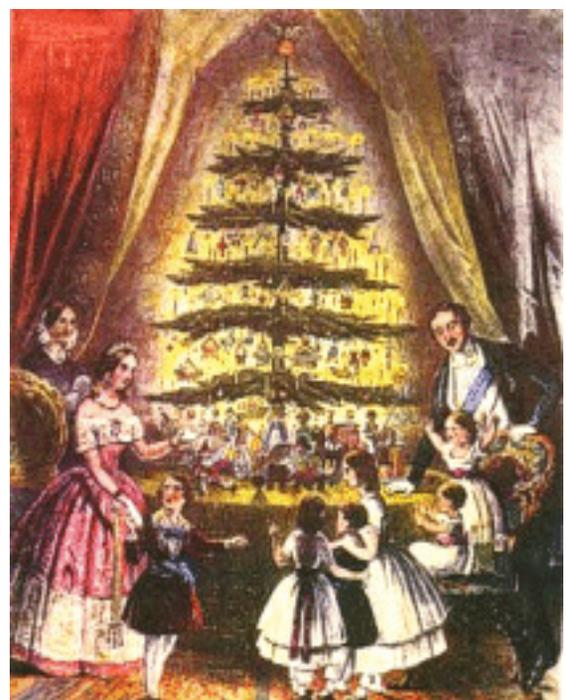
Equally sacred was the Holly, which again was prized by the Druids. When all the other trees have lost their leaves, the Holly’s evergreen nature symbolized immortality by adding a splash of colour to an otherwise barren woodlands. The red berries of the Holly were also thought representative of the sacred menstrual blood of the Goddess. A wreath of Holly was hung on the doors of the home for protection, and a sprig kept throughout the year for continued good fortune. Ivy is another evergreen plant and associated with one of the most popular of the ancient Egyptian gods, Osiris, a God of the Sun, Agriculture and Health.

Given the Druid’s veneration of trees, it may come as no surprise that the tree should play an important part in the Yule celebrations. As a focal point in the household, a tree, normally a conifer because of its evergreen nature, would be brought inside the home and decorated. As the tree was a known home of the Fairies and other Spirits, to appease them, they dressed the tree with strips of brightly coloured cloth, strings of shiny beads, fruit, gingerbread men and sweets of all kinds, which they hung from its branches.

Later however, with the arrival of Christianity, early Church leaders banned the practice in their efforts to stamp out pagan beliefs and associations.

The modern Christmas tree as we know it today, only dates back to Victorian times, when the practice of decorating a tree was re-introduced and made popular by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. In 1846 they were pictured in the Illustrated London News standing with their children around a decorated Christmas tree. As the Queen was very popular the practice soon became fashionable, not only in Britain and continental Europe, but also in America.

Another tradition of old was the lighting of a Yule Log, which was done with great ceremony and as a highlight of the family celebrations. It was believed that fire symbolized the return of the Sun after the Winter





Solstice. Traditionally the log used would have been of sacred Oak or Ash, from a tree felled on the householder's land, or given as a gift by their landlord. Placed in the hearth it would have been decorated with seasonal greenery, doused with cider or ale and dusted with white flour for added snow effect. Offerings of corn or breadcrumbs would be scattered over it, and coins to aid future prosperity placed upon it. Later the charred coins would be given away as lucky charms. On the eve of the Solstice the log would be lit and set ablaze using a piece saved from the previous year's Yule log. The log would be allowed to burn throughout the night and then left to smoulder for the next 12 days, before being put out. A piece would then be saved and kept to light the following year's log.

The Yule Log was believed to have many magical properties, and when lit was thought to ward off evil spirits. Later when put out, pieces of the log would be distributed around the house for added protection against



thunderstorms and lightning. Likewise the ash from the fire was never discarded, but used for healing purposes in both humans and animals. Rubbed into hands and feet it helped to protect against chilblains, when mixed with animal fodder it aided cows to calve and when mixed with corn seeds it kept the poultry flock healthy for the coming year.

Yule is all about community, friendship and helping others. This sense of community led to another old tradition called "Wassailing", which was the precursor to today's practise of Christmas Caroling. The word "Wassail" comes from the

old Anglo-Saxon term "Waes Hael", which has been variously translated as a toast meaning: "Be Well", "Be Whole", "Be Healthy" or "Be Happy". The proper response to this is: "Drink Hael", making it a shared and mutual well wishing. As Carolers still do today, traditionally friends and neighbours would go from door to door on the eve of the solstice, singing and bearing their "Wassail Cups", to be rewarded with seasonal drinks, fruit, bread or sweets from those who could afford to give it. The same would be freely given back to any poor and needy they met along the way.

### Mythology of Yule:



*Holly King vs Oak King* © 2008 Patricia J. Martin

In mythology, the Winter Solstice symbolizes the end of the reign of the Holly-King. As the sun reaches the end of its decline at the Winter Solstice (represented by the Holly King) and once again begins its ascent back to summer (represented by the Oak King), the two engage in battle. This time the Holly King is defeated by the Oak King who then rules over the first half of the new year until they meet again and do battle at the Summer Solstice. This in essence is an enactment of the annual cycle of life, growth and death in nature. The Oak King is the growing youth whose life and strength reaches its peak in Mid-summer, while the Holly King is the mature man whose life and strength declines in Mid-winter, from where he is again re-born of the Goddess. This change from one King to the other is a common theme

for ritual re-enactments at Mid-summer and Mid-winter festivals. In theory, the Kings are brothers and both exist as different aspect of the same Sun God, but each has varying levels of influence throughout the year. The youthful time of the Oak King is for growth, development, health, healing and new projects, while the time of the mature Holly King is for deliberating, reflecting, contemplation and learning.





**Symbols of Yule:**

Yule log, Evergreen boughs or wreaths, Holly, Mistletoe, gold pillar candles, baskets of Clove-studded fruit, a simmering pot of Wassail (see below), a Poinsettia or Christmas Cactus.



**Herbs and Plants of Yule:**

Bayberry, Evergreen, Frankincense, Holly, Laurel, Mistletoe, Oak, Pine, Sage, yellow Cedar, Rosemary, Ginger, Valerian and Myrrh.



**Deities of Yule:**

Deities associated with this time of year include: Newborn Gods, Sun Gods, Mother Goddesses and Triple Goddesses. Yule Gods include Apollo (Greek), Ra, Osiris, Horus (all three Egyptian), Lugh (Irish-Celtic), Odin (Norse), Father Sun (Native American) and Jesus (Christianity), to name just a few. Yule Goddesses include: the Morrigan, Brigit (both Celtic), Isis (Egyptian), Demeter, Gaea, Pandora, Selene and Artemis (all five Greek), Juno and Diana (both Roman), Astarte (Middle Eastern), Spinning Woman (Native American) and the Virgin Mary (Christianity), again just to name a few.



**Other associations of Yule:**

The most common **Colours** of Yule include: Red and Green, but Gold and White are also appropriate. **Stones** of Yule include: Bloodstones, Rubies and Garnets. **Animals** of Yule include: Stags, Squirrels, Wrens and Robins. **Mythical creatures** of Yule include: the Phoenix and Trolls. **Foods** of Yule (see the Pagan Kitchen below). **Drinks** for the Yule celebration might include: Wassail (a hot drink made from wine, beer or cider, spices, sugar and usually baked apples all served in a large punch bowl), Lamb's wool (ale mixed with sugar, nutmeg and the pulp of roasted apples), hibiscus or ginger tea, and apple cider.

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"The grate had been removed from the wide overwhelming fireplace, to make way for a fire of wood, in the midst of which was an enormous log glowing and blazing, and sending forth a vast volume of light and heat; this I understood was the Yule-log, which the Squire was particular in having brought in and illumined on a Christmas eve, according to ancient custom".

Washington Irving (1783-1859)

US essayist, novelist, and historian: best known for *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820), which contains the tales 'Rip Van Winkle' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'. He was the first American writer to achieve international fame.





## Rustic Herb-filled Ornaments

### Material List

- Assortment of seasonal cookie cutters.



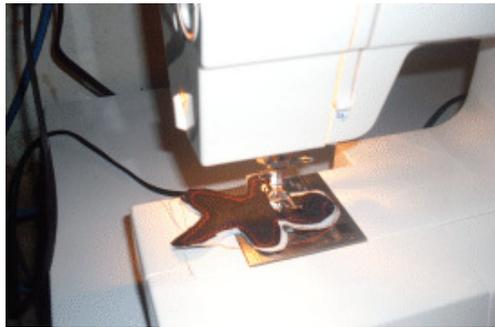
- Paper for patterns; paper grocery bags work great or sturdy wrapping paper.
- Assorted Natural (such as burlap) and Calico Fabrics.
- Natural or beige colored batting.
- Assorted Trims (buttons, rick rack, ribbon).
- Yule Potpourri for stuffing (Recipe follows).
- Sewing Machine, thread, hand needle, etc.



- Tacky or fabric glue.

### Directions

- Trace around cookies cutters onto paper to form patterns and cut.
- Trace Patterns onto Fabric, cut 2 for each ornament and 2 of batting as well.
- Place wrong sides of fabric together with 2 pieces of batting between them.
- Top stitch together using 1/4" seam allowance and leaving an opening for stuffing.



- Cut seams open outside of stitching line.
- Stuff w/ Yule Potpourri & hand stitch together.
- Clip edges every 1/4" to form fringed edge.
- Decorate using buttons and gluing ribbons and rick rack.



### Yule Potpourri

2 part pine needles ~ 1 part rosemary ~ 1 part cinnamon ~ 1 part cloves ~ 1 part dried orange peel. Mix together using a couple drops frankincense and a couple drops of myrrh oil and let sit in a covered jar for 2-3 days

Article by Chant from an idea courtesy of Joann.com and Pooka Pages. Chant lives in Upstate New York and joined the E.W. group on the 19th Aug 2008



### A Blessing for the Winter Solstice

*We ask a blessing on this house,  
This happy Eve of Solstice time.  
We sing and dance and make carouse  
To celebrate deep Winter's clime.*

*For Herne is here, and Mistletoe.  
The Holly and its berries bloom.  
We dance a carol, round we go  
The Ivy winds about the room.*

*With wine and cake we make a toast,  
And bring a blessing to our host.*



Paddy Slade ~ Encyclopedia of White Magic, A Seasonal Guide





## Animal Wisdom

### The Phoenix

By Patricia J. Martin

The Phoenix, known as Benu (or Bennu) to the ancient Egyptians, as the Feng-Huang to the Chinese, Zhar-Ptitsa to the Russians, and at times as the Thunderbird by Native Americans, is an ancient mythical bird known for its ability to be reborn from its own ashes; thus becoming a symbol for resurrection.

When Phoenix comes to you as a Totem, it is likely that you, too, are ready for a significant change - be it a renewal, a fresh perspective, or even a life-changing transformation. Symbolizing immortality, reincarnation and eternal light, the Phoenix brings with it a desire for change - a desire to reach for the stars. And since it is believed that there is only one of its kind in the world, you can expect that whatever you find yourself reaching for will also be quite unique. In working with this Totem, you may find yourself suddenly switching gears, trying on the wrappings of a new lifestyle or relationship, or totally changing a current mindset or pathway. Unparalleled and exceptional prospects will unfold and fortuitous events will begin to manifest, as Phoenix assists you with these changes.

Over the centuries, the image of the Phoenix has been widely used in art. Its legend began in Arabia where it is known as the King of Birds, and it is usually depicted as an enormous but graceful bird with a head resembling that of an eagle, a body resembling that of a pheasant, and tail plumage resembling that of a peacock. The word "Phoenix" derives from the Greek word "phoenix" meaning "purple-red" and refers to the bird's brilliant feather coloring of iridescent purple, crimson, gold and a touch of blue. This magnificent totem will also color one's life in vibrant hues. Things will seem crisper, clearer, and fresher in the new dawning light. You will also become more keenly aware of the cycles of life. The moon's phases will hold added meaning, the rising of the sun will bring more vivid inspirations, and the changing of the seasons will offer brilliant insights.

**"The phoenix hope, can wing her way through the desert skies, and still defying fortune's spite; revive from ashes and rise."  
~ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616)**

In legend, the Phoenix was known to sing each morning only for the Sun God. In return, the Sun God took a shine to this glorious bird and blessed it with eternal life. The Phoenix is said to live for 500 years (some say 1,000 or more), where after it flies westward gathering various aromatic woods and spices - usually myrrh, cinnamon, cassia and spikenard. Upon returning home, it builds a new nest with these pungent and fragrant plants in the tallest of palm trees. Here the bird sits and sings its most beautiful song. So beautiful is the sound, that it makes the Sun stop in its track and its rays shine with such brilliance and heat that the spices are ignited, setting the nest aflame, wherein the Phoenix dies within its own funeral pyre. Nine days later, a young Phoenix rises from the ashes, reborn, and once again begins singing its praises to the Sun. The Egyptians tell of the fledgling then flying the ashes, which have been embalmed in an egg made of myrrh, to Heliopolis where he places them on the altar in the Sun Temple.

Phoenix Totem may prompt you to go on your own quest. And though it may be one that promotes some sort of personal sacrifice, it invariably will lead to fortunate and beneficent change...for just as the bird is said to subsist merely on dew (some say air), so may you have to temporarily forego your usual fare in order to gain what treasure awaits you. The Phoenix is the ultimate totem for bestowing the wisdom of life, death and rebirth, but what it most strongly portends is hope and freedom from depression and despair. Phoenix people are always optimistic. Because of its beauty and tales of its relationship with the Sun, the Phoenix is associated with Apollo (a.k.a. Phoebus Apollo) and many other versions of the Sun God. It has been called "the soul of Ra" and "the heart of the renewed Sun." Through the teachings of this most exquisite bird come the gifts of cleansing Fire and uplifting Air. So sing for the return of the Sun! And as His smile once again shines down upon you in gratitude for your song, know that you are as eternal as the Phoenix.

**O sacred Fire Bird, to the Sun take flight,  
Bringing purity, hope, and renewal of Light.  
I look to thee, O mystical glorious bird,  
For renewal and rebirth, I've been told and heard  
That of these and more, you will take my hand  
And teach me well the secrets of this land.  
So let me fly with you in eternal splendored grace,  
With fiery courage I take my rightful place,  
And rise from the ashes to reveal my true face.**  
  
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**Sources:**  
*Magickal, Mystical Creatures*, D. J. Conway  
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Labyrinth/8952/phclassic.html>  
<http://www.mythinglinks.org/ct~animals~FirebirdPhoenix.html>  
Phoenix, himself  
  
© Patricia J. Martin, November 22, 2008  
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# Legacy~ Solstice Traditions of a Hereditary Witch

By Ardriana Cahill

'Tis the season to call back the Sun with song and silver bells. With warm fires, family, friends, and feasting to stay the winter cold. With stories of hope and the promise of future bounty. As the sun stands still on Solstice Eve, we light one candle and put it in a window to light the Sun-child's way back to our door.

The Irish divided the year into two seasons...depending on who you ask it was Samhain/Bealtaine or Lughnassadh/Imbolg - the sowing season before summer and the reaping season before winter. These are our older traditions...however Winter Solstice, over several dozens of centuries, was folded into our Christmas traditions that my family calls Winterfest (adapting to our Christian environment). Winter Solstice was a private family light ceremony. However what Wiccans called Yule (Gift-giving day) which was called Christmas by Christians was when we had an open house where "extended family" could join in.

My family didn't want their children to be alienated from Xmas, as some non-Christians were. After all many Sun gods were purported to have been born on December 25th, not just the Christian sun god. To be all inclusive (in a family that didn't obey any of the rules) we celebrated Winterfest: A Season of Light to celebrate the victory of light over darkness, based on the several stories of old god-kings dying and the newborn god-king being born. Our participation in a season of holidays rather than just Christmas always reflected the difference of whether we were following a tradition or creating a tradition. We did both.

Winterfest is celebrated over many weeks and is about so much more than just presents. We have many pre-Christmas traditions that we do as a family: cleaning out closets and toy boxes to donate to the less fortunate, making cookies, stuffing dates with walnuts and rolling them in sugar (our version of sugar "plums.") We make



popcorn treats to hang in the trees for the birds. We traveled to Indian Springs to gather Desert Holly, (silver leaves with red berries) to make wreaths and decorative clusters tied with bright ribbons.

### Solstice Eve

Solstice is the beginning of Winterfest in our home and the season continues through January 6th. It begins and ends with a formal ritual feast. Our philosophy of Solstice is to call the return of the Newborn Sun. On Solstice Eve at sunset, we banish the darkness of the longest night, by each lighting a candle as sympathetic Magick and placing them in the front windows to light the new born Sun to our door. When my children were little we had a bay window in the front and it held a candelabra of votive cups that belonged to Mother where we could safely light many candles. Even the littlest kid, with a long fireplace match and assistance from a parent, got to light a candle. Ideally, the fire we used to do that came from a flame that was captured on MidSummer's Drawing down the Sun ritual). Then we sing, dance and feast so the "Sun Child" could recognize us by our joyous noise. When we had a fireplace we'd light a ritual fire.

We attempted to be the merriest house in the neighborhood. (We are Irish and we use any excuse for a party!) As my children and the world grew too sophisticated to go caroling...we at least played carols at home and feasted. Think: Deck the Halls. In theme and style, it is a great Solstice carol. It was invented for those who don't sing or can never remember the words. Fa la la-ing is singing anyone can do. This is also the basis for ringing "silver bells." Ringing in the New Year is the same philosophy (the Old Man Year dies and the New Baby Year is being celebrated into existence)...we "ring in" or "ring the return of " or "sing, dance or ring into existence" the Newborn Sun. The whole point of the celebration is to do something ACTIVE to encourage the return of Spring which means food and birth and growth and life. After the longest, coldest most depressing night of the year...the sun, little by little, begins its journey back towards earth.

The one tradition we didn't do was decorate the tree until Christmas Eve. We would hang lights on the outside of the house and we would all go as a family to pick the tree (and play hide-and-seek in the man-made forest) but the tree we chose would remain in the back yard undecorated until Christmas Eve.





Also...on Solstice Eve...we tell stories about Solstice and the light festivals, like those of the Vikings, Romans, Persians; Hebrews, Hindus (Diwali, light festival in Nov) and Chinese New Year (first full Moon in Aquarius). Many Sun gods were born when the Sun stood still on Solstice or when the Sun could be seen to move again on Dec 25th. Death and rebirth is the recurring theme of the Solstice and Light celebrations of Zagmuk (Mesopotamian symbolic winter celebration of death and rebirth), Sacaea (Babylonian, literal death and rebirth of the king), Kronia (the Greek symbolic celebration of Zeus' victory over Cronus), Sky Feast (Egyptian 12 day festival of lights), Midvinterblot (Viking solstice celebration that gave us the name Yule.) Daygan (Ancient Persian festival of the birth of Ahura Mazda, their god of wisdom on Solstice - now called Mehregan in Iran, the day God gave light to the world, that had previously been dark); Saturnalia (the Roman holiday patterned after Sacaea where Saturn dies and his sons Mars and Jupiter reign. Also - Sol Invictus on the 25th, the Syrian sun god festival adopted by the Romans), Chanukah (Jewish light festival), Diwali (Hindu light festival in Nov), Chinese New Year (First full Moon in Aquarius, late Jan. or early Feb.) and when Rome became Christian, discussion of the many pagan festival's rituals and traditions of Winter Solstice, Sol Invictus and Saturnalia that were incorporated into the Christmas celebration. That the Christians picked this date (the Roman celebration of Sol Invictus DI) just made sense to everyone.

With a historic background in paganism, accepting the traditions of other philosophies was easy for us. The Romans adopted other culture's gods, like Mithra (the Persian Sun god) and Isis, if those gods favored Rome. And since the Irish believe that they are the soul of hospitality...respecting other culture's gods who favored us was part of my upbringing.

So I was not raised anti-Christian...or believing that Christianity "stole" or "usurped" our holiday. In a classical pagan culture where all philosophies are acceptable...Mother acknowledged the ancient tradition of Christianity, as somewhat adopted through our Irish tradition within our family pagan tradition.

**Christmas Eve**

To make Christmas different from Christian households there was an even older tradition our family brought from Ireland. Grandmother & Grandfather, Mother and Dad kept a tradition of putting the tree up on Christmas Eve - that way, the house looked exactly the same to us children as it did every other mundane day - and Christmas morning the house was transformed as if by Magick. I continued the tradition with my kids. It was an exhausting tradition that kept us up until 3 or 4 in the morning...and the kids were allowed to wake up

whenever they liked, which usually meant that we only got a few hours sleep. (When I was little...I could never understand why my parents were so old and so dull hat with all the excitement of the morning...they had to go back to bed and take a nap!) Lighted garlands in every room, the tree and presents - as children...we would go to sleep seeing the house looked the same way as it had for 364 days. But when we awoke....WONDERLAND... "Surely no human was capable of doing all that work in one night...so it had to be M-A-G-I-C-K!"

Children are allowed to wake up whenever they like. We would rush around waking up everyone and dashing into the living room. We rarely even got to sleep before someone "woke" us up...and my favorite sound was hearing the first child heading for the lights...."pitter, patter, pitter, patter.....SIGH!" The furniture was rearranged; the tree was the glowing, sparkling centerpiece; the Sugarplum tree filled with candy and



sparkling, twinkling decorations everywhere. We would rush to the tree to find our favorite or newly made ornaments and would always marvel that Father Christmas knew exactly how tall we'd gotten since last year...since our ornaments always hung exactly at our eye level. We'd go outside to check to see if the reindeer left footprints after they drank their water and ate their treats. And they always did! The Sugarplum tree was a gift from the reindeer for caring for them (a special reward for those who care for wild animals in winter!)

We also had a personal Elf that lived with us all year and hid small jingle bells around the house to remind us to be good. We had to find where all the music boxes were...and wind them all up to play at the same time! We'd check the cookie plate to see if Father Christmas liked the cookies. We'd check Dad's stocking to see if he got rocks again...and he always did. We always felt so bad for him, getting rocks in his stocking because we could never figure out why Father Christmas thought he'd been bad. We didn't think he'd been that bad and we forgave him for whatever it was. So, we'd dump out Dad's stocking, refill it with candy from the Sugarplum tree and go fetch the small presents we'd hidden for him, just in case. All of this happened before we ever GOT to the presents. There was always a tray of sweet breads and cups of hot cider or hot chocolate that we munched on while we opened presents. And it was one of the two days in the year (Easter/Vernal Equinox being the other) that children can eat candy before breakfast. In fact, they can skip breakfast altogether! It was an exhausting feat





to pull off but I thought it was worth it from both the child and the parent's point of view. Like me, my kids reached adulthood with such a sense of wonder, that it was not lost to the cynical world as they grew up.

When the children reached their teens, we began having a tree decorating party on Solstice Eve. Lighting the tree was part of the sympathetic Magick of the night. We had food and music and "shock fights" (Rubbing your sock-feet on the carpet to build up a shock to unload on someone's unsuspecting earlobe!) So, if you don't have the stamina for our Christmas Eve tree trimming and magickal house transformation, you can begin Winterfest on Solstice Eve with a tree trimming party and candles in the window...it makes the first day of Winterfest a purely pagan holiday.

**New Year's Eve**

Roman New Years Eve (January 1), just like Celtic New Year's Eve (Samhain October 31), was celebrated with all the same traditions, new clothes, lucky foods in the cupboards, drinking, feasting, divination, games and kindred. Bells were incorporated into Roman New Years with the whole "ringing in" theme that Solstice evoked. Would we skip it because it was not our cultural holiday? Are you kidding? I've said it before and I'll say it again...the oldest Irish tradition I know..."Any excuse for a party."



**Night of the cup**

This tradition coincided with European tradition of the twelve days of Christmas beginning on December 25th and running through January 6th. When you put up your tree on the 24th when the children are small, or

on the 21st when they are older, tearing down the holiday after a few short days is silly. So when everyone else's trees were trash by the day after Christmas, we celebrated on...until January 6th. We ended the season with another dinner for family and kindred, where we set a fine table and bought a fine wine and passed the cup of our dreams for the coming year.

**Conclusion**

There were many things in my early childhood that so impressed me that magick was real. The presents of the day were almost an afterthought. By the time I discovered that the magick was made by my parents...I was already discovering that Mother made magick ever day of the year. I never had that moment of disappointment discovering that Santa wasn't real...it was the magick that I never lost. And having recreated that magick for my children...I realized how much my parents loved me to work so hard to make that magick for me. To date, I can't remember what presents I got when, but I remember what magick feels like to a child.

The lessons we lived were to care for the animals, to share with the less fortunate, to forgive the wrongs of the last year, to thwart the authority of breakfast and the clock (because all our holidays had a touch of anarchy in them), to know "others" watched over us enough to know how tall we'd grown since last year...and that we had to prepare gifts for each other...in case Father Christmas did not provide (a metaphor for Fate or the gods). We learned that we had to take care of each other's happy holiday. All lessons that traveled with us to adulthood.

I understand that with families working two or three jobs to just make ends meet...my family's holiday traditions seem too demanding. And it saddens me that those of my clan who have children do not celebrate them...and those who would...do not have children. So, my grandchildren may never know the Transformational Magick that I was taught on Christmas morning. They do wait until Solstice to put up their trees, light candles (then come to my house for the feast!) and keep Winterfest through January 6th. Who knows perhaps they will someday read this and want to recreate our traditions for my great grand children.

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Ardriana Cahill lives in Western USA and is a Hereditary Witch, den of Clan McCormick and a Kell of Brighid. She has been a member of EW since 2004.

**"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home"**  
~ Dame Edith Sitwell





## Blessed Thistle

By Lyric Moonshadow

Among the many herbs associated with Yule is the Blessed Thistle, also known as Holy Thistle. This plant is a true example of dichotomy in nature. The name "Blessed" or "Holy" invokes feelings of softness and light, energy and purity. The leaves, however, are spiny and prickly and scream, "stay away". It is not a particularly impressive plant, growing 12 to 18 inches high with heavily branched stems whose leaves are both thorny and fuzzy. The flowering tops display a small yellow flower surrounded by purple or dark pink upper leaves, which form a cup around the flower. The flowering tops, leaves and seeds have been used medicinally for thousands of years. Although the plant is native to Europe and the Mediterranean region, it is also grown throughout the United States.

The Romans ate Blessed Thistle leaves and roots as a vegetable. The Romans also fed it to cattle and other farm animals. During the Middle Ages it was used to treat all manner of conditions including smallpox and the plague. It was grown in medicinal herb gardens in monasteries throughout Europe.



Blessed Thistle  
*Cnicus benedictus*

The Latin name *Cnicus benedictus* honors St. Benedict who is known as the founder of monasteries in Italy. For centuries the Brothers of St. Benedict used it to flavor their Benedictine liqueur.

Blessed Thistle looks similar to the Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) but the two have very

different uses and should not be interchanged. Blessed Thistle is from the Daisy family and should not be handled or used by anyone with an allergy to daisies, chrysanthemum or ragweed. Due to lack of research, young children, pregnant or nursing mothers, should not use Blessed Thistle. Because this herb can irritate the esophagus, stomach and intestines it should not be used by anyone with ulcers, inflammatory bowel conditions or gastrointestinal reflux disorder (GERD).

Medicinally it is used to treat indigestion and diarrhea and as an appetite enhancer. Blessed thistle is taken by mouth in the form of tea - using about 1/2 tsp. of dried flowers in 5 oz of boiling water and allowed to steep for 10-15 minutes. The solid leaves should be removed before drinking. The tea is very bitter and can be sweetened with sugar or honey to taste. Capsules are available and the dosage ranges from 1,500 to 6,000mg per day.

Topically it is used to soothe skin irritations caused by burns, shaving, scrapes and other minor injuries. A clean cloth can be soaked in the tea and the solid leaves left over from the tea can be wrapped in the cloth and applied to the affected area. It can be reapplied as often as needed.

### Magickal Uses:

The magickal characteristics of Blessed Thistle include the following: It is used for protection, purification and hex breaking. Its gender is masculine. It is ruled by the planet Mars and its element is Fire. Its sign is Aries and it is most often associated with the Deity Pan. It is used with all rituals of protection and with Yule.

During the Yule ritual, Blessed Thistle is placed in the Yule Cup and drank by the High Priest to invoke the Sun God. The energy attributed to the Blessed Thistle helps the Sun God to grow into the Father of the Harvest as the year progresses. This energy is reflected and enhanced by the herb's Astrological association with the planet Mars and its ability to empower ideas and to move forward with them.

Blessed Thistle is often placed in mojo bags due to its ability to break hexes and its protective qualities; again reflected by the energies of Fire and Mars. It is grown in gardens to ward off thieves and protect homes. It is said to lend energy and strength to those nearby and therefore it is often placed in bowls in sick rooms or where people are recuperating from illness. According to folklore it can be thrown into a fire when fear of being struck by lightning comes over us.

According to the Hoodoo tradition, Blessed Thistle is brewed into a tea with salt, and sprinkled around the home for protection from evil. This ritual is accompanied by the recital of Psalms. It is also blended in a bowl with Yerba Santa (*eriodictyon californicum*), Angelica, and Basil to bring spiritual aid to the home.

A spell to remember your dreams. By Sirona Knight from Wiccan Spell a Day 2003. You will need 3 tea bags of Chamomile and 3 tea bags of Blessed Thistle and 9 drops of Neroli oil. Draw a warm bath and add the tea bags and oil. Disrobe and climb into the tub. Immerse yourself and breathe in the fragrances of the herbs and oil. Relax and feel all your worries and problems flowing out of your mind, body and spirit. Reflect on the here and now and the future to come. Chant 9 times: Magic waters refresh and empower me. By the Lady and Lord, Blessed Be.

Soak for 10 minutes. Dry off with a soft towel and anoint yourself with Neroli oil and go to bed. As you fall asleep repeat to yourself: Magical dreams empower me. When I awake I will remember my dreams.

When you wake up, make a note of everything you recall.

Although you may be astonished by the duplicity of this common yet strange herb, if you embrace it you will find it to be not only beneficial to your health and well-being, but also a powerful helper and protector.

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Lyric lives in Canton Ohio, USA and is a Shamanic Eclectic Wiccan and a member of Circle of Nine Maidens Coven. She has been a member of EW since 2007

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"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream."

~ Barbara Winkler





## The Pagan Kitchen by OwlOak Yule Recipes

MM Folks,

Can you believe it....Yule, already???? Seems just like yesterday we were celebrating the coming of spring and here we are welcoming in the Child of Promise and a new solar year. My, how time flies when you're having fun!!

Speaking of fun, this Sabbat issue is full of fun recipes, with a bunch of them contributed by our members. We have gravy and biscuits, a Yule log for dessert, and Wassail to wash it all down. We even have a "celebrity recipe" submitted by Mr. M. R. Sellars, a new friend we met at the 1<sup>st</sup> Earth Warriors Festival this past summer in Ohio. Known as 'Murv' to his friends, he is the author of the "Rowan Gant" Pagan fiction series of books, among others, and is also an accomplished chef in his own right. We are honored to have him contribute to the Controversial Cauldron and would like to thank him for sending it in. Many thanks Murv, it sounds delicious.

### Now on to the Yule "Borgasmord"



## Great-Gram's Tourtière (submitted by OwlOak)

This is a pork pie (loosely pronounced tour tyeheir) that is served in Canadian-French households on Christmas Eve and can be served either hot or cold. It is often served with ketchup on it, but in my family it is traditionally served hot with pork gravy. This recipe has been handed down from my paternal great-grandmother who was Canadian-French so you know it is something that was, and is, always on the Yule menu in my family.



#### Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. ground lean fresh pork
- 2-3 medium potatoes - mashed (various recipes use cornmeal or cracker crumbs, and eggs in place of the potatoes. I personally prefer the potatoes, probably because that is what I grew up with.)
- 1 clove garlic - minced
- 1 medium onion - chopped
- 2 tbsp. dried parsley
- 3 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 pinch each (about 1/4 tsp.) of powdered sage or Bells Seasoning®, black pepper, nutmeg, ground cloves,

dried thyme, and cinnamon pastry for 2 - 9-inch crust pies.  
2 cups (or more) pork gravy (recipe below)

#### Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 375F (191C), then break-up the ground pork and brown in a large sauce pan over medium heat. Add the water, garlic, chopped onions, parsley, salt, pepper, sage, nutmeg, cloves, thyme, bay leaf, and cinnamon. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes on low heat.

Strain the pork mixture, reserving the liquid, \*\*\*remove the bay leaf \*\*\* and return the mixture to the sauce pan. Add the mashed potatoes to the pan of ground pork, mix until well blended, and cook over low heat with the cover off until the mixture is heated through - this allows the flavors to blend. Add more of the reserved liquid if necessary to keep it moist but not sloppy. Remove from the heat and cool to room temperature.

When the mixture is cool, fill each pie shell with 1/2 the filling, pinch the top crust in place, and cut slits in it to vent

the steam. Bake the pies at 375F (190C) for 40-45 minutes, or until the top crust is golden brown.

Cool for 15 minutes before slicing - the pie will be firm and not loose like a pot pie. Place each slice on a plate and cover with the desired amount of gravy. Makes 12 servings

#### ~~~Pork Gravy~~~

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups reserved stock (add more water if necessary to make the 2 cups)\*
- 4 tbsp. flour
- salt and fresh ground pepper - to taste
- Gravy Master® or Kitchen Bouquet® (optional)

#### Preparation:

Skim any excess grease from the cooled reserved stock and place the stock in a saucepan over medium heat.

Immediately add the flour, sprinkling it in 1 tbsp. at a time while whisking, or stirring, the broth until it is smooth - never add flour directly to very hot liquids as it will lump up.





Add salt and pepper to taste. Continue to whisk, or stir, the gravy until it comes to a boil and the white foam disappears and it thickens. Remember that flour needs to be boiled (cooked) to keep from having the floury taste.

Note: The "Rule of Thumb" for gravy thickness is - Thin gravy...1 tsp. of flour to 1 cup of liquid. Medium gravy...2 tsp. of flour to 1 cup of liquid. Thick gravy...3 tsp. of flour to 1 cup of liquid. Wallpaper paste...4 proportionately.

\*If more gravy is desired the stock can be doubled by dissolving 1 cube (tsp. or packet) each of beef and chicken bouillon in 2 cups of water and adding to the base stock. Increase the flour of the food coloring. In this case, the

Turn off the heat and stir in a few drops of the food coloring. In this case, the

## Amazing Gravy and Biscuits

(submitted by: vampire\_queen\_bbygrl)

For Yule breakfast what could be better than gravy and biscuits? This amazing gravy is not like that for normal biscuits and gravy. It is a chocolate gravy, good for a day of warming up, good for a Saturday breakfast if it's cold outside, or just if you are a cocoa maniac.

### Ingredients:

- 1 dozen fresh biscuits
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 heaping tablespoons flour
- 2 tbsp. cocoa
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup milk

heat.

Stir in the dry mixture and bring to a boil, stirring constantly so it doesn't burn.

Add the milk and bring it to a simmer while constantly stirring. Turn down the heat and continue stirring until it thickens to your liking.

### Directions:

Mix sugar, flour, and cocoa in a bowl until well blended.

Add the water to a medium skillet or saucepan and place over medium-low

If it's too soupy add a tad more flour. If it's too thick add a tad more milk.

Enjoy!!!



For lunch we have a choice of comfort foods either of which is bound to please anyone. The first one is...

## Punky's Lasagna

(submitted by PunkyRabbit)



### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. Lean Ground Beef
- 1 Medium Onion – sliced and chopped
- 1 lb. Italian Sausage
- Black Pepper and Salt – to taste
- 1/4 tsp. Red Pepper
- 1-2 Eggs

- 1 1/2 cups Ricotta Cheese
- 1 tbsp. Fresh Parsley - Chopped
- Fresh Mozzarella Cheese (as needed) - sliced thin or shredded
- Romano Parmesan Cheese (as needed) - freshly grated
- 8 oz. Lasagna Noodles
- Marinara Sauce (recipe below)

- 3-4 Whole Garlic Cloves
- 1 Whole Medium Onion
- 1 or 2 tsp. of brown or white sugar (this cuts down on the acidity)

In a large pot add all of the ingredients and let simmer on low heat for at least 3 hours stirring occasionally.



### Marinara Sauce (or Gravy as we Italians call it)

- 2 – 32 oz. cans Crushed Tomatoes
- 1 – 6 oz. can Tomato Paste
- Salt, Pepper, Oregano – to taste
- 1 Bay Leaf - REMEMBER to take out this leaf when sauce is done.

### Directions:

In a large skillet, brown beef, sausage (break down into little pieces if whole), chopped onion, red pepper, black pepper and salt; drain well. Stir in as much of the Marinara Sauce as you like and leave on low heat. (You'll want to have some sauce left over for people who enjoy extra sauce.)





In a separate bowl, mix the egg and a little salt and the parsley into the ricotta cheese.

Cook lasagna noodles according to package directions (makes sure to add a little olive oil to the water to help the noodles from sticking together), drain and dry each noodle with a clean dishtowel or paper towel to absorb the water.

In a 2-quart buttered or olive oil basted baking dish (about 11x7x2-inches), layer lasagna noodles on the bottom of

the dish, then some sauce, then some meat, dollops of ricotta cheese, Mozzarella cheese and Parmesan cheeses; repeat this until you've got at least 4 layers. On the top layer, if you have meat left over, sprinkle a few pieces, a little bit of ricotta and as much of the remaining cheese as you like.

Cover entire dish with aluminum foil and bake lasagna at 350F (177C) for 30-35 minutes, uncover and check. If it is thoroughly heated and bubbly, bake uncovered for a few minutes to crisp the top. Let stand for 8 to 10 minutes

before cutting and serving.

This should serve about 8 people unless you have the appetite of my brothers, then this will give you about 2-3 servings!

Note - For best results, I like to tightly wrap the dish with plastic wrap and then aluminum foil and put in the refrigerator overnight before baking. This firms up the lasagna and also allows the ingredients to really come together.



## “Celebrity Recipe”

### The O'Brien Dublin Coddle (submitted by author M. R. Sellars)



"This is my own recipe, which has been attributed to Felicity O'Brien, one of the primary characters from the Rowan Gant series. Felicity's clan serves up Dublin Coddle whenever they have a family gathering, and most especially around the holidays when it is cold outside."  
~ M. R. Sellars

#### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. sliced bacon
- 2 lbs. quality pork sausages, link style
- 2 large onions
- 6 cloves garlic
- 4 large potatoes, sliced thick
- 2 large carrots, sliced thick
- 1 cup shredded green cabbage
- 1 bouquet garni (see below)
- Fresh cracked black pepper
- Fresh parsley
- Fresh Unfiltered Apple cider
- Guinness Stout (or some other stout beer)

#### Directions:

Fry bacon until crisp, set aside, reserve some grease in skillet. Poach sausages in 50-50 mixture of Stout and Apple cider, reserve liquid. After poaching, brown in bacon grease, set aside. Smash garlic cloves and slice onions. Sauté in bacon grease until soft and slightly caramelized.

Break up bacon strips, slice sausages into 1" to 2" pieces. Layer ingredients in large cast iron Dutch oven, starting with cabbage on the bottom, carrots, potatoes, onions/garlic, bacon, sausages, bury bouquet garni in center. Cover ingredients with reserved 50-50 mixture of apple cider and stout. (If not enough liquid, add more stout and cider until covered.) Fit with heavy lid and place in oven at 200-225F (93-107C) for 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Raise temp to 250F (121C) approximately 30 minutes before you are ready to serve. When ready to serve, stir to mix, garnish with chopped fresh parsley, ladle into bowls and serve with soda bread. Serves approximately 6 to 8.

Place the bay leaf, thyme, and parsley together in a bundle with the bay leaf in the middle. Tie securely with fine string, leaving a length of string attached so that the bouquet garni can be easily removed before serving.



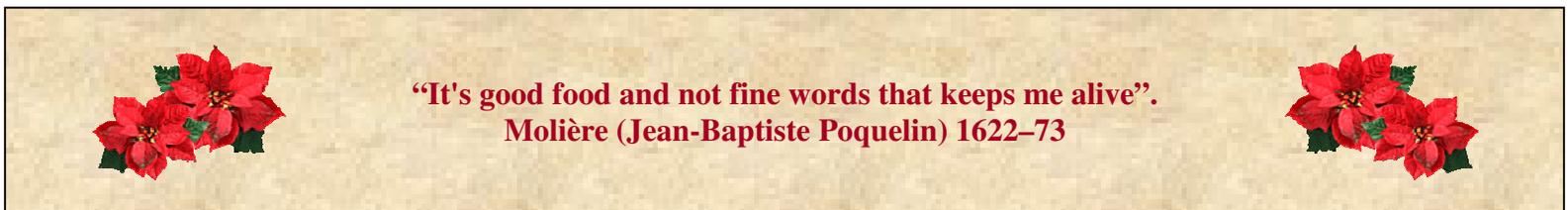
\*\*\* Bouquet Garni \*\*\*

- 1 whole bay leaf – dried is fine
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 4 large sprigs fresh curly parsley (including stalks)

“Hope you Enjoy”

M. R. Sellars

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





Now, no holiday is complete without something to munch on between meals and what fills the bill better than this ...

### Laura's Cheese Ball

(submitted by AuroraRose)

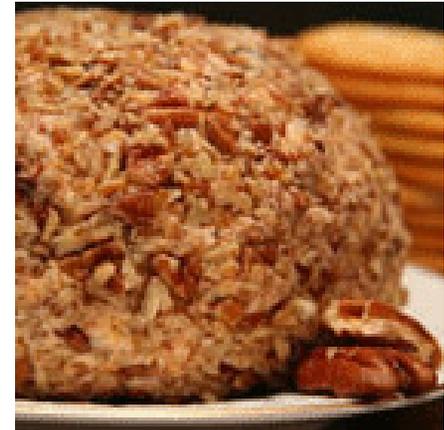
**Ingredients:**

2 - 8 oz. bars of Cream Cheese - softened  
4 oz. Blue Cheese - crumbled  
A splash of Worcestershire Sauce  
Crushed Pecans

Remove and form the mixture into a ball.

Just before serving coat the ball with crushed pecans.

Serve with your favorite crackers and/or julienne veggies.



**Directions:**

Mix the cream cheese, blue cheese, and Worcestershire sauce together in a bowl.  
Place in the refrigerator to chill.

Variations: Any crushed nuts (peanuts, walnuts, pistachio nuts, etc.), or fresh chopped herbs such as chopped parsley may be used as a coating.

For the evening meal we have...

### Honey Ginger Pork Loin Roast

(submitted by Chant)



Place in a suitable baking pan and bake for 40 min. or until the meat thermometer reaches 170F (77C), basting if desired with the reserved marinade.

Remove the roast from the oven. Before carving let cool for 15 minutes to allow the juices to redistribute.

**Ingredients:**

2 eggs  
1 cup milk  
1 cup sifted all-purpose flour  
1/4 tsp. salt

**Directions:**

Break eggs into mixing bowl, add milk and beat until well blended. Add sifted flour and salt, and continue beating until batter is smooth and thick. Pour into greased iron muffin cups or greased glass custard cups until they are about 1/3 full. Bake at 450F (230C) for 20 min ~ then reduce heat to 350F (175C) and bake 15 to 20 min. longer, or until well browned. Remove from the oven and make a small slit in each popover to allow steam to escape. Care should be taken as they will be very hot. Serve right away.

And, what goes great with a pork roast? Why... **Connie's Popovers** - Submitted earlier by flukefishing2000



**Ingredients:**

2 tbsp. Dry Mustard  
3 tbsp. Cider Vinegar  
1/4 cup Olive Oil  
1/4 tsp. Dry Ginger OR 1 tsp. Grated Fresh Ginger  
2 tbsp. Brown Sugar  
2 tbsp. Honey  
1 Pork Loin Roast

**Directions:**

Whisk all the ingredients together. Pour over the pork loin and marinate in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. Preheat oven to 425F (218C). Remove roast from the marinade and reserve marinade.

Makes about 6.

**“Strange to see how a good dinner and feasting reconciles everybody.”  
Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) English diarist 9th November 1665**





With dinner finished it's time to retire to the living room and enjoy a sip by the fire. Now, Yule wouldn't be Yule without this drink...

## A Traditional English Wassail Recipe

(submitted by George Knowles)

### Ingredients:

- 10 very small apples
- 1 large orange stuck with whole cloves
- 10 teaspoons brown sugar
- 2 bottles dry sherry or dry Madeira
- 1/2 tsp. grated nutmeg
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 3 cloves
- 3 allspice berries
- 2 or 3 cinnamon sticks
- 2 cups castor sugar (very fine granulated white sugar)
- 12 to 20 pints of cider according to the number of guests
- 1 cup (or as much as you like) brandy

### Directions:

Core the apples and fill each with a tsp. of brown sugar. Makes enough for 15-20 people – Place in a baking pan and cover the bottom with 1/8-inch of water. Insert cloves into the orange about 1/2" apart, and bake with the apples in a 350°F (175C) oven.

After about 30 minutes, remove the orange and puncture it in several places with a fork or an ice pick.

Combine the sherry or Madeira, cider, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, allspice berries, cinnamon, sugar, apple and orange juice and water in a large, heavy saucepan and heat slowly without letting the mixture come to a boil. Leave on very low heat.

Strain the wine mixture and add the brandy. Pour into a metal punch bowl, float the apples and orange on top and ladle hot into punch cups.



And, to put the frosting on the cake we have the cake too....

## Yule Log Cake (bûche de Noël)

(Submitted by OwlOak)



Like the Tourtiere, this is another Yule treat traditionally served in French homes. It can be decorated as fancy or as plain as you wish, let your imagination and creativity soar. This should be made a day or two ahead as the whole project will require several hours to complete and may require some practice rolling the cake.

### ~~Cake~~

#### Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 5 eggs
- 3/4 cup granulated white sugar
- 2 (1 ounce) squares unsweetened chocolate, or 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp. water
- 2 tbsp. granulated white sugar
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- confectioners' sugar for dusting
- solid vegetable shortening (room temp.) like Crisco® for greasing the pan and paper.

#### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Lightly grease a jellyroll pan (a cookie

sheet with higher sides) and line with parchment (or waxed) paper. Lightly grease this also.

Sift flour with baking powder and salt into a large bowl and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs on high for several minutes until they are very pale and fluffy. Gradually add in the sugar, (and cocoa powder if using it in place of the chocolate pieces, and skip the melted chocolate step.), beating 1 to 2 minutes more or until very thick. Gently, but thoroughly, fold in the flour mixture until well combined.

Melt the chocolate in a small saucepan over low heat. In a small bowl, combine the 2

tablespoons of water with the remaining 2 tbsp. sugar and the baking soda, then gradually stir into the melted chocolate until smooth. Quickly, but thoroughly, fold chocolate mixture into batter.





Pour a 1/4 inch thick layer of batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top to level it. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of cake comes out slightly sticky. If it is overcooked it will easily crumble and be hard to work with.

Lightly sift an even layer of confectioners sugar over a clean smooth dish towel and flip the cake out of the pan onto the prepared towel as soon as it comes from the oven. \*Carefully\* peel away parchment, or waxed, paper.

Trim away any crusty edges and dust the cake with confectioners sugar. Starting with one of the short sides of the cake, immediately roll the cake up in the cloth, jellyroll style, and cool seam side down on a rack.\*

\*If you want to get really fancy you can roll the cake from the long side and after adding the filling cut off a 4 inch piece which is then cut in half at a diagonal and placed on the frosted cake as cut branch stubs. Of course, these are frosted too. Toothpicks can be used to hold them in place, just be sure to remove them from the slices before serving.

~~Filling~~

**Ingredients:**

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup granulated white sugar
- 4 tbsp. cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp. flavored liqueur (such as Grand Marnier), or extract (such as maple, cherry, orange, raspberry, rum etc.)

**Directions:**

Combine ingredients and beat until very stiff. Set aside in refrigerator until needed.

~~Frosting~~

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 8 ounces (8 squares) semisweet chocolate, melted
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, softened

In a small saucepan, bring cream, melted chocolate, and butter to a boil over medium heat, stirring vigorously until blended. Remove from heat. Let stand until set.

~~Assembly~~

Unroll the cake and remove the cloth. Spread whipped cream over cake to within 1 inch of edges. Carefully re-roll the cake\* and place seam-side down on a serving plate or tray. The plate or tray should be decorated as you want it to be, i.e...foil, paper doily, etc, as once in place the cake will not be movable.

Spread with the set frosting, covering the whole cake- ends and all.

Make a bark pattern in the frosting with a fork or spatula and a swirl pattern on the ends to look like tree rings.

\*Don't roll too tightly and be prepared for a bit of a mess.

~~Decoration~~

This is where you can let your imagination and creativity run free.

You can make edible decorations like holly leaves out of marzipan (almond paste) dyed with food coloring with cinnamon candies for holly berries. Some of the log can be sprinkled with confectioners' sugar to resemble snow or green sugar crystals to resemble moss. 2 or 3 vanilla wafers can be pushed into the side for mushrooms, or you can use meringue ones. The following site has an excellent recipe for meringue mushrooms:

<http://candy.about.com/od/christmascandy/r/mushrooms.htm>

Also, it can be decorated with free-hand designs using colored frostings, or with plastic items that you find in stores like holly, snowmen, anything seasonal. As I mentioned, the limit is your imagination and creativity.

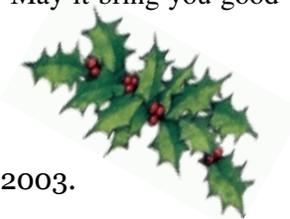
Note: If time or cost is an issue, the cake can be made with 1 box of dark chocolate cake mix, canned frosting, and whipped topping (just mix the flavoring and cocoa in before applying). If using the canned frosting, I recommend mixing 2 tablespoons of softened vegetable shortening to the contents of each can. This will make it creamier tasting and also easier to spread.

There ya have it folks. I'm so full I'm about to burst my britches. For those of you who are still hungry, if anyone could be, there's the left-overs to dig into. What's that you say? There's none left!!! Oh well, there's always next year. <G>

On a serious note, I wish each and every one of you a very "Merry Yule", and a truly blessed coming year. May it bring you good health, wealth, happiness, and most of all love.

Huggs & B\*B ~ OwlOak

© 2008 James Rancourt, aka OwlOak  
OwlOak lives in New England, USA and is a Wiccan High Priest. He has been an EW member since 2003.



If any one wishes to comment or make suggestions on the Pagan Kitchen please feel free to write me <jrr147@yahoo.com>. Please mention "Pagan Kitchen" in the subject line so it doesn't go into the "Spam" file.





## The Elder Tree

Written and Compiled by  
George Knowles

*“Elder Is the Lady's tree  
Burn it not or cursed you'll be.”*



The Elder tree (*Sambucus nigra*) is a member of the Honeysuckle family and is one of the sacred trees of Wicca and Witchcraft. According to the Celtic Tree Calendar, the Elder is the thirteenth tree of the year and dates from the 25<sup>th</sup> November – 22<sup>nd</sup> December, as such the Elder tree is associated with Yule - the Winter Solstice, which in 2008 occurs on the 21<sup>st</sup> December.

The word Elder is derived from an old Anglo-Saxon word ‘*aeld*’ meaning fire, an association given to the Elder because of its use. The soft pith of an Elder branch pushes out easily and the tubes formed were once used as pipes for blowing up fires, later bellows were made from Elder for the same use. From this followed the folk names Pipe-Tree, Bore-tree or Bour-tree, the latter is still being used in Scotland and is traceable to the Anglo-Saxon term *Burtre*. Other early names include Eldrun or Ellhorn, and then later in the fourteenth century it became known as Hyldor or Hyllantree. In Germany, it is known as Hollunder.

The botanical name for the Elder - ‘*Sambucus*’ occurs in the writings of Pliny and other ancient writers. Adopted from the Greek word ‘*Sambuca*’, a musical instrument much favoured and used by the Romans, it is thought that Elder wood was used in its

construction due its hardness. There is difficulty in accepting this however, because the *Sambuca* was a stringed instrument, while anything made from Elder would most likely have been a wind instrument, similar in the nature to Panpipes, a Flute or even a Sackbut, the renaissance equivalent to the modern trombone.

Pliny also records the belief held by country folk that the “shrillest pipes” and the most “sonorous horns” were made from Elder trees, but only those grown in areas away from human habitation and away from the sound of a cocks-crow. Young children would



make whistles, popguns and peashooters from the Elder, which Pliny notes were manufactures many centuries old. Culpeper, another old master, declared: “It is needless to write any description of the Elder, since every boy that plays with a popgun will not mistake it for any another tree”. In modern times, Italian peasants construct a simple musical pipe from the Elder called a ‘*Sampogna*’.

In the summer with its flat-topped masses of fragrant white blossoms, followed later in autumn by drooping bunches of purple-black berries; the Elder is a familiar and much loved sight in the English countryside. It grows in abundance with a minimum of soil and can be found in wastelands, woods, hedgerows and gardens. Mostly the Elder grows as a shrub, bush or small tree, and rarely exceeds nine metres (30ft) in height. Wild in nature the Elder re-grows damaged branches with ease and can root rapidly

from any of its parts. Cuttings or twigs broken off the tree and stuck in the ground will soon produce masses of fruit.

A peculiarity of the Elder is its method of growth. At the base of a sapling, stems appear each growing upright, then after awhile, as if under weight, they bend over creating a curve on top of which a new bud appears. From this bud a new stem grows upright for a while until it too bends over, and so its growth continues. The Elder’s trunk therefore is not formed by one upwardly growing mass like the trunks of other trees, but is a patchwork mess of curving drooping stems. This is why the Elder is neither elegant nor reaches any great height. The stems can sometimes reach nearly two feet in diameter, a size indicating several or more score of years. Today however, we are lucky to be able to find one growing half that size.

The bark of the wood is rough, corky and light brown to grey in colour, its branches are smoother and its twigs a pleasing bright green, but these are pockmarked with small brownish spots caused by the tree’s lenticels. The wood of the main stem is hard and heavy, white with a fine close grain. It is easy to cut and polishes well, and was often used for making butcher’s skewers or small toys for children. Other uses include shoemaker’s pegs,



fishing rods, needles for weaving nets, and combs. It being a hard wood, technical instruments and several different musical instruments were made of Elder. The pith from its branches was sliced and used as floats for fishing, while pith from younger stems being exceedingly light, was cut into balls and used for electrical experiments. In medicine, it was used to hold small objects for microscopic sectioning.





The leaves of the Elder consist of five leaflets attached to a central stalk sitting opposite each other on its twigs or branches. To ensure its leafing capacity, beneath its main leaf-buds the Elder produces a second smaller bud in reserve, but this will only open if the main leaves are lost due to inclement weather, and can remain dormant for a couple of years until needed. Once the leaves have formed, its flower buds begin to grow and by June the tree is awash with thousands of tiny white flowers.

The flowers all look alike and consist of five creamy white petals, on the back of which five green sepals form a star. In between each petal there are five yellow stamens surrounding a cream coloured ovary containing a three lobed stigma. To allow easy cross-fertilization by flies and other insects attracted by the flower's fragrance, the stamens and stigmas mature at the same time. Clusters of Elder flowers grow all at the same level facing the sky and viewed from beneath resemble

many tiny star-spoke umbrellas.

### Myths and Folklore

There is much folklore and superstition talked about the Elder tree, much of it passed down through the old religions of the ancients, and in common with many other trees and plants, the Elder tree in particular was attributed a number of negative Christian legends in efforts to suppress earlier pagan beliefs. One such legend as Shakespeare recounts in his *“Love's Labour Lost”*, is that of the traitor Apostle “Judas Iscariot” who supposedly hanged himself on an Elder tree. Reference to this myth is found as far back in English literature as Langland's – *“Vision of Piers Plowman”* written during the middle of the fourteenth century: *“Judas he japed with Jewen silver, And sithen an eller hanged hymselfe”*.

Why Judas would have selected the Elder for his gallows, is somewhat puzzling given the small size of the tree, but Sir John Mandeville in his famous book published in the 1300's entitled: *“The Travels of Sir John Mandeville”*, tells us that he was shown: *“faste by the Pool of Siloam, the identical Tree of Eldre that Judas henge himself upon, for despeyr that he hadde, when he solde and betrayed oure Lord”*. John Gerard in his famous *“Herbal or General History of Plants”* calls the Elder tree, *“the Judas-tree - the tree whereon Judas did hange himselfe”*.



Another old legend tells of how the Elder tree was one of several trees whose wood was used to make the Cross of Calvary on which Christ was crucified, and as a result the Elder tree in particular was punished, an old couplet states: *“Bour tree - Bour tree: crooked rong, Never straight and never strong; Ever bush and never tree, Since our Lord was nailed on thee”*.

In most countries, the Elder tree is intimately connected with magic and witchcraft, and there are many folktales and legends telling of a witch that lives in the tree. One such is about Hylde-Moer, the Elder-tree Mother, who lived in the tree to watch over it. Should the tree be cut down and furniture made of its wood, many believed she would follow and haunt the owners. As the story goes, an ignorant woodcutter once cut down an Elder tree to make a cradle for his newborn son, but each time the child was placed in it Hylde-Moer would appear and pull it by the legs, thus allowing the child no peace until it was lifted out. To cut an Elder, permission must always be gained first by asking, and not until Hylde-Moer has given consent by remaining silent, may the tree be cut down.





Another legend about an Elder witch concerns the famous Rollright Stone circle near the village of Long Compton in Oxfordshire. These strange and ancient monoliths are said to be the remains of an invading Danish King and his men intent on conquering England. As the King and his men were approaching Long Compton, an old hag witch approached them and called out a challenge: *“Seven long strides shalt thou take, an if Long Compton thou can see, King of England thou shalt be.”*

The village of Long Compton is hidden behind a low mound known locally as the Archdruids’ barrow. After the King had taken his seven strides he still could not see the village, so the hag witch called out again: *“As Long Compton thou canst not see, King of England thou shalt not be. Rise up stick and rise up stone, For King of England thou shalt be none. Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be, And I myself an Elder tree”*. With that cry the King became the lone standing stone known as the “King Stone”, a group of five upright stones huddled together are known as “The Whispering Knights”, while the stones forming the circle itself are known as the “King’s Men”.



### Magical Uses

As with most trees, one of the main properties of the Elder is that of protection, and grown on your land particularly near to the home, helps to protect it from negative energy and lightning attacks. Crosses made of Elder twigs were hung over stables and barns to protect the livestock. People buried objects, items of clothing and even their milk teeth in its shade, to protect the owner from evil spells and disease. Spells were also used to divert illnesses from a sick person into the Elder bush. Pieces of Elder wood worn close to the body will protect against illness, however many people still believed it was dangerous to place Elder in a cradle, fear was that the tree fairies would see this as a sign they could take the child away.



Elder trees can commonly be found growing in old country gardens and cemeteries, for wherever the Elder tree grew was considered sacred space protected by the Elder Mother. The flowers of the tree have a slightly narcotic smell and it is considered unwise to rest under it too long, for if you fall asleep you may never wake up. Because of this, the Elder has a long association with death. The dead were often laid out on Elder branches and its wood was used to make crosses for graves. In some countries branches of Elder are still put on graves today, and if they sprout, it is a clear sign that the departed person is happy and has been welcomed into Elysium, the blessed realm of the dead.

If you bathe the eyes with dew collected from the Elder tree, you will be able to see fairies and witches. In the Isle of Man, Elder trees are the main dwelling-place for elves, and in Scotland if you stand under an Elder-tree at Samhain, you can see the fairy host riding by. Scattering Elder leaves in the four winds will bring protection and when used to form a circle, helps to create sacred space. During ritual, a flute or whistle made from an Elder can be used to summon spirits.

### Medicinal Uses

The Elder has long been noted for its healing properties and was mentioned in the oldest of British Pharmacopoeias. To the physician and the wise-woman of old, it was considered “the medicine chest of the country” to those who knew its secrets. Most all parts of the Elder were used in drinks, healing poultices and ointments.

John Evelyn (1620–1706) a prolific English writer, gardener and diarist, wrote in praise of the Elder, saying:

“If the medicinal properties of its leaves, bark and berries were fully known, I cannot tell what our countryman could ail for which he might not fetch a remedy from every hedge, either for sickness or wounds. The buds boiled in water gruel have effected wonders in a fever, the spring buds are excellently wholesome in pottages; and small ale in which Elder flowers have been infused is esteemed by many so salubrious that this is to be had in most of





the eating houses about our town”.

Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) popularly regarded as the father of alternative medicine, states in his books: *The English Physician* (1652) and *The Complete Herbal* (1653) that:

*“The first shoots of the common Elder, boiled like Asparagus, and the young leaves and stalks boiled in fat broth, doth mightily carry forth phlegm and choler. The middle or inward bark boiled in water and given in drink worketh much more violently; and the berries, either green or dry, expel the same humour, and are often given with good success in dropsy; the bark of the root boiled in wine, or the juice thereof drunk, worketh the same effects, but more powerfully than either the leaves or fruit. The juice of the root taken causes vomitings and purgeth the watery humours of the dropsy”.*

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) another noted English physician and writer tried to reconcile religion with scientific knowledge, in his *Religio medici* (1643) he states:

*“The common people keep as a good secret in curing wounds the leaves of the Elder, which they have gathered the last day of April. The leaves boiled soft with a little linseed oil were used as a healing application to piles. An ointment concocted from the green Elderberries with camphor and lard, was formerly ordered by the London College of Surgeons to relieve the same complaint.*

The leaves are an ingredient of many cooling ointments: Here is another recipe, not made from Elder leaves alone, and very much recommended by modern herbalists as being very cooling and softening and excellent for all kinds of tumours, swellings and wounds: Take the Elder leaves 1/2 lb., Plantain leaves 1/4 lb., Ground Ivy 2 oz., Wormwood 4 oz. (all green); cut them small and boil in 4 lb. of lard in the oven, or over a slow fire; stir them continually until the leaves become crisp, then strain and press out the ointment for use”.



John Gerard (1545- 1612) in perhaps the most famous of the English herbals *“Herbal or General History of Plants”* first published in 1597 and republished in 1633, states that:

*“The jelly of the Elder otherwise called Jew's ear, taketh away inflammations of the mouth and throat if they be washed therewith, and doth in like manner help the uvula”.*



Jew's Ear (*Hirneola auricula Judae*), is a large fungus that can often be found growing on the Elder tree. The name is a corruption of “Judas's ear”, from the association that Judas hanged himself on the Elder. Purplish in colour, it resembles the shape and softness the human ear, and although it sometimes occurs on Elm trees, it grows almost exclusively on Elder trees particularly in damp and shady places.

The leaves of the Elder when bruised and worn in the rim of a hat or rubbed on the face will distract flies from settling on the person. To protect the skin from midges and mosquitoes, make an infusion from the leaves and dab it on the skin. Gather a few fresh leaves from the Elder and tear them from their stalks, place them in a jug and pour on boiling water, cover and leave for a few hours. When the infusion is cold, it is fit for use, pour off into a bottle and keep it tightly corked, a fresh infusion should be made often.



Farmers particularly value the leaves of the Elder, which when spread about around barns and granaries deter mice and moles away from their usual haunts. Sheep and other farm animals can be cured of foot-rot from a decoction of the bark and young shoots. The bark and roots of an old Elder tree was used in the Scotch Highlands as an ingredient for a black dye. The leaves mixed with alum also produce a green dye, and the berries a blue and purple dye.

Elder Flowers and Berries have long been used in the English countryside for making homemade drinks and preserves, and are just as popular today as they were in the time of our great-grandmothers. The berries make an excellent homemade wine and winter cordial, which improves with age. Taken hot with sugar just before going to bed, was an old-fashioned and well-established cure for the common cold.





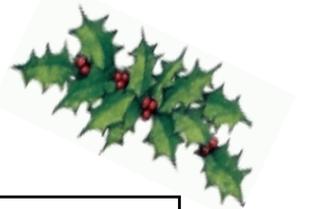
## Other Associations:

**Gender** - Feminine. **Planet** - Saturn. **Element** - Water. **God and Goddess** - Lugh, Dagda, Diancecht, Nuada - Airmid, Banba, Etain, Macha, Druantia and Áine. **Magical associations** - Exorcism, Protection, Healing, Prosperity, Sleep and Death.

**Astrologically**, Elder people have a tie to the White goddess. They are very similar to Rowan people. They are very musically inclined and gifted. Most Elder people will be water people as well, having water as their element or even associated with their astrological birth sign. They are excellent healers but need to be careful not to use their gifts to sway other people's wills and choices. They are also excellent seers.

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# *The Bard's Corner*

## *A Whisper From The Trees*

*Deep within the woods  
I walked beyond where man had been,  
And spoke to the forest  
Where the trees could listen in.*

*I sang the words of magic  
To wake them from their sleep,  
Then said that I was grateful  
That we could finely meet.*

*When off in the distance  
I heard the ruffling of the leaves,  
But then again I listened  
And heard the whisper of the trees.*

*I wrapped my arms around to hug  
This one that seemed so old,  
And words became my breath  
As my thoughts to him were told.*

*When finely I had finished  
To sit beside him on the ground,  
That is when I truly knew  
Of the treasure I had found.*

*A poem by Misty Gail Akers*

*Misty says: ... "I am of Witchcraft not of Wiccan ways and this is how I differ. I take everything to my circle including spells and incantations, nothing is forbidden. That is left to the Gods, the elementals, and the spirits to bear witness and empower my magic into existence, or to let it die on the wind. I am a Witch of a Witch and live in Lebanon, Oregon in the U.S.A.*

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## On the Rocks

### Ruby

By Patricia J. Martin

A perfect stone to awaken and revive us as we celebrate the return of the Sun on this joyous Winter Solstice, and one that is said to "light the darkness of one's life" and "give birth to a spark of light throughout body and spirit, conquering darkness on all levels" ... meet the Ruby.

From Oz's Dorothy to India's Krishna, this rare and beautiful crimson crystal has been the desired gift of choice for millennia - and if there is any gemstone that can truly take us *home*, it is the Ruby. These precious gems are a variety of red Corundum, an aluminum oxide that forms in hexagonal crystals. Their colors range from pink to dark red to orange-red to red-violet, but the most sought after are the deep crimson specimens whose red color stems from chromium, or the infamous red-violet Star Ruby often called "pigeon or dove blood". In fact, Ruby's name derives from the Latin word "rubeus" meaning "red". It is the rarest of all the Corundums. Only the red variety is called Ruby; all other Corundums are called Sapphires. Ruby is one of the most precious gemstones on Earth, rivaled only by the Diamond and Emerald. The finest of its kind hail from Burma, India, Thailand, Ceylon, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Australia and North Carolina in the USA. It is the second hardest natural mineral and registers 9 on the Mohs Scales, so it is easy to take care of and can be cleansed by most methods.

Rubies stimulate and open the Heart Chakra of love and devotion, but the chakra it governs and awakens most is the Root - our very life essence, our means of survival, and the birthing place of our physicality and passions. Ruby deals with life force (chi, or qi) and vitality, and can increase our own energy, enthusiasm and well-being. As we shuffle through the remaining coldest months of Winter, this optimism-inspiring stone (which has forever been associated with the Sun) will aid in eliminating depression or any negative thoughts, while lending us renewal of strength, courage and determination of will. While this gemstone amplifies energy, it also enhances memory and concentration, making for good decisions. The Ruby crystal



is known as the "star fire" and some of them exhibit a dichroic or pleochroic property, meaning they shine two or three different colors respectively when viewed from different angles along their different axes. Some also contain inclusions

of titanium oxide which can produce a highly prized asterism (a 6-pointed star) when cut and polished as a cabochon. Likewise, a Ruby crystal will encourage us to shine, and will aid us in finding several solutions to any problem. It is also a very protective stone and helps to alleviate fear and dispel any surrounding negativity. It can help us overcome any challenge. Physically, Ruby is used to help detoxify the body, to aid with heart issues, and to strengthen the circulatory system or reproductive system.

The Ruby is said to have been one of the 12 stones in the breastplate of the High Priest. It is known as a "Stone of Nobility," and was revered by royalty old and new, as it symbolizes and bestows strength, courage, power and wealth. Legend says that Chinese Emperor Kublai Khan once offered an entire city in order to procure a large Ruby. Rubies promote desire, but not only of the crystal itself, as it will awaken all kinds of desires in you. It invites you to be courageous and asks you to not only be in love with life, but to actively make love to life. Called "the king of precious stones" and "the lord of gemstones" by the Hindus, Ruby will help you carry your own regal air, but never with any arrogance. Romance will also increase in Ruby's presence, as it brings its fiery passions, its love of beauty, and an **a b u n d a n t** appreciation for the sensual pleasures of life into your own life.



Ruby brings back the life force...the light. It helps you transform intent into physical manifestation, aiding in the manifestation of your desires by encouraging self-expression in the physical. It brings life to any barren landscapes of the suppressed mind, body and spirit, renewing all three.

As we celebrate the return of the life-giving Sun, and as we honor the return of the Oak King who precedes the promise of new life, embrace the Ruby's fire. Embrace the Light.

Blessed Be!

© Patricia J. Martin, Nov. 2008

Sources:

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# A Seasonal Festival

## Hanukkah

By *Graham & Pari*

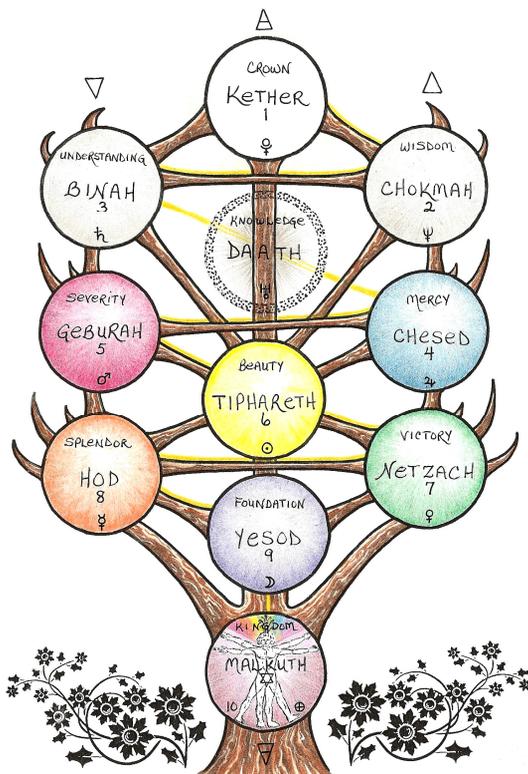
Albert Einstein once said “There are two ways of looking at the world - either you see nothing as a miracle or you see everything as a miracle.” Every year, the followers of Judaism celebrate the latter in a festival called Hanukkah. Starting on the 25th day of Kislev (the ninth month of the traditional Jewish lunisolar calendar, which usually falls in November-December), and lasting for 8 days, the festival of Hanukkah is a celebration of light - the light of miracles.



Hanukkah (which means “dedication” in Hebrew) has been celebrated for more than 2,000 years, and commemorates events that occurred in Judea (now Israel) around 165 BCE. At that time, Antiochus IV, the Greek-Syrian ruler of the region, forbade the Jews their most important religious practices - including the reading of the Torah, the most holy text of Judaism. Reacting against these restrictions, the Jews formed a rebel army that came to be known as the Maccabees (after their leader, Judah the Maccabee). After 3 years of fighting, the Maccabees managed to reclaim the temple on Jerusalem’s Mount Moriah and immediately prepared to rededicate this temple. However, upon doing so, they could only manage to find enough purified oil to keep the temple light burning for a single day. Nevertheless, miraculously, the temple light continued to burn for eight days. Since then, the miracle of this triumph of light over darkness has been celebrated at Hanukkah. The most important activity of the celebrations is the lighting of candles on a special nine-stemmed menorah (a candelabra). The candles are always lit from the flame of a special central observance candle on the

menorah. On the first day one candle is lit, on the next day a second candle is lit, and so on until on the eighth day all candles are ablaze.

Another traditional activity that takes place during Hanukkah is the spinning of dreidels, which are toy tops. When the Jews studied the Torah in secret under the repression of the Syrians, they kept these tops handy so that if they were found studying, they could quickly pretend to have only been playing. Other activities include the singing of songs, the recitation of prayers, and the consumption of foods fried in oil (in commemoration of the miraculous oil of the temple light) such as potato pancakes and donuts.



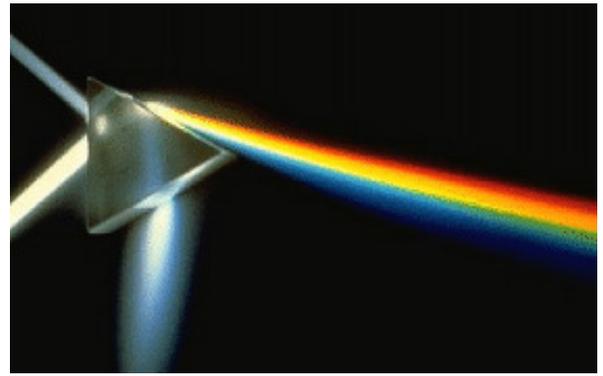
© Patricia J. Martin

At Hanukkah, one is not permitted to read, or do other activities using the light of the sacred menorah. Instead, one is supposed to only look at the light itself, and to contemplate its mystery. “Light” has a special symbolism in the Kabbalah (Hebrew for “that which is received”), the ancient mystical lore of Judaism that seeks to reveal the underlying reality of the relationship between ourselves, the universe, and the supreme spirit of creation - generally referred to as God. The Tree of Life is a visual framework that helps one understand this relationship. It consists of a geometrical arrangement of 10 Sephiroth, with each Sephirah (“sphere”) representing a fundamental aspect of the divine. We are all considered to be sparks of the divine, and consequently to have these same aspects within us in accordance with the principle “as above, so below”. The Tree of Life also seeks to show the descending path of the divine into our material world, and conversely, the ascending steps that one may take to achieve unity with the God. Revealing insight into the nature of the Tree of Life can be gained from the following analogy to the observed properties of light: The highest Sephirah Kether (Crown) is the ultimate source of pure white light. A focused beam of this light is the second Sephirah Chokmah (Wisdom), with the third Sephirah Binah (Understanding) being a prism that sends the light forth as a scattered rainbow of components. None of the three highest Sephiroth individually





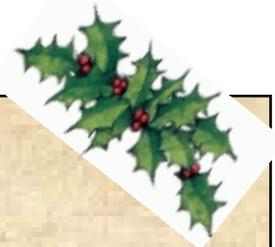
contain any colour, and yet when combined, produce the spectrum of colours which represent the remaining seven lower Sephiroth. The top three Sephiroth, often referred to as the “Divine Trinity”, are thus special in that they represent the highest realms and the way they link to those lower - the supreme light of creation, channeled by wisdom, and projected through understanding.



The seven lower Sephiroth, as well as being related to the seven colours of the spectrum, have also been related to the major chakra energy centers in our bodies. They are: Chesed (Mercy), Geburah (Severity), Tiphareth (Beauty), Netzach (Victory), Hod (Splendour), Yesod (Foundation), and finally the lowest, Malkuth (Kingdom - representing our material world). A mysterious hypothetical eleventh Sephirah called Daath (Knowledge) is sometimes added to the Tree of Life on the path between Binah and Chesed. Daath can be thought of as representing a void or gulf that must be traversed between the Divine Trinity and the lower Sephiroth. As its nature and position in the tree suggests, the best way that this “window between the worlds” can be traversed is through the gaining and use of knowledge, balanced by wisdom and understanding.

The above discussion has only touched upon the Kabbalah, which has had a profound impact on the development of Western magical tradition, occult lore and related disciplines such as astrology and the tarot. A significant case is the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which was founded in London in 1888. To learn about the inner world, and how one might control the external world, members of this order used the Kabbalah (or as they called it, the Qabalah) as a foundation for the performance of meditation, ritual, evocation, and high magic. Well-known members included Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (one of the founders), the poet William Butler Yeats, Dion Fortune, Israel Regardie, and the controversial magician Aleister Crowley.

In 1905, Albert Einstein changed the face of science when he proposed his special “Theory of Relativity”. At the heart of that theory was a universal principle that contradicted all established logic of the day. Namely, that the speed of light was always the same, regardless of the relative movements between the light source and observer. Such were the unprecedented consequences of this assumption, that the previously considered “unchangeable” quantities of time, space and mass all became variable quantities. It also followed that amazingly, mass and energy could be considered to be two sides of the same coin, and interchangeable according to the now famous formula  $E = mc^2$ . So it was that by his discovery, Einstein showed that light could indeed be considered to be an expression of a supreme and immutable principle in our universe; and thus, be a worthy subject for Hannukah meditations on the miracles that surround us every day.



**“The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility...  
The fact that it is comprehensible is a miracle.”  
Albert Einstein, “Physics and Reality” (1936)**

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## Solar ~ Savior gods

Written and compiled by Ardriana Cahill

Throughout religious history tales of the hero/savior god have been told around many a fire. This hero god was often also a solar or sky god and although the names of the hero/savior gods have been many, being also a Sun god, this time of the year, on or near the Winter Solstice, was often said to be his birthday. Whether his birth was claimed to be on the Winter Solstice when the Sun stands still in the sky or several days after when the Sun visibly can be seen to move closer to the earth, the stories that surround these Solar gods have repeated and repeated for more than 5000 years. There are dozens of Solar gods whose mythology have been tangled in with former Solar gods. Below are those who have the most attributes in common.

These comparisons are not made to suggest that the myths surrounding modern Christianity's solar deity, Jesus, are fraudulent or blasphemous because they were usurped from former gods. If you believe in reincarnation, who is to say who was who and who did what. Whose to say the gods do not send the messengers again and again. Whose to say that each is not the reincarnation of a great hero of old. I only repeat the stories again because that is what a bard does. We keep the lore alive in hopes that true or false, fact or fancy, god-made or man-made, these stories may carry a lesson to us, to give us insight and wisdom about ourselves and our history. We celebrate these Solar gods as tradition has done for millennia. As one of my anthropology professors once said. Philosophies that have outlasted the ages must have something to them. It is up to us to understand what that something might be. Even if it only inspires the hero in us. Meanwhile, we will remember the deep-rooted histories of our ancestors whose ancient philosophies have refused to die, so they may continue to inspire. Let us celebrate the 5500-year-old story of hope in the Sun Child's rebirth.

### Horus/Osiris of Egypt ~ 3500 B.C.E.

- Horus was born of the virgin Isis-Merion on December 25 in a cave/ manger.
- His birth was announced by a star in the East and was attended by three wise men.
- His earthly father was named Seb ( Joseph ).
- He was of royal descent.
- At age 12, he was a teacher in the Temple.
- He disappeared for 18 years and was baptized at 30.
- He was baptized in the river Eridanus or Larutana (Jordan) by Anup the Baptizer ( John the Baptist ), who was later decapitated.
- He had 12 disciples, two of whom were named Anup and Aan (the two Johns ).
- He performed miracles, exorcised demons and raised El-Azarus (El-Osiris), from the dead.
- Horus walked on water.



- His personal epithet was Lusa, the ever-becoming son of Ptah, the Father.
- He was called Holy Child.
- He delivered a Sermon on the Mount and his followers recounted the Sayings of Lusa.
- He was crucified between two thieves, buried for three days in a tomb and resurrected.
- He was called: The Way, the Truth, The Light, The Son of Man, The Good Shepherd, The Lamb of God, The Word Made Flesh, The Truth, The Messiah, The Anointed One and The KRST.
- He was the fisher of men and was associated with the Fish, the fish symbol (the Ichthys), the Lamb and the Lion.
- His followers were promised immortality.
- He came to fulfill the Law.
- Horus was supposed to reign one thousand years.

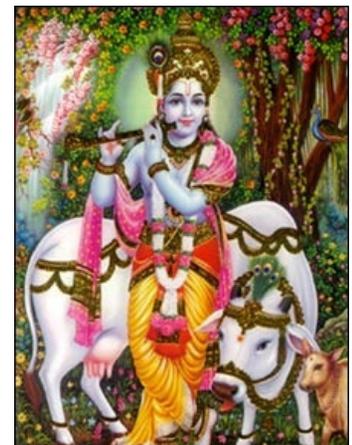
### Dionysus/Bacchus ~ 3000 B.C.E.

- Dionysus was born of a virgin on December 25 and, as the Holy Child, was placed in a manger.
- He was a traveling teacher who performed miracles.
- He was the God of the Vine and turned water into wine.
- He rode in a triumphal procession on an ass.
- He was killed and eaten in an Eucharistic ritual for fecundity and purification.
- He rose from the dead on March 25.
- He was called King of Kings and God of Gods, The Only Begotten Son, The Savior, The Redeemer, The Sin Bearer, The Anointed One and The Alpha and Omega.
- He was identified with the Ram or Lamb.



### Krishna of India ~ 1200 B.C.E.

- Krishna was born of the Virgin, Devaki (Divine One) on December 25.
- His earthly father was a carpenter, who was off in the city paying his taxes when Krishna was born.
- His birth was signaled by a star in the east and attended by angels and shepherds.
- The heavenly hosts danced and sang at his birth.
- He was given gifts of spices.
- He was persecuted by a tyrant who ordered the slaughter of thousands of infants.
- He was anointed on the head with oil by a woman whom he healed.
- He worked miracles and wonders, raising the dead and healing lepers, the deaf and the blind.
- He used parables to teach the principles of charity and love.
- He lived with the poor because he loved them.
- He was angered by the clergy, charging them with ambition and hypocrisy . . . Tradition says he fell victim





to their vengeance.

- He is depicted as having his foot on the head of a serpent.
- His beloved disciple was Arjuina or Ar-jouan (Jouhn/ John).
- He was transfigured in front of his disciples.
- He gave his disciples the ability to work miracles.
- His path was strewn with branches.
- In some traditions, he died on a tree or was crucified between two thieves.
- He was killed around the age of 30, and the sky darkened at his death.
- He was depicted on a cross with nail-holes in his feet, and the image of a heart on his clothing.
- He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven before witnesses.
- He is the lion of the tribe of Saki.
- His disciples purportedly bestowed upon him the title Jezeus, or Jeseus, meaning pure essence.
- He was called: The Shepherd of God, The Redeemer, The Firstborn, The Sin-Bearer, The Liberator, The Universal Word, The Son of God and Our Lord and Savior.
- He came to earth to die for man's salvation.
- He was the second person of the Trinity.
- He is to return to judge the dead, riding on a white horse, and to do battle with the Prince of Evil, who will desolate the earth.



**Attis of Phrygia ~ 1200 B.C.E**

- Attis was born on December 25 of the Virgin named Nana.
- He was called: The Savior and Most High God.
- He was slain for the salvation of mankind.
- His had a Eucharist ritual where his body was eaten as bread by his worshippers.
- His priests were eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven.
- Attis was both the Divine Son and The Father.
- He was crucified on a Friday, on a tree where his holy blood letting redeemed the earth.
- He descended into the underworld.
- After three days, he was resurrected on March 25.



**Mithra/Mithras of Persia ~ 200 B.C.E.**

- Mithra was born of a virgin on December 25 in a cave.
- His birth was attended by shepherds bearing gifts.
- He was considered a great traveling teacher and master.
- He performed miracles.
- He had twelve companions or disciples.
- His followers were promised immortality.
- As the great Bull of the Sun, he sacrificed himself for world peace.
- He was buried in a tomb and after three days rose

again.

- His resurrection was celebrated every year.
- He was called: The Good Shepherd, The Way, The Truth and The Light, The Logos, ( meaning: Word) The Redeemer, The Savior and The Messiah.
- He was identified with the Lamb and the Lion.
- His sacred day was Sunday, The Lord's Day.
- His principal festival was a Movable Feast that changed every year. The date of the festival was calculated as the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox. A cipher still used today to decide the date of Easter.
- His religion celebrated with a Eucharist in remembrance of their Lord's Supper at which Mithra said, "He who shall not eat of my body nor drink of my blood so that he may be one with me and I with him, shall not be saved."
- His followers were promised immortality.
- His annual sacrifice is the Passover of the Magi, a symbolical atonement for moral and physical regeneration.



**Zoroaster/Zarathustra ~ 660 B.C.E.**

- Zoroaster was born of a virgin by immaculate conception through a ray of divine reason.
- In his youth, he astounded wise men with his wisdom.
- He was tempted in the wilderness by the devil.
- He was baptized in a river.
- He baptized with water, fire and holy wind.
- He began his ministry at age 30.
- He cast out demons and restored the sight to a blind man.
- He taught about heaven and hell, and revealed their mysteries, including those of the resurrection, judgment, salvation and the apocalypse.
- His followers were promised immortality.
- He used a sacred cup or grail.
- He was killed.
- His followers had a Eucharistic meal.
- He was called: The Word Made Flesh.
- He will come again as the virgin-born Saoshynt or Savior, in 2341 C.E. and begin his ministry at age 30,
- He will usher in a golden age.

**Jesus of Nazareth ~ 0 C.E.**

- He was born of a virgin named Mary on December 25 in a manger.
- His birth was signaled by a star in the east and attended by angels and shepherds.
- He was presented with spices by three wise men.
- The heavenly hosts danced and sang at his birth.
- His earthly father was named Joseph and was a carpenter who had to travel to the city to pay his taxes when Jesus was born.
- He was persecuted by a tyrant who ordered the slaughter of thousands of infants.
- At age 12, he was a teacher in the Temple.





- He disappeared for 18 years and was baptized at 30.
- He was baptized in the river Jordan by "John the Baptist" who was later decapitated.
- He was considered a great traveling teacher and master.
- He had 12 companions or disciples.
- He performed miracles, exorcised demons and raised Lazarus from the dead.
- He walked on water.
- He was anointed on the head with oil by a woman whom he healed.
- He was tempted in the wilderness by the devil.
- He delivered a Sermon on the Mount
- He gave his disciples the ability to work miracles.
- He was transfigured on the Mount.
- He used a sacred cup or grail.
- He was crucified between two thieves, buried for three days in a tomb.
- He descended into the underworld and in three days was resurrected.
- His followers were promised immortality.
- He was both the Divine Son and the Father.
- He was called: The Christ or Anointed One, The Redeemer, The Savior, The Messiah, The Way, The Truth and The Light, The Son of Man, The Good Shepherd, The Lamb of God, The Word Made Flesh, The Alpha and Omega and The King of Kings.
- He was the fisher of men and was associated with the fish and fish symbol (the Ichthys), the Lamb and the Lion.
- His principal festival is on Easter, on what was the principal festival of Mithra which was calculated as the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox. A cipher still used to decide Easter.
- He rode in a triumphal procession on an ass.
- His path was strewn with olive branches.
- His first religion (Catholicism) has a Eucharist or Lord's Supper, at which Jesus said, "Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new and every-lasting covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Do this in memory of me."
- He was the second person of the Trinity.
- He came to fulfill the Law and will return again.
- He will usher in a golden age that will last one thousand years.

In every age, the Sun was the hope of the world. We personify it as a hero come to fight, die and be reborn in order to stay the cold (evil) and bring the promise of Spring (goodness). Like our ancestors, no matter what our beliefs, let us celebrate this season of light and hope.

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**"Every winter when the great sun has turned his face away,  
The earth goes down into a vale of grief, and fasts, and weeps,  
and shrouds herself in sables, leaving her wedding-garlands to decay -  
Then leaps in spring to his returning kisses"  
~ Charles Kingsley**





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 (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,  
Georges Knowles

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The Winter Sun

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