



# The Controversial Cauldron

*Beltane - May Day 2009*

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## *Welcome to the Email Witches Newsletter*

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

*Best Wishes*

*<http://www.controversial.com/>  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group>Email\\_Witches/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group>Email_Witches/)*

## *Group Information:*

- Members: 711
- 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.



# *The Beltane Festival*

*Written and compiled by George Knowles*

*"Hail, bounteous May! that dost inspire  
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;  
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,  
Hill and dale both boast thy blessing.  
Thus we salute thee with our early song,  
And welcome thee, and wish thee long".*

*(John Milton – (1608 - 1674)*

Beltane is one of the greater Sabbats of the Witches annual calendar, and in the northern hemisphere is celebrated on the 30<sup>th</sup> April (May Eve). The equivalent Sabbat in the southern hemisphere is Samhain. Beltane is the last of three Spring fertility festivals and marks the courtship of the Goddess and God in a renewal of the ancient marriage of polarity. As the young God emerges into manhood, he desires the Goddess and they fall in love. They meet together in fields and forests where spurred on by the energies at work in nature, they unite and the Goddess again becomes pregnant of the God.

This is the time of year when crops are planted and begin to grow, when animals produce their young, and when people came out of their homes after the long dark months of winter. In times of old, without our trapping of the technical age (electric lighting and central heating, and other things we take for granted today), the coming of Spring with its fair weather and longer daylight hours would have been most welcome and cause for celebration. Depending on location and tradition, Beltane is known by many alternative names: Bealtinne (Caledonii or the Druids), Floralia, Tana's Day (Aridian Strega), May Day, Roodmas, La Baal Tinne (Faery Wicca), Walburga (Teutonic), Walpurgisnacht (German) and Whitsun.

Many of the traditions associated with Beltane are believed to have originated from the Celtic peoples of Western Europe who in turn reinvented them from an even older Roman festival called Floralia, in which Flora the goddess of spring was celebrated. Similar practises then spread to the British Isles and continue to be celebrated all across England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the Isle of Man. Beltane in Ireland is known as "Bealtaine", in Scotland "Bealtunn", in Wales as "Galan Mae" and in the Isle of Man as "Shenn do Boaldyn".

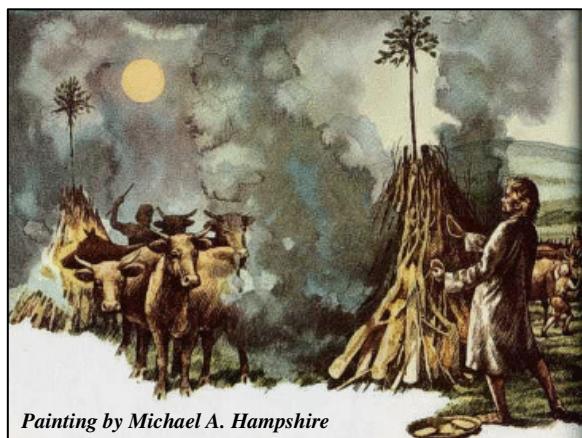
Along with Lammas, Samhain and Imbolc, Beltane is one of the four great Fire Festivals that quarter the turning points of the year. In preparation for Beltane, it was customary to build two large bonfires called "Bel-fires" named after and dedicated to the Celtic sun god Bel or Belinus. Traditionally the fires were built using wood from nine of the sacred trees of the Druids: Birch,

Rowan, Ash, Alder, Willow, Hawthorn, Oak, Holly and Hazel. The Willow in particular was sacred for according to the Celtic tree calendar (15<sup>th</sup> April - 12<sup>th</sup> May), the Willow is the tree most associated with Beltane.



"Photo courtesy PDPhoto.org"

The Bel-fires were considered sacred for their healing and purifying powers and were lit to celebrate the return of life and fruitfulness to the earth while burning away the cold of winter. On the Eve of Beltane, two Bel-fires would be ritually lit by the Druids, leaving enough room between them so that cattle and other livestock could be led through, an act that purified and protected the animals from disease during the coming year. While the cattle and other livestock were led away to their summer grazing, torches would also be lit from the Bel-fire and carried around their barns and stables in another act of purification. All across the country household fires would be extinguished and re-lit afresh from the Bel-Fires. Later the ashes from the fires would be scattered in the fields.



*Painting by Michael A. Hampshire*

Once the fires had been lit on Beltane Eve and the children put to bed, adult activities would take place in the late hours before sunrise. Wedded couples would dance and jump over the fires to enhance their fertility. Single men and women would also join in and later wonder off into fields or forests to let nature take its course. Such unions were seen as good and proper, even though not sanctified by marriage, a Christian notion. These were referred to as "Greenwood marriages", and are the origin of the handfasting customs observed by

modern witches and pagans today. However, there is an old belief that May is an unlucky month in which to get married, and that lovers should wait until the month of June for their official handfasting. If a marriage did not work, or produce no children, couples could easily split and end their union without the messy and complicated procedures of a divorce, another Christian notion.

*"Oh, do not tell the Priest our plight,  
Or he would call it a sin;  
But we have been out in the woods all night,  
A-conjuring Summer in!"*

*Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)*

Water also has a strong association with Beltane, more specifically Morning Dew which was seen as sacred and magical. Of old, women would bathe in dew gathered before dawn on Beltane Morning in the belief it would enhance their beauty throughout the year, and if she chanted an appropriate charm while doing so, she might even entice a future husband. Another custom was to drink from a well before sunrise on Beltane morning to insure good health and good fortune. This led to the tradition of "Well Dressing", particularly in Ireland where many wells are considered Holy.

Another popular custom associated with Beltane was "Bringing in the May" when people from the villages went out into the fields and forests to gather seasonal flowers. These would be used to decorate their homes and later to dress themselves in readiness for the festivities. On their return home laden with flowers, they would stop at houses along the way singing songs of Spring and leaving gifts of flowers. For this they would be greeted and treated with whatever food and drink the house had to offer. From this came the common custom of leaving gift baskets of flowers and fruit on the doorsteps of not just friends and family, but also old and infirm neighbours.

One of the principal characters associated with the Beltane festivities is the "Queen of May". The May Queen is usually a young maiden selected from the previous years "Maidens in Waiting" and crowned with a ring of fresh flowers. Many old accounts mention both a May Queen and King being chosen, and that they reigned together from sunset on the Eve of Beltane to sunset on the following day. Among their duties was to lead the

Beltane procession around the village, start the day's festivities and games, and later present prizes to the victors.

Perhaps the most recognised symbol associated with Beltane is the Maypole. To the Celts who started the custom, the Maypole was a phallic symbol representing fertility. The Celts were a tribal clan who depended upon the land and their animals for survival. If their cattle and crops proved fertile, they were able to eat, but if there was famine or drought, they went hungry. Likewise the fertility of their women was considered essential to the survival and longevity of the clan. The Maypole therefore was a very powerful symbol of the significance of fertility.



"Photo courtesy PDPhoto.org"

*"... this May-pole (this stinking Idol, rather) which is covered all over with floures and herbs...and sometimes painted with variable colours...And thus being reared up, with handkerchiefs and flags hovering about the top...then fall they to dance about it like as the heathen people".*

*Puritan Philip Stubbes (1550 – 1593) from his Anatomy of Abuses*



*A scene taken from the cover of the sheet music "May Queen Waltz" illustrating a newly crowned May Queen leaving the Maypole Dance. (Published by Henry Prentiss – 1842, Mass).*

In the old days just before Beltane, the men of the village would go out into the woods and cut down a tall tree. Stripped of all its branches, the resulting tall pole would be erected in the village square and decorated with long brightly colored ribbons, leaves, flowers and wreaths. During the festivities an even number of young men and maidens would be selected to dance the May pole, each alternately holding the end of a ribbon. The circle of dancers would start as far

out from the pole as the length of ribbon allowed, men facing clockwise and maidens facing counterclockwise. Once the dance began, each would move in the direction they faced, those on the inside ducking under the ribbons of those on the outside, while those passing on the outside raise their ribbons to slide over those on the inside. As the dance progressed the ribbons weaved into a pattern down the pole. The success of the pattern is said to indicate the success of the years harvest.



Another traditional association of the Beltane celebrations was the Morris dancers leading May Day processions through towns and villages, and then later dancing around the village Maypole. Morris dancing dates from the 15th century, but up until the early 17th century was mainly associated with Town Guilds, Courts and Parishes. After a decline in popularity during the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was revived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a rural folk tradition with various forms and styles.



Traditionally, the Morris dancers consisted of 6-8 men-only teams called sides. They were all dressed up in uniform trousers, shirts, hats and with gaily decorated bells, rosettes and ribbons. The dancers typically form opposing lines of 3 or 4 from which they perform various synchronized movements in a light, skipping manner, while at the same time swinging handkerchiefs or clashing wooden sticks. Today women also form Morris dancing sides and can be seen performing, as well as the male sides, at many Springtime festivals, Summer fêtes and Civil events around Britain.

As with any festival, food also plays an important part in the Beltane celebrations. It was customary at Beltane to bake small scone-like cakes called Bannocks. These were made from oat or barley flour worked into dough with just a little water and no leavening, then filled with sweetmeats and spices. Traditionally one of the cakes would be burned or marked with ashes. The recipient of the burnt cake would be considered bad luck, and required to jump over a small fire three times to purify and cleanse themselves of any ill fortune.

Beltane and its opposite Sabbat - Samhain, are the two points of the year separating Light (summer) and Dark (winter), but as Samhain is associated with the darker mysteries death, Beltane is all about celebrating life. Beltane, like Samhain, is a magickal time, a time when the veil between worlds is at its thinnest, a time when many strange and mysterious things can occur. As our gardens returned to life and Spring flowers began to bloom, it was thought the Fairy Folk returned at this time to take up residence.



**The Fairy Queen by Sir Joseph Noel Paton (1821 - 1901)**

One old legend tells how the Queen of the Fairies rides a white horse and roams about on Beltane Eve intent on enticing people, especially children, back to Fairyland. In another legend, if you sit beneath a tree on Beltane eve you may see the Fairy Queen or hear the sound of her horse as she rides through the night. Often full of fun and mischief the fairies like nothing more than to play games and laugh at human folly. As such it was customary on the eve of Beltane to place branches of Rowan across windows and doors for protection. Likewise, any food left over from the May Eve feast, was never wasted, but buried in some special place in the garden reserved to appease the fairies.

Beltane then, marks the end of Winter and the beginning

of Summer. It should be a day full of laughter and gaiety, fun and frolicking, games and feasting. As was the way of our ancestors, the Wheel of the Year wouldn't turn without human interaction, so people did all they could to encourage the Sun's growth. Therefore, Fires, Rituals and Celebrations were an important part of the old ways to insure the Sun's light would continue to support the fertility of the earth.

#### Other Beltane Associations:

**Herbs & Flowers:** Almond, Angelica, Bluebells, Cinquefoil, Daisies, Frankincense, Honeysuckle, Lilacs, Ivy, Marigolds, Primroses, Roses, Rosemary, Satyrion Root, St. John's Wort, Woodruff and Yellow Cowslip.

**Incense:** Lilac, Passion Flower, Rose or Vanilla.

**Colours:** Green for nature's growth, abundance and balance. White for purity, peace and spirituality. Red for vitality, energy and power. Pink for love, harmony and friendship. Blue for joy, good fortune and wealth. Yellow for the Sun's energy, healing energy and life

**Gemstones:** Sapphires, Bloodstones, Emeralds, Orange Carnelians and Rose Quartz.

**Goddesses:** Aphrodite, Arianrhod, Ariel, Artemis, Astarte, Cybele, Diana, Freya, Rhiannon and Venus.

**Gods:** Apollo, Bacchus, Bel/Belanos, Cernunnos, Cupid/Eros, Faunus, Frey, the Green Man or Horned God, Herne, Odin, Orion, Pan, Puck and Robin Goodfellow.

**Food:** All dairy products including: Eggs, Oatmeal cakes, Honey, Cherries, Strawberries, Green salads, Ice cream, Red fruit and Wine punches.

**Animals:** Goats, Rabbits, Hares and Bees.

**Mythical:** Fairies, Pegasus, Satyrs and Giants.

**End.**

Written and compiled on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009 © George Knowles

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#### *The May Queen (1833)*

*You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear;  
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year;  
Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest merriest day;  
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.*

*I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,  
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break:  
But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and garlands gay,  
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May*

*Extract from a 1833 poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)*

## Gods and Goddesses Of Love, Sexuality and Marriage

Luamerava, African goddess of Desire  
 Astlik, Armenian goddess of Love  
 Ishtar, Assyrian goddess of Love/Sex  
 Eueucoyotl, Aztec god of Sex  
 Chalchiuhltlicue, Aztec goddess of Love/Beauty  
 Mariana, Brazilian goddess of Love  
 Anath, Canaanite goddess of Love  
 Aidin, Celtic goddess of Love/Sex  
 Medb, Celtic goddess of Sex  
 Bes, Egyptian god of Love/Marriage  
 Bastet, Egyptian goddess of Love/Sex  
 Hathor, Egyptian goddess of Love/Marriage/Beauty  
 Isis, Egyptian goddess of Marriage  
 AlpanAlpan, Etruscan goddess of Love  
 Anna Perenna, Etruscan goddess of Desire  
 Freya, Germanic goddess of Love/Beauty/Sex  
 Frigg, Germanic goddess of Marriage  
 Eros, Greek god of Passion/Sex  
 Aphrodite, Greek goddess of Desire/Beauty  
 Hera, Greek goddess of Marriage  
 Hestia, Greek goddess of Marriage  
 Cythera, Greek/Cyprian goddess of Love  
 Ursule, Haitian goddess of Love  
 Kanikanihia, Hawaiian goddess of Love  
 Kama, Hindu god of Love  
 Lakshmi, Hindu goddess of Love/Beauty  
 Kilya, Inca goddess of Marriage  
 Angus Og, Irish god of Love

Branwen, Irish goddess of Love  
 Brighid, Irish goddess of Marriage  
 Gekka-O, Japanese god of Marriage  
 Benten, Japanese goddess of Love  
 Auseklis, Latvian goddess of Love  
 Nambi, Masai goddess of Love/Sex  
 Xtabay, Mayan goddesses of Seduction  
 Inanna, Mesopotamian goddess of Fertility/Love  
 Astrild, Norse goddess of Love  
 Sjofn, Norse goddess of Love/Passion  
 Bangan, Philippine goddess of Love  
 Astarte, Phoenician goddess of Love/Sacred Sex  
 Dzydzileya, Polish goddess of Love  
 Zizilia, Polish goddess of Love  
 Alalahe, Polynesian goddess of Love  
 Cupid, Roman god of Love  
 Juno, Roman goddess Marriage  
 Venus, Roman goddess of Love/Beauty  
 Vesta, Roman goddess of Marriage  
 Lada, Slavic goddess of Love  
 Zoria, Slavic goddess of Beauty  
 Ghede, Vodoun god of Love  
 Erzulie, Vodoun goddess of Love/Beauty/Sex  
 Arianrhod, Welsh goddess of Desire  
 Brangwaine, Welsh goddess of Love  
 Odudua, Yoruba goddess of Love  
 Oshun Ana, Yoruba goddess of Love  
 Morongo, Zimbabwe goddess of Love/Sex

## The Season of Marriage

**I**n favor of MAY: A month of the goddess and women. A mischief month. A month of the fairies. Handfastings, an engagement "with benefits" came first to prove that the woman was fertile. Once pregnancy was established, then marriage followed. Sex first, then pregnancy, then marriage corresponding to the three Flower Festivals would equate to: Imbolg: = seeds, germination=sex, Ostara: fertility, eggs=pregnancy, and Beltaine: celebration, life in full bloom=marriage.

Laura, EW member: 2005



Rose Song, EW member: 2007

In favor of JUNE: In ancient Rome, June is the month of marriage to honor Juno, great mother who bestowed blessings on those who wed in her month. Christian June bride then replaced the pagan May bride of the "Marry month of May." Kightly in The Perpetual Almanack of Folklore/I records an old English rhyme: "*Married in May and kirked in green, Both bride and bridegroom won't long be seen.*" Green is a fairy color and inappropriate to wear it in church. *A History of Their Own* write, "A man could not marry in May, the woman's month, because then he would fall prey to lust and give her power over him." Summer was considered lucky do to the phallic nature of the penetrating rays of the Sun. At his zenith and the Sun gods' strength on the fertile earth and reenacts the divine marriage at Litha/Midsummer/June 20-21. The term Honeymoon (the first month of a marriage) equates to one of the names of the Full/Bright Moon in June, the Honey Moon.

Keira, EW mem: 2008



Julie, EW member: 2007



Binding with the Handfasting cord.



Ardriana, EW mem: 2004

## ***Handfasting Ritual by Crone***

**S**et-up is more complex than for a solitary ritual with a small alter at each direction, one in the center, and a larger alter between any two of the directions.

The main altar should be covered in a white altar cloth and have flowers, goddess and god statues, wand, athame, chalice of water or wine (depending on couple's preference), plate with a bit of bread, a basket of flower petals or small flowers, and a bowl. Lighted candles are optional.



North altar: green scarf, two small stones.

East altar: yellow scarf, two feathers

South altar: red scarf, two small candles (not lighted)

West altar: blue scarf, two shells

Center altar: white or lavender scarf, two pieces of rose quartz

If there are attendants, they can be stationed at the 4 direction and at center altars to present the gifts.

“He” and “She” are used where the names of the couple would actually be used.

Since many in attendance have never experienced a pagan ritual, I begin with a few words of orientation. I explain that as pagans we do not gather in a church or temple, but instead create sacred space wherever we are. The beginning of the ritual will involve creating sacred space. We honor the Goddess and the God, but they should feel

comfortable in substituting the god of their own faith in our prayers and invocations if they wish. I tell them we invoke spirits of the four directions, and that the couple will receive blessings from the directions. I invite them to participate in the chanting.

Cast the Circle with broom, saying:

*“We cleanse our circle round and round  
All love and joy may here be found.”*

Leave the broom where it is readily accessible, but not where it will be in the way throughout the ritual.

Have an attendant or child cast the Circle by scattering flower petals from a basket, with chant:

*“We cast this Circle here today  
With love to guide us on our way.”*

Invoke the directions and the Goddess and God with wand or athame:

*“North and south and east and west,  
All by Mother Earth are blessed.  
These directions now we call.  
May your spirits join us all.”*

*Goddess, we invite you here.  
Enter please and then stay near.  
Be with us on this special day  
Sharing love in every way.*

*God, we'd have you join us, too,  
Be with us, please, in all we do.*

*Lady and Lord to you we call  
That you might come and bless us all.”*



An attendant brings the couple into the Circle, walking them around the Circle deosil, and ending in front of the altar.

Welcome He and She.

I am honored to be here with you. He, why have you come here this day?

He: I have come here to be joined with She in Hand Fasting.

She, why have you come here this day?

She: I have come here to be joined with He in Hand Fasting.

That I will gladly do.



First I would ask the blessings of our Lady and our Lord upon this celebration.

*"Gracious Goddess of love and life  
We ask that this couple may have no strife.  
Gracious God of the sun above  
We ask that they may always love.  
Lord and Lady, bless, we pray,  
This couple on their special day.  
Blessed be."*

(If you know the couple, this is a good place to insert some personal words about them.)

If it is your will, He, repeat your pledge to She thus:

*By seed and root, by bud and stem,  
by leaf and flower and fruit,  
by life and love,  
in the name of the Goddess and the God,  
I, He, take thee, She, to my heart  
And my spirit.  
Nor shall death part us,  
for in the fullness of time,  
we shall be born again, and love again.  
Thou art Goddess, She, and I love thee.*

If it is your will, She, repeat your pledge to He thus:

*By seed and root, by bud and stem,  
by leaf and flower and fruit,  
by life and love,  
in the name of the Goddess and the God,  
I, She, take thee, He,  
to my heart and my spirit.  
Nor shall death part us,  
for in the fullness of time,  
we shall be born again, and love again.  
Thou art God, He, and I love thee.*

Have you tokens to give one another in honor of your love?

Rings are placed in a bowl on the altar. Hold wand over them and say:

*These rings are round, as our sacred Circle is round.  
These rings, like our Circle, are never ending, as is  
your love for each other. May the Goddess and the God  
bless them as they bless your union.*

Gives ring to He who puts it on She, saying:

He, say to She: *This ring is a symbol of my love for you.*  
Give ring to She who puts it on He saying:

She, Say to He: *This ring is a symbol of my love for you.*

With a scarf, ribbon, or cord, tie one hand of each together at the wrist saying:

*With this cord I bind you hand to hand and heart to heart, together as one. With this knot you are joined in sacred union.*

As you move together in the Circle, you will note that your movement will be awkward unless you consider the movement of the other. It is a reminder to you to always consider the other as you make your plans in life.

Yet as one hand is bound, so the other hand is free, symbolizing that even as you are joined together, you are still separate beings, separate selves with separate identities.

May the Lord and Lady smile upon you and bless you with health, prosperity, love, and joy.

Let us now journey to the four quarters to receive their gifts and blessings.

They walk to the North.

The North represents Earth and the Physical Realm. Your blessings from the North are good health, a happy home, groundedness, and fertility.

Give each a small stone, saying: *"May you always nurture your love, and each other."*

They walk to the East.

The East represents Air and the Mental Realm. Your blessings from the East are good communication, learning, and intellectual growth.

Give each a feather, saying: *"May you always grow in wisdom, about life and about each other."*

They walk to the South.

The South represents Fire and the Action Realm. Your blessings from the South are creativity, harmony, sensuality, and vitality.

Give each a small candle, saying: *"May the fires of passion always spark your love."*

They walk to the West.

The West represents Water and the Emotional Realm. Your blessings from the West are understanding, intuition, and friendship.

Give each a shell, saying: *"May you always provide emotional support for each other."*

They walk to the Center.

The Center of our Circle represents Spirit and the Spiritual Realm. Your blessings from the Center are balance, integrity and wholeness.



Give each a rose quartz, saying:

*"Rose quartz is a symbol of love. May it remind you to always continue in your spiritual growth."*

Lean broomstick against small center altar, or have an attendant hold the broom in position. Have couple place their gifts on the center altar.

You have been bound and you have been blessed. You may jump the broomstick together to complete this sacred rite.

They jump amidst much cheering and hoopla. They'll probably kiss, but if not, say: *"You may kiss the bride."*

Bring the couple to the main altar, and hold high athame and chalice, dipping blade into cup, saying:

*"You stand as representatives of the Goddess and the God, thus united.  
You are One in love, in beauty, and in truth.  
In the sight of the Goddess and the God  
He and She have been joined,  
hand to hand and heart to heart.  
So Mote It Be."*



Offer chalice of water or wine to the couple saying:

*"This is your first drink as a hand fasted couple. May you never thirst."*

Couple drink.

Offer plate of bread to the couple saying: *"This is your first food as a hand fasted couple. May you never hunger."*

She and He, you have been joined here within this Circle. May you go forth from this sacred space in love and joy.

This benediction is the blessing of the triple goddess on your union:

*"The light of the Maiden surrounds you.  
The love of the Mother enfolds you.  
The wisdom of the Crone empowers you.  
Wherever you are  
The Goddess is.  
And all is well.  
Blessed be."*

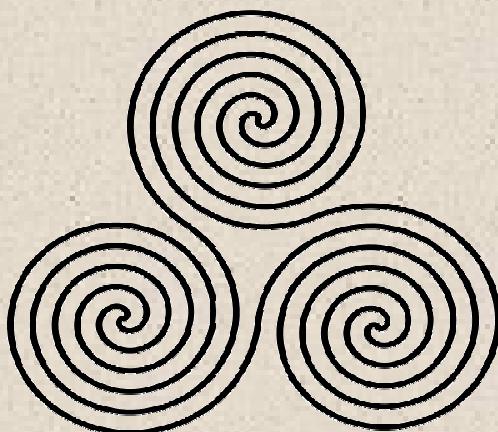


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**Crone is an active member of the UU (CUUP's) and has been a member of Email Witches since 2004**

## Pagan Symbolism

### The Triskele



The Triskele and diverse other spiral symbols were commonly used in many areas of the ancient world, and in Bronze Age Europe were especially associated with the Celtic tribes. The famous Newgrange megalithic passage

tomb in Co Meath, Ireland, one of the oldest burial mounds in Europe is a prime example. Dating back to around 3200 BC, many of the huge stones and walls in the structure have been carved and decorated with variously designed symbols, prominent among which are spirals.

The earliest forms of spirals are thought to have represented the rise and fall of the Sun and symbolised the never-ending cycle of birth, life and death. The Triskele form of the spiral, a mainly Celtic symbol, emphasizes the threefold nature of life, death and rebirth. The Celts gave great significance to the number three, for to them anything of importance occurred in threes: physically – we have the Land, Sea and Sky, mortally – there is Life, Death and Rebirth, and spiritually - the Unknown-World, the Real-World and the Celestial-World.

In modern Wiccan theology the Triskele symbolizes the Mother Goddess in her threefold aspects of Maiden, Mother and Crone. Drawn in a single line with no beginning or end, the Triskele also represents the forward motion of Development, Progress and Continuity, which in turn leads to Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Growth.

## Animal Wisdom

### Goat Totem

*by Pari*

**H**ighly visible in ancient mythology and highly regarded in Pagan culture to this day, for Beltane, let us visit the Goat - that wild and wooly, horned and bearded mammal of the genus Capra.

Goats, along with Sheep, were one of the earliest domesticated animals, (earliest finds of this fact date back to between 6000 and 7000 BCE), so it is not surprising to often find the goat shrouded in myth and seen as magickal. This agile and inquisitive creature has a long list of associations throughout history, but one of his most notable ties is with Pan, the mischievous, musical and virile

nature god associated with sexual energy, fertility and the season of Spring. Pan is a god that rules over shepherds and their flocks, fields and mountain wilds, wooded glens and forest groves. As a satyr, he has the hindquarters, legs and horns of a goat.



In other mythology, the nurturing goddess, Amalthea, is often depicted as a sheep-goat or a goat-tending nymph. As a goat (all of whom have hollow horns), the cornucopia or "horn of plenty" that we know today and which holds the bounty of fruits and grains symbolizing fruitful abundance, was symbolically derived from her broken horn; the same horn from which the infant Zeus drank. The Greek goddess Aphrodite and the Hindu fire god, Agni the Vedic, both rode goats. In Egypt, the goat was a symbol of nobility. And Thor, the Norse god of thunder, is said to have had a flying chariot drawn by a pair of magickal goats named Tanngrisnir and Tanngnjóstr. Later, in the all-too-often realm of religious scapegoats (pardon the pun), the goat became associated with Satan - a horned "devil" depicted as having the face of a goat and sporting a small beard which we now call a "goatee". In certain occult traditions today, the inverted pentagram is likened to the head of a goat which is, at times, called Baphomet or Baphomet of Mendes, a "Sabbatical Goat" first drawn by Eliphas Levi.

So how is it that Goat transformed through the ages from a mischievous, sexual and highly energized god, to a nurturing and uplifting goddess, then alternately to an alluring satanic demon, and then back again? Well, domestic goats,

unlike sheep, are known to be able to rapidly revert back to the wild if given the chance. Wild is in Goat's nature. And wild at heart he shall remain. Those with Goat Totem will find their own sexual and lustful behavior increase dramatically. There was an old superstition from the Middle Ages that said goats whispered lewd and lascivious comments into the ears of the saints. So yes, lust is Goat's middle name. But along with their sexual nature, (or maybe because of it <grin>), goats are also very inquisitive and will climb upon almost anything, survey their surroundings, and then poke their nose into anything that looks interesting. In this, we too will find a greater curiosity and independence driving us to explore new horizons, opening our awareness and having our newly-gained knowledge lending us the ability to use to our benefit all that we learn there. Goat reminds us to release any lingering binds of Winter, to frolic through Spring, and to unleash our wild side as we begin to engage Summer. For those in the Southern Hemisphere, take Goat's wisdom within to sustain you throughout the Winter, and remember to keep your curiosity and your wild side alive even if indoors.

While the adult male goat is called a billy or buck and while the adult female is called a nanny or doe, a baby goat up to one year old is called a kid - the same slang we use today for our own playful and mischievous children. But beyond the precocious and inquisitive temperament of



"Baphomet" by Eliphas Levi

a kid lies an able sage, for even baby goats are agile and alert right from birth. In appearance, all goats look capable and wise beyond their years...and they are. As all goats, both male and female, sport horns (some curved, some spiraled), and as all animals with horns on their heads indicate psychic awareness, clairvoyance and the ability to see into the future, Goat can aim us toward the best pathway to our desires and can help us see how best to maneuver or, if need be, butt our way through any obstacles which may lie in our path. A goat's horns are also used to help fight off predators or in squabbles amongst themselves, teaching us a good deal about protective measures and defending our right to go after what we desire. Life is, after all, about finding our truest self and heading toward what and where we know we want to be.



The goat's main ancestral line begins with the Bezoar goat which originated in the mountainous regions of Asia and the Middle East. Today's domesticated goats are found worldwide in a variety of colors and sizes and are used for the same reasons the ancients used them - for their milk, meat, hides and hair. A goat's milk is more easily digested than cow's milk and is used for the same purpose, along with producing several cheeses. Their meat and hides are used for edible sustenance and leather goods respectively. And their hair, a usually coarse overcoat atop a soft undercoat, the latter of which is used in the manufacture of clothing - the Angora's mohair and the Kashmir's cashmere (aka pashmina) being the softest blends and being the most highly prized. Within these physical characteristics of the goat we find the metaphysical aspects of nurturing and life-giving nourishment (milk and meat), protective and rugged endurance (hides and horns), and yet fanciful appearance to enhance our ability to attract new mates (hair/soft "wool")... all of which aspects we will use when working with Goat medicine.

In the Zodiac, we see Goat as an integral part of the sign of Capricorn - a figure that is usually depicted as half goat and half fish, meaning half ambitious climber and half the intuitive nurturer. A popular ancient myth attached to the origin of this image is the following story: Determined to help retrieve Zeus' stolen tendons and in order to avoid the monstrous Typhon who'd originally stolen them, the goat-god Pan dove into the Nile and attempted to turn himself into a fish. But his magickal thought was only able to be half-contrived and, thus, only half of his body shape-shifted. Soon after, Pan succeeded in recapturing and returning Zeus' tendons, and in honor of his loyal deed, Zeus placed his image of the Sea-Goat in the sky. Anyone working with Goat should also study the traits of Capricorn, for their characteristics are, for the most part, one and the same. They are disciplined, determined, ambitious, opportunistic, cunning, amorous, practical, stable, steadfast, sure, protective, truthful and honorable; these being just a few of their strongest qualities. And although the Goat can also be seen as being reserved, cautious and conservative at times, it is in these traits he makes his way, steady and sure. But always along the way he will take time to play.



**The Angora goat is adorned with mohair, which can be six inches or more in length.**



There are over 600 different breeds of goat, the most commonly known being the Alpine, the Nubian, the Nigerian, the Angora, the Cashmere, the Pygmy and the Mountain Goat. All are vegetarians subsisting on leaves and grasses, and all are cloven-hoofed making them able to traverse and climb rough mountainous terrain with ease, especially the Mountain Goat. His thick coat and flexible legs make it easy for him to jump up to 30 feet or more to ledges that are barely wide enough for any footing at all! Goats can go where other animals do not dare to venture. Some goats will even climb into trees to feed or on top of roofs to take in the view. In this, the spirit of Goat promotes flexibility and ease of movement as we enjoy the open spaces and newfound mobility of Spring. He helps us reach for the stars, nudging us to go after the things we most desire but that we may have once perceived as unobtainable. As a Totem, Goat is sure to bring his own surefootedness and steady steps to our most lofty ambitions. And if we happen to stumble, he will pick us up and help us regain our balance and perspective. Diligent movement and greater strength and coordination will enter our realm as Goat nudges us toward our goals at this more active time of year. But, of course, we will always be asked to intermittently stop and enjoy life along the way! Wild fun and pleasure are a prerequisite to understanding Goat and his teachings.



**Mountain Goat**

With Goat to guide us, it is a time to begin new endeavors with foresight, agility, renewed strength and ever-present protection as we climb to new heights. A time to be playful, lustful and active as we revel in the gaiety of Spring and prepare to leap into Summer.

A Blessed and fun Beltaine to all!

#### Sources:

*Animal-Speak*, Ted Andrews

<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Goat>

<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/goats/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalthea\\_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalthea_(mythology))

Goat, himself.



© Patricia J. Martin, March 29, 2009

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<http://www.peacefulpaths.com>

*I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained,*

*I stand and look at them long and long.*

*They do not sweat and whine about their condition,*

*They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,*

*They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,*

*Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,*

*Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,*

*Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.*

**Walt Whitman 1819–92**

(Song of Myself" (written 1855) pt. 32)



## The Crafter's Corner

### A Fairy Garden Chair

*By Wes Sanders and George Knowles*



Beltane, like its opposite Sabbat Samhain is a magickal time of the year, a time when the veil between worlds is at its thinnest and a time when many strange things can happen. As our gardens return to life and spring flowers begin to bloom, it is thought that the Fairies (spirits of nature) after their winter respite are eager to return and torment the unwary.

Legend has it that if you sit under a tree on Beltane eve, you may be able to see the Queen of the Fairies riding about on a large white horse. Be careful not to stare however, for her mission is to enchant and entice people, especially children, back to Fairyland. Often full of fun and mischief, fairies like nothing more than playing tricks and laughing at human folly. As such it was customary on Beltane eve to place branches of Rowan across windows and doors for protection. Likewise, any food left over from the May eve feast was never wasted, but buried in some special place in the garden reserved to appease the fairies. So what better way to gain their favor than to create a special place for them in your garden?

I determined this year to create a Fairy Garden and while rummaging about in my garage for a suitable feature, I found a rickety old chair I had discarded long ago collecting dust in the corner, and so thought to make use of it.

As I work in a Community Garden next to a Pre-School, I thought it might be a good idea to have the school Kids help. I talked to the Teacher and she thought it was a good idea too.....so, the chair

pictured above is the creation of the Bobby Bonds Pre-Scholars. While this project has just started and I have much to do in the garden itself, if you wish to do something similar in your own garden, here's some ideas:

#### Things you'll need:

*An old chair  
Sandpaper  
Primer paint tinted to suit your final design colours  
Weather resistant clear varnish  
Paint brushes  
Plants of choice*

Step (1) Sand any rough surfaces on the chair and repair as necessary. Thoroughly clean the chair with mild soap and water, and then let it dry.

Step (2) Paint two coats of primer on the chair and allow to dry completely.

Step (3) Paint and decorate your chair to your own design. If you are not particularly artistic you may wish to use transfer designs and images, these may be available in your local craft shop??

Step (4) Use a weather resistant clear varnish to paint over your designs to finish the chair.

Step (5) Place the chair in the garden area ready prepared for it, and fix firmly in place.

Step (6) You may wish to plant some climbing plants around the legs of the chair. An ideal plant for this is Morning Glory (genus Ipomoea) of the Bindweed family, which produce showy purple, blue, pink and white trumpet-shaped flowers.



### **What to plant around your chair:**

Your choice of plants to surround the area of your Fairy Chair will depend on where you intend to place it. If placed in a sunny spot you may wish to use sun-loving plants, but if placed a shaded or woodland area, you may wish to choose others more suitable for the shade.

### **Plants and Herbs associated with Fairies:**

**Thyme** – has long been a favoured plant of the fairies. In day of old it was said that the fairies hid their babies under thyme for safekeeping.

**Sweet Woodruff** – with its delicate white flowers will reflect the moonlight for their fairy dances.

**Cowslip** - Cowslip blossoms are said to be loved by fairies who use them as umbrellas and to protect the other plants. Cowslips are considered helpful in finding fairy treasures, and thought to be the key to unlocking the secret location of hidden fairy gold.

**Lambs Ear** – makes a wonderful soft bed for the fairies to sleep on.

**Rosemary** – sometimes called the Elf plant. According to folklore, its fragrance and pale lilac flowers captivates the fairies. You may wish to plant the trailing variety to cascade down the back of the chair.

**Saffron** – Food spiced with saffron is a favourite food of the fairies. The yellow colour of the saffron is also much favoured for their clothing.

**Primroses** - are the key to the secret doorway of Fairyland. If you are lucky enough to find the doorway in your garden, you need only to touch it with a primrose and the door will be opened revealing all its treasures. Plant primroses in your garden to attract fairies to it, but be sure to take good care of them, for to allow them to wither or die will earn their hostility.

**Bluebells** - fairies love to celebrate at midnight and dance to the ringing sound of Bluebells flowers. Fields full of Bluebells are a favourite playground for the fairies, so much so that if children are allowed to wander in unaware, they are likely to be kidnapped and held captive. Even adults who enter alone can become so enchanted that they are unable to leave until another human comes in to lead them out.

**Lily of the Valley** – are dainty bell shaped flowers and perfect for making fairy hats.

**Forget-me-nots** – are pure blue flowers associated with many fairy legends.

**Foxglove** – is perhaps the most famous flower associated with the fairies, they are said to wear the tiny flowers as hats and gloves. It is thought that the fairies sleep inside the bellflower in order to be protected in the night. Foxglove blooms are white and cream with various shades of pink and purple. Planting Foxglove is an invitation for fairies to enter your garden.

**Elecampagne** – also called Elfwart and Elf Dock, an herb whose roots are used in fairy magic. Scattering the root about is said to attract fairies to your home, and growing Elecampagne is said to attract them into your garden.

### **Care of your garden and fairy chair:**

Dependant on the plants you use, the fairy chair area will need to be watered regularly, so check it daily. If herbs or perennial flowers are used, these will need pruning back as they grow to keep the area tidy, fairies like tidy. You may also need to change the soil occasionally and add new plants to replace the old. As a final touch, you may wish to place some decorative rocks around the chair area and add a shallow bowl of water, when not being mischievous, fairies love to keep busy bathing and washing their clothes. Clean fairies make happy fairies and it would also act as a nice visiting place for their bird friends and butterflies.

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## ***Legacy***

### **Memories of Bealtaine**

**By Ardriana Cahill**

In my Family Tradition, the Flower Festival of Bealtaine is a family day. Like Samhain, the veil is thin between the worlds of living and dead, but where Samhain is dedicated to honoring our beloved dead; Bealtaine is dedicated to honoring our beloved living. Traipsing all over the country as an Air Force brat, I didn't always live near family so we celebrated as we could. On May Eve/May Day our ritual was a late afternoon picnic and as the sun set we made a bonfire.



May Pole Dancers

When I was in second grade in Amarillo, Texas, I danced the May Pole for the last time. The large pole was erected in the rear school yard with colorful crepe paper ribbons attached to the top. A wreath of silk flowers crowned the pole. Unlike some traditions, boys were included in the dance. Music played on a record player. Alternating one boy to one girl, the boys would hold a ribbon in their right hands and walked in a clockwise circle while the girls held a ribbon in their left hands and walked in a counterclockwise circle. I remember, as I met each boy, I would alternate by bowing down before one boy, going under his high held ribbon and the boy would bow down to go under my high held ribbon. Each boy and girl did the opposite under-over gesture as the music played. I sometimes had to stand on my tiptoes to hold the ribbon high enough for the boys to go under, as they were often taller than me. The dance created a brightly woven pattern of ribbons plaiting down the pole. When we could no longer fit under and over each others ribbons, we stood facing the pole, changed the ribbons from one hand to the other hand turned in the opposite directions and un-wove the weave. When we were done, another group of children took up their positions to do it all again.

The closest we got to the tradition of a May Queen was in the Catholic Church which translated that tradition by using a statue of the Blessed Mother. There would be a procession of young girls wearing white and wreaths of flowers to the statue of the Blessed Mother and it would be crowned with a wreath of flowers. Then the following Sunday the statue would be carried into the church wearing her flower crown to the children singing and tossing rose petals in her path. This is how my Family Tradition included the goddess on May Day.

Since as a Family lived in a Christian culture and we could not erect a proper May Pole, we sometimes made Faery May Poles to place in the garden. Two inch dowels of varying heights no more than two feet tall are shaved to a point on the bottom with multi colored ribbons tacked around the top and a crown of flowers to finish it off. With the smallest spring breeze, the ribbons fly and you can imagine the Fey - dancing to their magickal music.

May Eve or May Day traditions included wearing green, feasting, leaving milk or food out for the Fey and doing love divinations. The Beltane's fire marks the beginning of the bright half of the Celtic year, a season of growth and fertility. I remember one Bealtaine in Wyoming, how we girls wove floral "jewelry" (bracelets and necklaces) of long stemmed wildflowers and clover. We made crowns and wreaths of flowers or floral ribbons for our hair. Then, we made boutonnieres for the boys to place behind one ear or to peek out of their chest pockets.



Faery May Pole

Like Samhain, Bealtaine is a Faery night and thus mischief night, but a harmless one. One Bealtaine, as a young teenager in Las Vegas, my girlfriends and I made May "baskets" by taking colored paper, curling it into a cone and taping or stapling it closed. Then, we made a handle by cutting and braiding ribbons, leaving a length of the ribbons free to "tassel" both ends. We pushed the ribbon ends through small holes in the sides of the cone and knotted the ribbons, leaving the tassels dangling on the outsides of the cone. Then we filled the cones with flowering shamrocks, dandelions and wild mustard. At sundown on May Eve, we'd hang the "May baskets" on our neighbor's doors,



May Baskets

especially our elder neighbors and family members. We'd ring the doorbell and then run away, never letting on that we left the flowers. The next day, the recipients of the May Baskets would tell us about how they were visited by the Fey who left the flowers! We tried to look innocent and tried not to laugh and give away our secret. Because secrets give you power.

The evening ended as the fire died with songs and stories of the loyalty, bravery and romances of the heroes of our Family Line. Mother would tell the story of Cormac McAirt's journey to the Faery land. We would sit in wonder, each time she told the story about Great Grandpop McCormick's funeral, who was the a Confederate officer in full dress uniform who attended this Union soldier's funeral? And what was the promise his coming had fulfilled? She would tell of how Grandmother McCormick had willfully kissed her sick brother on the mouth who was suffering the murderous flu of the great pandemic of

1918, just to defy the fears of her getting sick and of his dying. (Neither of which happened.) She told ghost stories, like that of Aunt Ardath who came to tell Mother when my brother was lost in the desert that she'd just left him in the lifeguard's chair at Lake Mead and that he was safe and fine. And how the search party found him there, hours later. She told us about the great love stories of our family and ancestors. And the creative pranks that Great Aunt Ann and Great Aunt Molly played on each other throughout their lifetimes.

Then we would all sing songs. Mother had a professional quality voice and Dad sang well too as well as play the guitar. As my half-sister and I grew, we often sang three part harmonies to mother's melodies. Only my half-brother was tone-deaf and his attempts to sing always added laughter to the night. Not until everyone was sleepy, was the night over. We slept under the vast dome of the stars and saw the lights there as the spirits of our ancestors. And we dreamed in anticipation of the joys of summer.

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[www.ArdrianaCahill.com](http://www.ArdrianaCahill.com)

Kindred

CRYSTALLIZED INTENTIONS



using semi-precious stones. Each bracelet is a self contained spell for a specific intention. With the more general intentions, such as my elements set, you can wear a different element every day, depending on what aspect of the element you may feel the need to call upon. I design the bracelets using color theory (blue for peace, red for strength, green for health, etc), and the historical folklore surrounding each stone. I also use intuitive choices that may not correspond to any standard school of thought. I also make custom spell bracelets. When you buy one of my bracelets, you hold in your hand a Crystallized Intention, a spell set in stone so to speak. I do not claim to cure diseases. But if your stress level is high, you may banish a headache or worry with one of my bracelets.

At the age of nine I bought my first piece of quartz in Yellowstone National Park. At age twelve, I consecrated a set of stones under the full moon to make my first magickal stone bag. At fifteen I performed a self-dedication ceremony to the Goddess and soon afterwards it was revealed that I was an inheritor of an Irish, Family Tradition of witchcraft and esoteric pagan philosophy. I have been a Pagan and a practicing witch for 20 years.

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## *The Artist Loft*

Love/  
Friendship



# Ametrine

## Balancing Dual Natures

by Stephanie Pflumm

I am embarrassed. For years I put off learning about the beautiful bi-colored Ametrine crystal. I simply dismissed it as a gem that carries both the energies of Amethyst and Citrine. Fortunately from the moment I picked up my Ametrine companion to study with I began to learn differently.

Ametrine is very much its own crystal, with its own dramatic formation process, its own unique energies and its own story. I have done this incredible crystal a great disservice by assuming its attributes are merely a combination of its siblings' energies.

Ametrine crystals grow in pegmatites and geodes that formed during Andean mountain building process in Bolivia and Brazil. These processes resulted in a treasure trove of gems and crystals throughout South America. However in the ancient tribal lands of the Aureiros, there is one mine where the perfect conditions existed for Ametrine crystals to grow.

Geologists know that when you heat and/or expose Amethyst to radiation it will become Citrine. This transformation takes place in both the laboratory and in nature. There are even situations where Citrine has turned back into Amethyst. It all has to do with the state of the Iron ion. When the Iron ion is exposed to enough heat or radiation it oxidizes and turns yellowish orange. If the Iron ion remains a slightly cooler temperature its colors are cooler (i.e. purple).

In order for the Iron to produce both colors within the same crystal, very specific conditions have to be present. Not only does one area of the crystal have to be exposed to more heat, while another section is slightly cooler; this dual temperature condition has to remain stable during the entire growth cycle of the crystal. Geologists theorize that a deep vent within the Anahi mine created just the right amount of heat, flowing in just the right direction to cause one area of the forming crystals to stay "hotter" than the rest, creating the perfect balance to form Ametrines. Otherwise, these magical gems would have become Amethysts or Citrines.



Only two places on the entire planet had just the right circumstances to form Ametrine Crystals - the Anahi Mine in Bolivia and the Hyderabad Mine in India. The Bolivian mine yields about 90% of the Ametrines being marketed today. In 1999 a new area of the mine was opened near Pozo Rico and a huge cavern of Ametrine crystals was discovered. This crystal covered cave measures 4 meters x 3 meters x 1 meter. India's Ametrine is primarily Amethyst with small Citrine zones and lack the rich bi-coloring found in the Bolivian specimens.

In addition to Ametrine, this delightful gem is marketed under the names Bolivianite, Tristine and Bicolored Amethyst.

This multi-colored gemstone seems to also have a double history. Most geological references state that Ametrine was first brought to the market in the 1970s. However, there is another story about this special crystal that dates back to the conquistadors.

During the 17th century, a conquistador named Don Felipe married Anakha, the princess to the Aureiros tribe of Bolivia. The mine, named Anahi for the princess, was given to him as part of her dowry. When it came time for Felipe to return to Spain, his princess bride wished to return with him. As the couple attempted to depart, angry tribesmen turned on them and murdered the young princess. The duo colored gem is said to represent the princess' two loyalties; to her husband and to her tribe.



Upon his return to Spain, Felipe presented his unique dowry crystal to the King (or Queen depending on the reference). This appears to be the last time white humans will hear about or see the gem until the late 20th century. However, descendants of the Aureiros tribe were mining Ametrines until the very last of the 19th century and trading them in the Puerto Suárez markets of Brazil.

Today the bi-colors of the Ametrine is extremely popular in the jewelry trade. Despite its rarity, this special Quartz crystal remains very reasonably priced. Cutters have developed new faceting techniques and elongated rectangular shapes to show off this gem's delightful duality.

The Ametrine's duality also makes it a powerful companion for creative, healing and psychic workings. Purple and gold/yellow are opposite of each other on the color wheel, and yet are very complimentary to each other. A royal purple robe is even more stunning when decorated with gold trim.

In this one crystal you can utilize the cool dark powers of the purple night and the bright warm strength of the sunny day. If you perform readings, work in the astral plane, wish to communicate with spirits, energies and guides in alternative worlds, Ametrine is extremely effective at opening these psychic doorways. It will provide protection as you journey through these unfamiliar landscapes, and light your way back to familiar ground.

For those engaged in more mundane activities, Ametrine teaches you to balance your physical activities with your spiritual hunger. Workaholics learn to pause and enjoy the many fruits your labors can provide. Procrastinators discover the empowering joy of completing a task and the rewards you reap when a goal is achieved. Those that walk among the clouds suddenly find purpose in touching the Earth.

If you walk with fear, your Ametrine crystal will reveal your hidden warrior. If you move with detailed precision, executing well thought out plans, your gem will show you the power of serendipity.

If your eyes are blind to the plight of others, this stone will help you see the connection and responsibility you share with every resident of our planet. If one child is hungry, your own plate can never be full. If one being is homeless, your own home can never be warm.

Ametrine teaches you these simple, unrelenting connections. There is no life without death. You can not know joy if you have not known sadness. Your are not safe as long as another is in danger.

Meditations with Ametrine will help you achieve calm quicker, allowing you to more easily access alternative states. Portals to new dimensions, new perceptions and new ideas are open for you to discover your greatest potential.

Like its other Quartz siblings and cousins, Ametrine can be a powerful healing tool. Its dual nature makes it very effective at removing blockages in any Chakra, assisting you in achieving a healthy physical balance. The gem's dark nature helps to release emotional damage and replace the void left behind with healing light. Often, injured humans are afraid to let go of the damage. They would much rather feel the pain, than face the prospect of feeling nothing at all.

Ametrine Elixirs may help to remove toxins from the body. It may also be beneficial in lessening or alleviating some of the symptoms of physical illness. Your body may be less achy from fever, and your head less miserable with congestion if you are carrying an Ametrine while sick. The gem may improve immunity and assist the body in absorbing oxygen. Patients preparing for implants or artificial limbs and organs may find an Ametrine companion helps their body becoming more accepting of the foreign object.

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Stephanie Pflumm has been studying with and writing about our crystal relations since 1999. She has self-published a book on crystals, a poetry collection and a collection of fiction short stories. You can find her writings and discover her love of crystals at: <http://www.ozarkrockexchange.com/>

Stephanie has been a member of Email Witches since 16 February 2009



## The Willow Tree

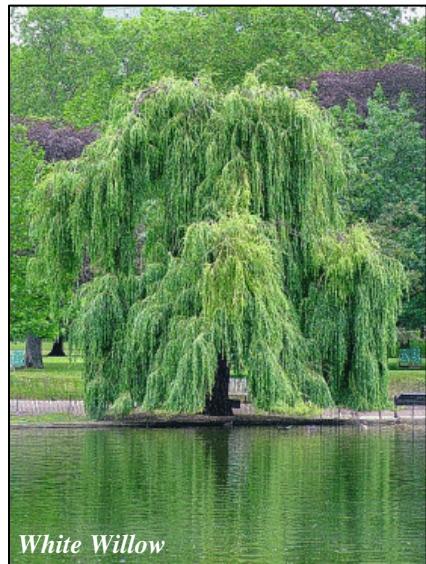
**Written and Compiled by George Knowles**

The Willow tree (*Salix alba*) has long had associations with Wicca/Witchcraft and figures in the folklore and mythology of many cultures. The Willow was particularly sacred to the Druid of old, for according to the Celtic tree calendar (15<sup>th</sup> April - 12<sup>th</sup> May), the Willow is associated with the ancient Beltane springtime celebrations, more commonly today known as May Day.

The botanical name of the Willow is 'Salix', which comes from the Celtic word 'sal' - meaning near, and "lis" - meaning water. Because the Willow grows rapidly and has deep tough roots, they are widely planted to check soil erosion particularly on the banks of rivers and streams. It can also be found flourishing in the moist ground of many temperate regions throughout the world. As the Alder tree is known as the "King of the Waters," so the Willow is known as the "Queen of the Waters."

The Willow tree comprises more than 300 shrubs or trees of the Salicaceae family and varies in height from a few inches to 70-80 ft (21-24 meters). Some of the more common types to be found include the Black Willow (*Salix nigra*) named for its dark bark, the Pussy Willow or Goat Willow (*Salix discolor*) usually grown as a shrub along the banks of streams where its furry catkins herald the coming of spring, and the tall White Willow (*Salix alba*) commonly found growing in cultivated grounds. This is the largest of the Willows and is thought to be a descendant of the White Willow of Europe. It can grow to over 75 ft (23 meters) with a girth of some 20 ft or more (6 meters); its ash-grey silky leaves give the tree its white appearance. Perhaps the most recognized Willow is the Weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*), which is believed to have originated in China and often appears in Chinese art. Its beauty makes it a favourite ornamental tree in gardens and parks, but while it is widely cultivated for its beauty, it has practically no commercial value.

Perhaps the most commercial of the Willows are those of the genus called Osiers, from which a significant industry has developed from the use of its wood. The Osiers include: the Common Osier or Basket Willow (*Salix viminalis*) and the Purple Willow (*Salix purpurea*). They furnish pliable shoots and twigs that are used all over Britain and Europe for basket making and wickerwork. The wood of the Willow is white, soft and light but also tough and elastic, and is not given to splintering when subjected to strain. It is used for making Shipping containers, Tool handles, Baseball bats and Cricket bats, and because the wood is relatively non-flammable, to make the brake blocks on Railway carriages.



*White Willow*



*Black Willow*



*Basket Willow*



***Basket Willow is cut and dried ready for making baskets***

The bark of the White Willow is thick, gnarled, rough and furrowed, with a pale greeny-brown colour. The leaves of the Willow are mostly long and narrow and those of the White Willow are two-tone in colour, the topside being greeny-grey and the under-side an ivory-white. This makes them easily recognizable for when the wind blows it gives the impression of rippling silvery waves in motion on water. Willows flower and leaf during May, sometimes together or sometimes separately, the flower before leaf. Male and female flowers grow on separate trees relying on the wind and insects for pollination. It flowers in the form of catkins of which the male flower is the prettiest.

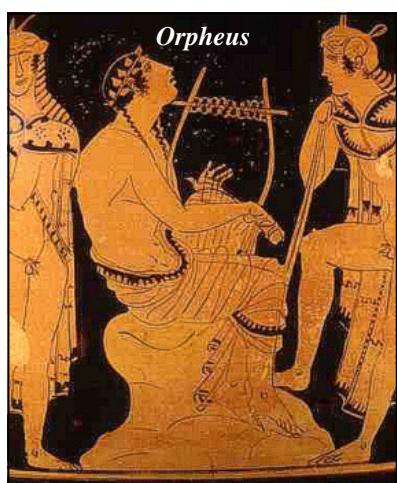


**Bark - Leaves - Catkins**

## Folklore and Myths:

The Willow tree is particularly rich in folklore and mythology, and is associated with many Gods and Goddesses, including: Asclepius, Proserpina, Orpheus, Hecate, Circe, Bel or Belenus, Artemis and Mercury. One of the main properties of the Willow is fertility, and due to its slender branches and narrow leaves, was associated with the serpent; the serpent in turn being sacred to the God of Medicine Asclepius. In Athens it was an ancient custom of the Priests of Asclepius to place Willow branches in the beds of infertile women, this in the belief that it would draw the mystical serpents from the Underworld and cure them, the connection being the phallic symbolism of the snake form itself. In later times, this belief was turned around and the Willow became protective of snakes by driving them away. Asclepius himself is depicted with a serpent wrapped around a staff made of Willow, from this came the belief that he had power over snakes.

The ancient Spartan fertility rites of the Goddess Artemis, also demonstrates the Willows connection with fertility and fecundity. Here male celebrants were tied to the tree's trunk with Willow thongs, and then flogged until the lashes produced an erotic reaction and they ejaculated fertilizing the land with their seed and blood.



The Willow was also sacred to poets, for the sound of the wind through the Willow is said to have a potent influence on the mind resulting in inspiration. Orpheus the celebrated Greek poet is said to have received his gifts of eloquence and communication from the Willow by carrying its branches with him while journeying through the Underworld. Due to his talents as a poet, the God Apollo presented him with a lyre and asked him to make music, he in turn instructed the Muses in its use. It was said that when he played music he not only enchanted wild beasts, but also that the trees and rocks of Mount Olympus moved from their places to follow the sounds of his harp. Upon his death with the intercession of Apollo and the Muses, Zeus placed the lyre of Orpheus amongst the stars.

There is a darker side to the Willow however, for it is also associated with grief and death. The Greek sorceress Circe is said to have had a riverside cemetery planted with Willow trees dedicated to Hecate and her moon

magic. Here male corpses were wrapped in un-tanned ox-hides and left exposed in the tops of the trees for the elements to claim and the birds to eat. From this association with grief and death came the practice of placing Willow branches in the coffins of the departed, and the planting of young saplings on their graves. Old folklore advises that to plant a young Willow and watch it grow, would ease the passage of your soul at death. The ancient Celts believed that the spirit of the dead would rise up into the sapling planted above, which would grow and retain the essence of the departed one. Throughout Britain, many cemeteries and particularly those situated near rivers, lakes or marshes, are often to be found lined with Willow trees to protect the spirits in place.

The Willows connection with water links it directly with the moon Goddess who is revered by contemporary Witches and Pagans alike. One old tradition concerning the Willow is still celebrated today by Rumanian Gypsies. This is the festival of Green George that takes place on the 23rd of April. A man wearing a wicker frame made from the Willow represents the character of Green George, which is then covered in greenery and vegetation from the land. This is symbolic of the Willows association with water that fertilizes the land bringing fruitfulness to the fields. On the eve of the festival and in a gay and lively manner, everything is prepared in readiness. A young Willow tree is cut down and re-erected at the place of the festivities. There it is dressed and adorned with garlands. That same night all the pregnant women assemble around the tree and each place an article of clothing beneath it. The belief being that if a single leaf from the tree falls on a garment over night, its owner will be granted an easy child delivery by the Willows Goddess.

At dawn on the 23rd of April, Green George appears in all his splendour and knocks three nails into the tree, removing them again he proceeds to the nearest river, lake or stream from whence the tree was cut and throws them into the water, this to awaken the goodwill of the waters spirits to their proceedings. Returning he collects the Willow tree and takes it back to the river, lake or stream and dips its branches and leaves until they are heavy with water, thus awakening the tree's beneficial and fertile qualities. The water spirits and the Willow tree's beneficial qualities evoked, all the communities animals, flocks and herds are led to Green George who raises the tree and shakes water onto them in a blessing to ensure their fertility for the coming year. This done the tree is taken back to the place of festivities and re-erected. Feasting, drinking and merriment then commences in thanks to the tree and water spirits. This tradition may well have evolved into the Maypole celebrations associated with May Day.

## Medicinal Uses:

Willow bark has been used for its pain-relieving qualities since ancient times. The White Willow (*Salix alba*) contains salicin, which is converted to salicylic acid in

the body. Salicylic acid is closely related to aspirin the synthetic drug that has displaced Willow bark from popular use. Willow bark reduces fever and relieves rheumatism, a common ailment in cold and damp regions like the British Isles. A decoction can be used for gum and tonsil inflammations, and as a footbath for sweaty feet. The bark is collected in the springtime being careful not to ring the tree or it will die. It is made by soaking 3 teaspoons (15ml) of the bark in a cup of cold water for 2 - 5 hours, then bring to the boil. Strain and take a wineglassful each day, a mouthful at a time. The bark can be dried, powdered and stored in an airtight container.



Willow bark

Black Willow (*Salix nigra*) has black bark as opposed to the light greeny-brown of the White Willow. Its properties are much the same, but was used in the past as an aphrodisiac and sexual sedative. The Goat Willow and Sallow Willow (*Salix caprea*) is used in very much in the same way as the White Willow, but an infusion of Sallow bark tea is recommended for indigestion, whooping cough and catarrh. It can also be used as an antiseptic and disinfectant.

## Magickal Uses:

Of old, strips of Willow were used for binding magical and sacred objects together. The popular Witches' Besom (Broom) was traditionally made with an Ash handle and Birch twigs all bound together with strips of Willow.



Head of a Besom bound with strips of Willow.

Willow is one of the best water-divining woods, along with Hazel and Birch. Perhaps the most common magickal use of the Willow is the making of Wands, for all the Willow's qualities are naturally contained within its wood, although when consecrating your wand, you

may wish to charge or empower certain aspects of its qualities for specific uses. Use a piece of fresh Willow cut from the tree with appropriate reverence and ritual, or use a newly fallen piece which the tree has recently shed. You may wish to strip the bark off and carve the wand with runic symbols to associate it with specific uses. It is easier to carve fresh wood and then let it dry out, small twigs will dry out quickly and without cracking in a house, but it is better to let larger pieces of wood dry slowly in an outhouse or shed, or even under a hedge. When it is dry it can be polished with several layers of beeswax to protect the wood, or you may prefer to leave it natural.



### **Swallowhead Willow Ogham Wand**

*This wonderful wand has been crafted from Willow wood respectfully gathered at the site of Swallowhead Spring which is the source of the River Kennet in Wiltshire, a place with ancient fertility connections and close to the Avebury stone circle. It is hand-carved with a band inscribed with ogham and is finished with a shaped base.*

*Length: 19 inches/ 48 cm*

<http://www.spiritofold.co.uk/wands/willow.htm>

Willow wands are used whenever there is a need to connect with intuition, dreams, seer-ship, visions and poetically inspired writing or images. They are also used to deal with emotional numbness or emotional excess, or where there are negative emotional feelings that need to be worked through. Like the wand, talismans and charms can be made in the same way, perhaps using the natural shape of the wood to suggest and inspire a carving. Talismans may be worn round the neck or as a brooch, or carried within a pouch and kept close to the body. Like the wand, runic symbols can be carved on a talisman representative to their uses.

The Willow has always been known as a tree of dreaming, inspiration and enchantment. It was associated in Celtic legend with poets and spells of fascination and binding. Our deep unconscious thoughts speak to us through our dreams, so if you have lost touch with your dreams or wish to increase their potency, place a piece of Willow under your pillow when you sleep. You will find your dreams will immediately become more vivid and meaningful. The Willow's weeping stance reflects its association with grief. By wearing a piece of Willow (as in the popular song "All around my hat I will wear the green Willow"), a person will be able to access all the levels of their grief, and be able to move through these levels to gain healing and inner strength.

### **Correspondences:**

The Willow tree is known by many folk names: Osier, Pussy Willow, Saille, Salicyn Willow, Saugh Tree, Tree of Enchantment, White Willow, Witches Aspirin, Withe and Withy. Its deity associations are with: Artemis, Ceres, Hecate, Persephone, Hera, Mercury, Belili, Bel and Belinus. Its gender is female. Its planetary ruler is the Moon. Its associated element is Water. The willow is used to attract the powers needed for such things as: Protection, Divination, Inspiration, Healing, Fertility, Love, Grief and Death, and anything to do with the element Water.

Willow people (i.e. those born in April/May) are beautiful but full of melancholy, are attractive and very empathetic, they like anything beautiful and tasteful and love to travel, they are dreamers and restless, capricious and honest, they are easily influenced but are not easy to live with being demanding, they have good intuition, but suffer in love and sometimes need to find an anchoring partner.

**End.**

### **Sources:**

**Cunningham's Encyclopedia Of Magical Herbs** - By Scott Cunningham.

**The Encyclopedia of Witches & Witchcraft** - By Rosemary Ellen Guiley.

**Tree Wisdom** (The definitive guidebook to the myth, folklore and healing power of Trees) - By Jacqueline Memory Paterson.

**AA Book of Britain's Countryside.**

**The Penguin Hutchinson Reference Library** (CD cassette).

**Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia** (CD cassette).

Plus many websites to numerous to mention.

Updated on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009 © George Knowles

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<http://controversial.com>



# The Pagan Kitchen



*by OwlOak*

*MM Folks....another turn of the wheel and Beltane is upon us. The time of May Pole dancing, and frolicking through the woods at night. Of course all this takes energy, and what better way to get that than good food. So, with that in mind, here is a selection of delicious and nutritious recipes - one of which has to tempt even the most discriminating palate.*

*Everyone should start their day with a good breakfast and for that we have:*

**Whole Wheat & Oat Meal Buttermilk  
Waffles by Punky Rabbit**



Original Art by Punky

**Ingredients:**

- 1 3/4 Cup Wheat flour
- 1/2 Cup Oatmeal
- 2 Tsp. Baking powder
- 1/2 Tsp. Cinnamon (optional)
- 2 Eggs - beaten
- 2 1/4 Cup Buttermilk
- 1/2 Cup Vegetable oil

**Directions:**

Mix the flour, oatmeal, baking powder, and cinnamon in a suitable bowl and set aside. In a separate bowl whisk the eggs, oil, and buttermilk until creamy. Whisk in dry ingredients until mixed and let batter sit a few minutes while the waffle iron heats.

Grease the waffle iron with butter spray and pour batter evenly over the heating elements. Allow the batter to heat a few seconds while gently lowering the top of the waffle iron. (This helps prevent the batter from flowing out the sides). The waffles are usually done when the light comes on.

Makes 4 (10 inch) waffles.

\*\*These waffles are very moist and fluffy. If you want crispier waffles, I suggest setting the waffle iron on high and then let the waffles sit an extra minute or two in the iron. Note, these are NOT Belgium waffles.

*If you wish something heartier, you could accompany them with Scotch Eggs:*

**Scotch Eggs by OwlOak**



**Ingredients:**

- 1 Lb. (454 Gms.) Ground sweet pork sausage
- 6 Hard boiled eggs - shelled
- 1 Cup Seasoned bread crumbs
- 1 Egg - uncooked
- 1 Tbs. Water
- 1 Tsp. Prepared mustard
- 1/8 Tsp. Ground mace
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper - to taste

**Directions:**

Preheat the oven to 400F/200C.

Mix the mace, salt, and pepper with the sausage meat and divide into six equal portions and press into patties. Wrap one patty of sausage around each egg until it is totally enclosed.

Beat the raw egg with the mustard and water. Dip the sausage-wrapped eggs, one by one in the mixture then roll in the bread crumbs until totally covered and place on a rack in a shallow baking dish.

Bake until browned, turning once during baking.

As an alternative, they can be deep fried in hot 360F/185C oil. When the coating is browned and the sausage is cooked through remove and allow to drain on a paper towel.\*

Cut the cooked eggs in half, lengthwise, and serve hot with your favorite sauce. Hollandaise or a Dijon mustard one work well.

\*If you don't have a deep fat fryer, they can be cooked in oil in a frying pan, turning frequently to ensure the meat is fully and evenly cooked.

*Knowing that not everyone likes a hearty breakfast, the following will satisfy your sweet tooth and give you something to smile about:*

### Cinnamon Rolls by OwlOak

#### Ingredients:



#### Dough

1 Cup Warm, not hot, water  
2 Packets Dry yeast  
1 Tsp. Finely granulated sugar  
1 Cup Milk - warmed  
2/3 Cup Granulated sugar  
2/3 Cup Butter - melted  
2 Tsp. Salt  
2 Eggs - slightly beaten  
8 Cups All-purpose flour

#### Filling

1/2 Cup Butter - melted  
1 1/2 Cups Granulated sugar  
3 Tbs. Ground cinnamon

#### Glaze

2/3 Cup Butter - melted

4 Cups Powdered sugar

2 Tsp. Vanilla extract

Hot, not boiling, water - as needed

#### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350F (180C) degrees.

In a small bowl, mix together the warm water, yeast, fine sugar and set aside. In a large bowl, mix the milk, sugar, melted butter, salt and eggs. Add the prepared yeast mixture to this and stir until well blended.

Next, add 2 cups of the flour and beat until smooth, stirring in as much of the remaining flour as needed to form a slightly stiff but sticky dough. Place the dough on a well-floured board and knead for 5 -10 minutes. Note - do not over-knead the dough or it will not rise properly and will be tough.

Place in a large well-buttered bowl, cover with a clean dish towel, and let rise in a warm, not hot, place until doubled in size then punch down the dough and let it rest for a few minutes.

After it has rested, place the dough on a floured surface and gently roll out into a large rectangle between 1/4 and 3/8 in. (.6 to 1 cm.) thick and spread it with melted butter. Mix the granulated sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle evenly over buttered dough.

Starting at the short end, roll up the dough in a jellyroll-fashion. Cut into 1 in (2.5 cm) rounds. Place the rounds, flat side down and close together in a large well-buttered baking pan.

Cover, and let them rise in warm place until Meanwhile, in medium bowl, mix the melted dough is again doubled in size. Bake in the butter, powdered sugar, and vanilla together and preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, or until rolls stir in 1 Tbs. hot water at a time until the glaze are well browned on top. Remove the rolls from the oven and allow to cool until warm to the touch.

is smooth and easy to spread but not watery. Coat the top of the warm rolls with the glaze and serve.

*The day's dancing and merrymaking is bound to work up an appetite, and a thirst. These dishes will more than take the edge off that:*

### Baked Chicken with Lemon Sauce by OwlOak



#### Ingredients:

3 Lb. (1 1/2 kg.) Chicken pieces  
1/2 Cup butter or margarine - softened  
Garlic powder  
Onion powder  
Fresh minced parsley  
Fresh minced rosemary  
Fresh minced thyme  
1/4 Cup white wine  
1 Cup water

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350F (180C). Place the chicken pieces on a rack in a suitable baking pan.

Pour the water into the bottom of the pan then pour the wine over the pieces and brush them with the softened butter.

Sprinkle the top of the chicken pieces evenly with the herbs

Bake until the juices run clear when thickest portion of meat is pierced with a fork, about 30 minutes then remove from the oven.

Serve drizzled with Lemon Sauce (see below).

### Lemon Sauce

#### Ingredients:

1 Lemon (juiced)  
Pan drippings  
2 Tbls. Flour  
Water (as needed)

#### Directions:

Add enough water to the pan drippings to make 1 cup of liquid. To this add the lemon juice and flour. Heat until thickened while stirring constantly.

When thickened, spoon over the chicken pieces and serve hot.

Baked potatoes or rice pilaf make a great side, as does Steamed Day Lily Shoots:

### Steamed Day Lily Shoots

Contrary to what folks might think these shoots are



delicate in flavor and delicious as a side-dish. When harvesting choose only the young and tender shoots 2 -3 in. (5 - 7 1/2 cm.) tall and snap them off at the base as you would asparagus. Simple recipe, but ohhhhhh so good.

**Ingredients:**

1 Colander full of shoots  
 Salt & pepper - to taste  
 Butter or margarine - to taste

**Directions:**

Rinse shoots under cool water and place in steamer.

Steam until al dente (only a couple of minutes).

Mix in the salt, pepper, and add butter or margarine to taste.

*To wash this all down I suggest a generous glass of sangria:*

**Sangria by OwlOak**

Cut the unpeeled orange, lemon, and lime into rounds and place in a large bowl. Add the sliced strawberries and cherries. Mix well, then bruise the fruit - gently mash them a bit to get the juices flowing (I use a wire potato masher).

Pour this into a large pitcher and add the wine, rum, and orange juice. Stir until mixed then refrigerate for 2-3 hours, or until well chilled and the fruit flavors have been absorbed by the liquid.

To serve, pour into glasses and include some of the fruit. Garnish with a wedge of orange on the rim.

**Ingredients:**

1 Bottle Dry red wine  
 1 Cup White rum, or brandy  
 1 Cup Orange juice  
 1 Cup Club soda - optional\*  
 Fresh mint - optional\*\*

Fresh fruit - while virtually any fruit can be used; apples, pears, pineapple chunks, etc., here are the ones I use but feel free to experiment:

1 Orange  
 1 Lemon  
 1 Lime  
 1 Cup Strawberries - sliced  
 1 Cup Cherries - sliced

**Directions:**

\* If you wish to add a bit of a sparkle to it, the club soda can be mixed in just before serving.

\*\* If you wish to jazz it up a bit for looks and flavor you can lightly bruise a sprig of mint and add it to the glass after pouring.

Note: To make a "kid friendly" version just omit the rum and use grape juice in place of the wine.

*Come dinner time a substantial meal helps carry one through a night of frolicking in the woods and its outcome. This next dish provides the "carbo-boost" to do just that:*

## Creamy Shrimp Scampi and Fettuccini by OwlOak



### Ingredients:

1 Package fettuccini  
1 Lb. Fresh medium shrimp (30 to 40 count) - shelled and de-veined\*  
1/2 Cup Half & Half  
5-6 Cloves Garlic - minced  
1 Stick Butter  
1/4 Cup White wine  
1/2 Cup Fresh mushrooms - sliced  
Salt and fresh ground black pepper - to taste  
Fresh parsley - chopped

*A seasonal and appropriate side dish would be a nice dandelion salad:*



## Dandelion Salad by OwlOak

### Ingredients:

1/2 Lb. ( 227 gms.) Tender young dandelion greens - washed and sorted

*...and to soak up all that creamy sauce a loaf of fresh bread does the trick very nicely:*

### Directions:

Place the fettuccini in a large pot of boiling salted water and cook until el dente (firm but tender).

While the fettuccini is cooking melt the butter in a large frying pan and add the shrimp, minced garlic, mushrooms, white wine, salt, and pepper. Cook on medium low heat until the shrimp turn pink and the garlic is lightly browned.. Add the Half & Half and, while stirring constantly, continue to cook until it is reduced to a medium consistency

Turn off the heat to the frying pan and drain the fettuccini.

Place the drained fettuccini into the frying pan and lightly toss until it is coated with the sauce.

To serve, place on a plate and sprinkle with the chopped parsley.

\* Precooked shrimp can be used but should be added just before the Half & Half as shrimp tend to become tough if overcooked.

1/2 Onion (red, vidalia, or spanish) - chopped  
2 Tomatoes - chopped (plum tomatoes work very well because of the thick and meaty walls.) \*

1/2 Cup Fresh basil - chopped  
Salt and pepper - to taste

### Directions:

In a medium bowl, toss together dandelion greens, onion, and tomatoes. Season with basil, salt, and pepper. Top with your favorite dressing, or my favorite, 3-4 pieces of crumbled bacon in the warm pan drippings.

Makes 4 servings

\*If using Plum tomatoes blanch and peel them first as the skin can be tough.

### Old Fashioned Batter Bread by OwlOak



This recipe is one I have used often but is not one of my own, nor do I know the origin.

#### Ingredients:

2 to 2-1/2 Cups Flour  
3/4 Cup Rolled oats  
1 Tsp. Salt  
1 Pkg. Dry yeast  
1 Cup Water  
1/3 Cup Light molasses

1/4 Cup Butter  
1 Egg

#### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375F/190C.

Grease an 8" x 4" (20 x 10 cm.) loaf pan. In large bowl, combine 1 cup of flour, oats, salt and yeast and mix well. In small saucepan, heat the water, molasses and butter until very warm, about 120F/49C. Add this and the egg to the flour mixture and beat for a couple of minutes until well combined. Stir in enough of the remaining flour to make a stiff batter. Cover and let rise about 25-30 minutes.

Stir down batter and place in the greased pan. Cover and let rise until batter reaches top of pan, about 15-20 minutes. Bake the bread for 35-40 minutes, or until the loaf sounds hollow when lightly tapped. Remove from pan immediately and allow to cool on a rack. Serve while still warm.

*Now, no meal is complete without a great dessert and here are a couple; one that is decadent and delicious, and another that is just plain good:*

### Chocolate Cheesecake by OwlOak



#### Ingredients:

2 Cups Vanilla/chocolate wafers or graham cracker crumbs  
1/2 Stick Unsalted butter - melted  
3 - 8 oz. Packages Cream cheese - room temperature  
1 Cup Granulated sugar  
5 Eggs  
5 Squares Dark chocolate - melted

#### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 300°F/150C.

Melt the chocolate in a double boiler.

Mix together wafer or cracker crumbs and melted butter. Press into the bottom of a 9 in. (23 cm.) spring-form pan bringing them about 1/4 in. (0.6 cm.) up the side of the pan.

In a large bowl beat together the cream cheese, sugar, melted chocolate (a little at a time), and eggs until smooth and fluffy.

Pour the batter into the spring-form pan and bake in the preheated oven until the cake center is firm (45 min. - 1 hr.). Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool. Once completely cooled to room temperature, cover and place it in the refrigerator for 2-3 hours to completely chill.

When completely chilled, remove the bottom of the pan and place the cake on a serving dish. Run a knife dipped in warm water around the sides to separate the cake from it, then remove the sides.

To serve, cut into slices and top with your favorite topping, sauce, or icing.



### Gram's Rhubarb Pie

#### Ingredients:

4-5 Cups Fresh, ripe rhubarb stalks - washed, trimmed, and cut into 1 in. (2.5 cm.) pieces

1/4 Cup Flour

1 Tsp. Ground cinnamon

1 1/2 Cups Granulated sugar

2 Tbs. Butter

Enough rolled out pastry for a double crust pie  
(see recipe below)

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350F/177C

Line a pie pan with 1/2 the pastry (1 crust). Fill it with the cut rhubarb.

Sprinkle the rhubarb with the sugar, cinnamon, and flour. Top this with the pats of butter and cover with the remaining pastry. Trim and seal the edges by either pinching them with your fingers, or fluting them with a fork.

Cut slits in the top to vent the steam and bake for 50-60 min., or until the top crust is brown and the juices are bubbling through the vents.

Remove from the oven and place on a rack to cool.

The pie can be served warm or cold. I prefer it warm with a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream on top.

Note: If you have pie dough left over from the trimmings and you don't want to waste it, you can combine it and roll it back out. Sprinkle it with cinnamon and sugar and cut it into 1 x 6 in. (2.5 x 15 cm.) strips. Place them on a cookie sheet and bake along with the pie. Gram called these "stitches". We kids called them a delicious treat.

### Double Crust Pastry

This crust is very simple and easy to make. The measures do not have to be exact, so if it's too loose just add more flour; too stiff, just add more milk.

#### Ingredients:

2 Cups Flour

1 Cup Shortening (vegetable shortening or lard - Gram used lard which gave a very tasty and flaky crust)

1 Tsp. Salt

Milk - as needed (1/3-1/2 cup)

#### Directions:

In a large bowl sift together the flour and salt, then cut-in the softened shortening. Add enough milk to give a workable dough.

Divide the dough in half and roll out each half on a well floured surface until it is large enough to fill or cover a pie pan with some hanging over.

*There we have it folks, another holiday of great food, fun, and beverages. May your day be filled with love, fun, friendship, family, and happiness. Until the next issue I bid you all a safe and Blessed Beltane.*

Huggs & B\*B ~ OwlOak



© 2009 James Rancourt, aka OwlOak  
OwlOak lives in New England, USA and is a Wiccan High Priest.  
He has been an EW member since 2003.

## ***The Herb Garden*** ***Sweet Woodruff*** ***by Lyric Moonshadow***

Ahhh, Beltane! Visions of bonfires and May Poles instantly pop into my head... It is the most fun and beautiful of all Sabbats –and I am very insistent about this as I am a May baby and Taurus through and through!!!! Of the many herbs associated with this glorious time of the year, including Cypress, Myrrh, Violet, Daffodil, Hazel, Pine, Rosemary, Rue, Patchouli to name but a few, my favorite is the Sweet Woodruff. I have it growing all over my garden as ground cover under my big maple and as borders everywhere else. And why am I so attached to this plant? Two words: May Wine .... But we'll get to that later!!!!

### **Characteristics and Growing**

Sweet Woodruff aka Wild Baby's Breath, Wunderove, Ladies in the Hay, and Master of the Woods as well as by its botanical name *Gallium Odoratum*, is a ground covering perennial and a member of the Rubiaceae family. The name originates from the old French word rouelle, which means wheel. Aptly named as the leaves form a delicate circle around the stem, and surround a lovely, tiny white flower. Woodruff is native to Asia, North Africa and Europe. It is shade loving, which is why it just LOVES my garden. It can easily be transplanted by digging up a clump and replanting it, or it spreads easily by way of its root system. Once the seeds develop they are covered with hooked bristles and attach themselves to birds and animal fur and are dispersed this way as well. It does have a tendency to take over and therefore you should keep your eye on it. I love giving it away as gifts when it becomes too robust and “active”. Woodruff has a strong sweet smell. It has been described as a combination of cinnamon, fresh grass and vanilla. Unlike many plants, the fragrance seems to increase once it is harvested and dried. This probably explains why it works well in potpourri, sachets and in medieval times it was used as mattress stuffing. The flower blooms in early May and lasts through June – right now mine are starting to develop buds, even with our late snow, so I know there will be Beltane May Wine this year – more on that later, hahhhahaha!

### **History and Folklore**

According to Mrs. Greive's *A Modern Herbal in the Middle Ages*, Sweet Woodruff was hung and strewn in Churches on Holy Days, particularly St. Barnabus and St. Peter's along with roses and lavender. I speculate not only for its sacred properties, but also to hide the odor of an unwashed congregation!

Teutonic warriors carried Woodruff tucked in their helmets to aid in success in battle. The origin is not clear, but it makes sense as Woodruff leaves are said to be a mild anesthetic and to promote healing when applied externally. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Germans used Sweet Woodruff to flavor new wine (wine that hasn't had time to age). This tradition is still used today to welcome Spring by making “May Wine” or “Maiwein” or “Waldmeister”..... and yes, there will be more on this later!!!!!! Just as the Germans served Wassail in winter, Walmeister was served in spring.

### **Medicinal Uses**

Woodruff should be harvested just before or shortly after it flowers for full effects. The active constituents are coumarin (which ferments when the plant dries and is responsible for the fresh smell) and dicumarol. These elements cause the plant to act as an anti-spasmodic, mild sedative, as well as an anti-inflammatory and anticoagulant. *Please note, as with all herbal remedies they should not be taken if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, and just to be safe, I advise consulting with your healer prior to ingesting any medicinal herb.* Woodruff may cause internal bleeding if taken in large doses. It should not be taken if you are currently taking any blood thinning medications or any medications for circulatory problems. The FDA has only approved Woodruff for use in alcoholic beverages.

To treat the symptoms of abdominal cramping, migraines and headaches:

Add 1 cup of boiling water to 1 tsp. of dried Woodruff and steep for 5 minutes. Drink 2-3 cups of unsweetened tea per day. If you prefer a cool drink, steep 2 tsp. in 8 oz. of cold water for 8 hours. Strain before drinking.

To use as a calming agent or to help treat insomnia:

Add ½ tsp. of dried, ground Woodruff to honey or pureed fruit and take half-an-hour before going to bed.

To use as a compress to help in the healing of wounds, injuries or phlebitis:

In a mortar and pestle grind fresh Woodruff. Place on a warm (microwaved, slightly dampened) cloth and wrap well. Place on the affected area. Be sure to avoid touching the skin with the plant pulp, as it may cause a rash if you are sensitive.

### **Magickal Uses**

The elemental properties of Sweet Woodruff are:

Original Art by Lyric Moonshadow

Gender: Masculine, Hot

Planet: Mars

Element: Fire

Magickal Properties: Success, Victory in War and Sports, Prosperity, Healing, Protection

Associated Deities: Cerridwen, Arawn, Daga, Lugh, the Morrigu, Macha, Pwyll

Looks can be deceiving. Despite Woodruff's delicate appearance it is a commanding herb. Add it to your Mojo bag to help master adverse conditions, and for strength. Put Woodruff in your shoe to attract money, prosperity, victory for athletes and soldiers. Along with Sampson Snake Root, Woodruff in your shoe will delay tiredness and promote healing. To master an adversary, sprinkle dried Woodruff in the path of your adversary to ensure he or she walks through it. Then call upon the Gods to help you master, rule, control your opponent. For your Beltane celebration, enhance the beauty of your altar by adding sprigs of Woodruff, or wear a garland in your hair. Last but not least, enjoy May Wine!!



### Recipes

Lyric's Quick and Easy May Wine.

1. Harvest Sweet Woodruff just as it has begun to bloom, and early in the morning before the sun is high, rinse it off and pat dry with paper towels.
2. Pour a bottle (or two) of your favorite white wine into a large glass jar with a lid. You may need more than one jar. Save the bottle and the cork.
3. Stuff the woodruff into the jar. The more you use the more flavorful your wine will be.
4. Pour the wine back into the jar, screw the lid on tight and let it stand, shaking it once a day. How long should it steep? – As this is a very pagan recipe, the answer is “for as much time as you have before your Beltane celebration”! I’ve done it for two weeks, and I’ve done it overnight only. Doesn’t matter, it’s always good. The morning of Beltane, strain the wine and pour it back into the bottle (tip: a funnel works best for this – believe me!) Chill before serving. Happy Beltane.

If you would like more traditional German recipes for May wine (Maiwein) please visit this website:

<http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/aa042601b.htm>

**Lift a glass of your favorite May Wine and sing a verse or two of Tull's “Cup of Wonder”:**

*“May I make my fond excuses for the lateness of the hour,  
but we accept your invitation, and we bring you Beltane’s flower.  
For the May Day is the great day, sung along the old straight track.  
And those who ancient lines did lay will heed the song that calls them back.  
Pass the word and pass the lady, pass the plate to all who hunger.  
Pass the wit of ancient wisdom; pass the cup of crimson wonder.”*

**Enjoy your Beltane, the most fun and beautiful of all Sabbats. I always do!!!!**

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*Sweet Woodruff*

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## *Tools of a Witch*

# The Besom (Broom)

by George Knowles

The besom, or broom, is one of the main ritual tools of the witch and is sacred to both the Goddess and God. The God - through its symbolic phallic shape, the Goddess - through its three-piece make up, the shaft, the bristles and the binding cord, three being the tri-form aspect of the Goddess. While besom and broom are two names used interchangeably, there is a small difference in their definition. The brush of a besom is usually made of twigs and is therefore more rounded in shape, whereas the brush of a broom is primarily made of straw, which is flatter in shape.



**Besom - Broom**

Traditionally a besom was made from three different woods, Ash for the shaft, Birch twigs for the bristles and Willow strands for the binding cord. Ash is protective and has command over the four elements, Birch is purifying and draws spirits to one's service, while Willow is sacred to the Goddess and binds them all together. In modern witchcraft today, while the traditional besom still takes pride of place, other woods are used for special purposes: Oak for added power and protection, Pine for luck and health, Redwood for longevity, Maple for love and money, Walnut for health and wisdom, and Cinnamon for spirituality.

Magically, a besom is used for a variety of purposes, but more generally they are used to purify and protect. In ritual they are used to cleanse sacred space before magick is performed by visually sweeping away negative energies and astral build up. Before casting the circle, the Priest or Priestess will walk clockwise (deosil) around the circle space, and holding the besom a few inches off the ground sweep outward from the centre while chanting the Besom Chant:



## Besom Chant

*"Besom, besom, sacred broom  
Sweep out darkness, sweep out gloom  
Rid this sacred hallowed ground  
Of demons, imps and hell bent hounds;  
Then set ye down on Her green earth  
By running stream or Mistress' hearth,  
Till called once more on Sabbath night  
To cleanse once more this sacred site."*

(Author unknown)

Sweeping the area with a besom can be done in addition to or in place of incense, to purify ritual space, and is often used for such when rituals are conducted in smoke-free areas. When not being used in ritual, place your magical besom by the door to protect the home from evil spirits and negative energies. When standing a besom, always place the bristles up, with the shaft on the floor. This not only makes the bristles last longer, it will also bring you good luck. Another old custom was to place a besom outside the door, this as an indication to other witches that the occupants are out, or working, and didn't wish to be disturbed.

To make your own traditional besom you will need the following:

*A length of Ash approximately 4ft long and about 1in thick for the shaft.  
Birch twigs (about 1-2 ft. in length) to act as the bristles.  
Several strands of Willow for binding the bristles to the end of the shaft.  
A pair of Scissors.  
Water and salt.*

Soak the Birch twigs and Willow strands overnight in warm lightly salted water (to make them pliable) and allow them to dry slightly before using. They need to be damp and pliable before binding them to the Ash shaft. Arrange the twigs alongside the shaft about 3-6 inches from the bottom, larger twigs form the centre of the brush with shorter ones around the outside, then bind them with the Willow strands. Be sure to tie them very securely. Use as many layers of twigs as you like depending on how full you want the brush to be. Leave overnight to dry.



Whether you make your own besom in the traditional way "as above," or purchase a ready made one, you may then wish to decorate it with a magickal name or other meaningful symbols or sigils. Once decorated, the besom should then be consecrated ready for use in your magickal workings. To do this anoint the besom with oil while reciting the following chant:

### Consecration Chant

*"Besom of birch and willow tied,  
Be my companion and my guide.  
On ashen shaft by moonlight pale  
My spirit rides the windy gale  
To magickal realms beyond both space and  
time.  
  
To magickal lands my soul will sail.  
In the company of the crone I'll ride  
This besom of birch with willow tied  
So do I consecrate this magickal tree.  
As I will it, so mote it be."*

(Author unknown)

Once consecrated for use in the magick circle, it should not be used for any other purpose. When making a besom for normal household usage, it can still be magically charged for that use. On one side of the shaft (from the bristles travelling upwards) carve the following words while visualising your intent: "I sweep out evil and poverty." On the opposite side of the shaft (from the top travelling down to the bristles, carve "I sweep in money and luck." When sweeping, visualise the same intent, but sweep towards the fireplace if you have one. If not sweep in any direction except towards the front door, so as not sweep out and lose your good luck.

### Myths and Folklore

Most people identify the besom with the old wedding ceremonies performed by Gypsies and early American slaves, when couples "Jumped the Broom" to cross the threshold of their new homes ensuring fertility, domestic harmony and longevity. This custom continues today in modern hand-fasting rituals, when as part of the ceremony, the bridal couple will jump across a decorated besom as conformation of their commitment to each other. Should the marriage not work, or end in divorce, jumping the broom backwards will break that commitment.

The age-old image of witches flying around on broomsticks casting baneful spells is believed to have come from old fertility rites associated with nature and agricultural. As part of the



seasonal Spring rites to aid the growth of newly planted crops, women from local villages would gather around fields with their besoms. Placed between their legs as they circled the field, much like riding on a hobby horse, the idea was the higher they leapt, the higher the crop would grow.

In renaissance times, according to the demonologists, the Devil himself presented brooms and flying ointment to newly initiated witches so they could fly to the Sabbats. Often they carried with them familiars in the shape of demons or animals. They were also said to fly across fields blasting their neighbour's crops, or ride out to sea in order to rise up storms. However, such concocted myths were generally forced from the poor tortured victims of the persecutions, and should not be taken seriously.

### Other Magickal Uses

Placing a broom across a doorway allows your departed friends and family to speak to you if they so choose. As long as the broom remains, they can communicate freely. To bring rain, stand outside and swing a broom in the air over your head. If lightning blows your way put a broom on your porch to act as a lightning rod. Electricity and lightning are thought to be attracted to brooms. Another way to safeguard a house against lightning strikes is to cross a spade and a broom outside the main entrance.

A besom placed under the bed or beneath the pillows at night, will protect the sleeper from nightmares and ensure a peacefully sleep.

Similarly, it is not wise to leave a bed empty for too long. If you are going away for any length of time, place a besom in your bed, laying the bristles on the pillow. This will guard the bed against evil spirits until you return.

Two crossed besoms hung on a wall or the back of a door will protect the house from unwanted influences.

With the exception of those used exclusively for magickal purposes, moving an old besom into a new house will result in bad luck.





Illustration by Harrison Fisher

## *The divination Depot*

### **Cartomancy**

## **Playing Card Divination**

**By Ardriana Cahill**

There is an ongoing debate about which came first, Playing cards or Tarot cards. Around the time that the Queen became part of the Court cards, the evidence shows that some gaming packs added more picture cards as permanent trump cards. The 22 non-suited cards "Tarot" cards were actually trump cards used with the suited playing cards, to form a pack of 78 cards. The card packs have been extended to 97 cards by adding more trumps and shortened to 63, 54 and 42 cards by dropping numeral cards.

Fanciful mythologies have evolved in the craft, occult and metaphysical communities as to the origin and design of the 22 trump cards. All have largely been debunked. Gypsies did not invent them nor did they bring their wisdom from Egypt because the Tarot cards evolved in Europe before the Roma arrived. But Italian witches, who all but claim that they invented witchcraft *<grin>* can do some honest crowing in that Cartomancy, telling fortunes with cards, appears to be their invention. Historians credit hereditary witches with the older card interpretations, preserved in the playing card traditions that allowed them a divination tool that could be left out in public. Still the definitions vary from family to family

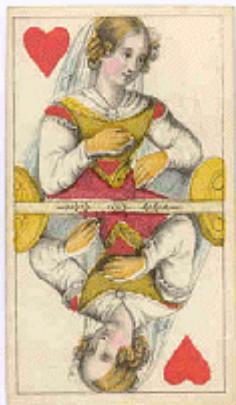
-- Because everything that is alive - evolves.

Recent investigating on current card meanings has proven frustrating for me. Card meanings that are a cherished mainstay of FamTrad playing card readings have evaporated into more homogenous definitions, such as, clearing and balancing one's nameless energies. Other websites have turned the definitions into psychological diagnostic tools. But when did hearts, in general, stop representing love, home and happiness?

The following is very nearly what Grandmother taught me. Some of the meanings have changed subtly and some have expanded in their definitions. As in the Ace of Diamonds tradition meaning a message coming by phone or wire, is now expanded to include emails, since it can no longer mean a telegram (which are officially extinct now).

### **The Cards and their Meanings**

#### **HEARTS – Home and Love**



Ace: The home. A new love or friendship. A love letter.  
 Two: A sweetheart. An engagement or partnership. The dove.  
 Three: Friends, teamwork. (surrounded by black card: You need to be cautious)  
 Four: News of a marriage or a child.  
 Five: Help or favors from distant people. A Legacy.  
 Six: A proposal of marriage. A late in life marriage.

Seven: Changing places or residence for the better. A lover's quarrel, a family spat, jealousy. A pleasant surprise, small pleasures.  
 Eight: A happy gathering, a party or dinner. Home preparations. Visiting and visitors.  
 Nine: The wish card. Your dream will come true. Good Fortune.  
 Ten: Your true love. "At sunset..." Good Fortune.  
 Jack: An intimate poetic friend, sister or brother  
 A good-natured, fair-haired young man or woman with blue eyes.  
 Queen: A confidant or mother  
 A beautiful, kind or fair-haired woman, with blue eyes.  
 King: A good advisor or father  
 A good-natured, affectionate fair-haired man with blue eyes. The owl.



### SPADES – Caution and Misfortune

Ace: Right side up - A large city. A nuisance or obsession. Upside down – a death, an ending, a conclusion. The Raven.  
 Two: A serious illness. Unwelcome news.  
 Three: Tears. Of sorrow (unless connected with red cards, then tears of joy.)  
 Four: A disappointment or delay. A separation or broken

promises.

Five: An upset condition. Stress, suspense.

Six: A misunderstanding, miscommunication. Small improvements.

Seven: A change of plans or affections, a reversal of fortune. The loss of a friend. Temptation, betrayal, lies.  
 Eight: Drastic action. Chaos. Surrounded by red cards means that the upheaval may actually put you in a better position however painful it is getting there.  
 Nine: Bad luck in all things. Slander, gossip, illness, accident and jealousy. Plans go awry. Friends let you down. Cancellations. The long way.  
 Ten: "At night." Loss, sorrow, misfortune lost freedom, depression. A sad journey.  
 Jack: A messenger  
 A well-meaning but immature youth, male or female.  
 A very dark-haired youth.  
 Queen: A meddler  
 A widow, an unscrupulous or selfish woman.  
 A very dark-haired woman.  
 King: A soldier.  
 A widower, an ambitious, cold and authoritative man.  
 A very dark-haired man.

### DIAMONDS – Money and Fate (Chance)



Ace: A message by phone or wire (e-mail?) A gift.  
 Two: An important letter.  
 Three: Papers to be signed. Legal contracts, a large purchase, domestic arguments.  
 Four: Money granted. A refund. An inheritance.  
 Five: A small amount of money. Success in business.  
 Six: A gift of money. Reversal of fate.  
 Seven: A change in luck. (surrounded by red cards

outcome positive. Black cards?...not so much.) A gift of money or metal. A promotion or raise. An unexpected

expense. Self-Deception. Gossip.  
 Eight: A windfall, a boon you don't expect. A brief but memorable love affair. Financial ups and downs.  
 Nine: A large sum of money from an outside source. Restlessness.  
 Ten: Health, wealth and happiness. "A bright morning" and a brilliant future. Travel highlighted.  
 Jack: A cousin, sibling or a close but family friend.  
 A red or very fair-haired youth, either male or female.  
 A dishonest or unreliability youth.  
 A student.  
 Queen: An aunt, grandmother or family friend.  
 A red or very fair-haired woman.  
 A woman who loves to gossip. A flirt.  
 A midwife.  
 King: An uncle, grandfather or family friend.  
 A red or very fair-haired man. A stubborn or influential man. A miser.

### CLUBS – Industry and Luck (Achievement, Fortune, Business)



Ace: Good news. A sudden surprise.  
 Two: An obstacle. A time card meaning 2 days, 2 weeks, 2 months.  
 Three: An agreement. A time card meaning 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months.  
 Four: A difficult conversation (face to face) (surrounded by red cards outcome positive. Black cards?...not so much.)  
 Five: A car ride. "A short cut..." An alliance.

Six: A journey, a voyage, a long trip. Financial aid. A

victory  
 Seven: A change in prospects. An unexpected burden. Recognition and good returns. A short trip. A swap.  
 Eight: A party, admirers and accolades. Good friends. Jealousy. A project falters.  
 Nine: "For sure." An admirer. Caution. False friends. The Fox.  
 Ten: Great luck and a successful journey. "At midday" or a "midway" success  
 Jack: An athlete.  
 An attractive dark-haired youth, male or female.  
 Queen: An artist.  
 An intelligent, self-confident woman.  
 A dark-haired woman.  
 King: A scholar.  
 An honest, generous and loyal man.  
 A dark-haired man.



## Shuffling

Shuffle the cards casually (not like a professional 21 dealer!) and while you (or s/he if you are reading for someone else) is doing that, think about what you are seeking, what your are concerned or curious about. And instead of asking a question about the subject's outcome...visualize (wish for) the outcome you desire. If one or a few cards fall out during shuffling, take note of what they are because they are important to the reading. Then, place them back into the deck. Note if they show up again.

Place the deck on the table. Cut the cards towards you. (If you cut the cards away from you, you are pushing your luck away.) Then deal from the top of the deck in one of the following layouts. (Or any modern Tarot layout, like the Celtic Cross.)

## Layouts

The Simple Yes or No question

Concentrate on any question then cut the cards three times. Suit and number are of no consequence.  
\*\*\* Family tradition

## Meanings

- 3 Red = Definitely Yes
- 2 Red to 1 Black = Conditional Yes
- 2 Black to 1 Red = Conditional No.
- 3 Black = Definitely No

## The 21 card method

\*\*\* Family tradition

Three month layout - Five piles or 4 cards and one outstanding

- Pile One – Regarding you
  - Pile Two – Regarding your home
  - Pile Three – Regarding your wish
  - Pile Four – Regarding what you don't expect.
  - Pile Five – Regarding what is sure to come to pass
  - One card extra – overall indicator of next 3 months
- (Incorporate any card that may fall out while shuffling as subjective to the 21<sup>st</sup> card)



## Standard Three Card Quick Spread

\*\*\*for a time period of either one day, one week or one month

Shuffle the cards thoroughly, and then deal three cards in a row in front of you. The card on the left side represents the immediate past, the center card represents the present, and the right-hand card depicts the immediate future. Suppose you chose the eight of diamonds, the queen of hearts, and the ten of spades. This means that you will be involved in financial matters in the first month. You will have dealings with a strong woman who will offer advice on love or friendship in the following month. The final month reveals an unexpected new start, which could involve change. It is an indication to proceed cautiously.

## Final Note

Never expect a reading to pass further into the future than three months. Even three months is pushing it. Anything further is unreliable even if random events prove the reading accurate a year later.

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# **Seasonal Festival**

## **Floralia**

**by Graham & Pari**



On the sun-soaked hillside, undulating fields of wild oats and bursting blooms of red poppies, spring gentians, wild orchids, cosmos and periwinkles bring a much-welcomed splash of color to a young girl's eyes and hope to her heart. Cypress, olive and fig trees dot the Roman landscape around her, and rows of grapevine are beginning to bud, bringing the promise of abundant future wines. Three temples loom in the distance.

But it is the Templum Flora on the Quirinal Hill that is a bustling scene today as a procession of townsfolk, both young and old, stop to drop their flower offerings atop the altar of the Goddess of Spring. The young girl grows excited, watching the crowds and listening as hails to Flora are carried on the wings of the wind and bawdy merriment is in the air. A few of her girlfriends are huddled together on the grass nearby, busily tying brightly colored ribbons to the flower wreaths that will adorn their heads today. They giggle and flirt with a gaggle of boys who are, at the moment, teasing and poking sticks at the wild hares and goats which were earlier in the day ceremoniously penned and which await release after sunset...when the chase begins. But her deep brown eyes are on one young man in particular. And his eyes are riveted on her. As he stares, he reaches into the pouch that dangles from his braided belt and pulls out a long, thin vetch flower which he begins to slowly twirl between his fingers. An impish but almost imperceptible smile brightens his face...and on her own, a blush that rivals any Spring flower.

Nearly everyone is carrying a similar pouch stuffed with beans, lupine and vetch flowers, each symbolizing fertility, and all awaiting to later be thrown into the crowds...crowds of people now gathering for a most salacious and sense-ridden Spring festival ~ Ludi Florales!

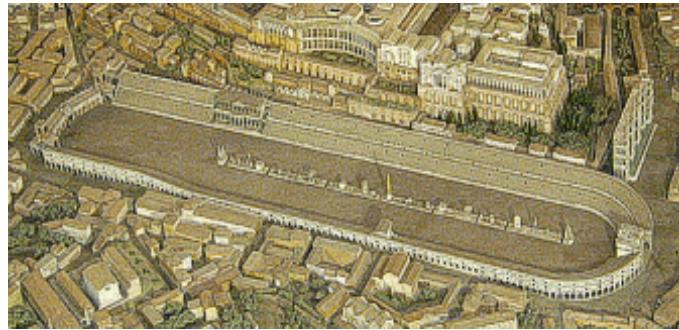
\* \* \*

Ludi Florales - translating to "floral games" and more commonly known today as Flora - was a May Day celebration in honor of Flora, the goddess of all plants, flowers, fields and fruits and patroness to all the most sensual pleasures of youth. She is the wife of Favonius who is the god of the west wind, and sister to Fauna who is the goddess of animals and wildlife and wife of the Roman god Faunus (Greek Pan), god of the forests. The ludi, or games, held in Flora's honor were established as an annual event in ancient Rome around 173 BCE, and were run over the course of six days from April 28 to May 3. During this time, Romans clothed themselves in colorful attire, with green always being a favored color, and the woman would adorn their hair with flowers. Floral garlands and decorations were to be found everywhere. In the temples, ritual sacrifices were made and libations of milk and honey were offered to Flora with the hope of winning her blessings for a bounteous season. The festivities continued day and night and, although originating and once limited to the patrician nobles of the day, they later became particularly popular with the plebeians who enjoyed the raucous singing, drinking and dancing that was characteristic of the festival - all done with the intention of encouraging and taking part in Nature's awakening. Spirits were further raised by risqué theatrical and gladiatorial performances involving courtesans, for whom Flora was particularly important as patron goddess. Goats, hares and roe deer, revered symbols of fertility, were released into gardens and fields to ensure the fecundity of the lands which were so crucial to the sustenance and survival of the community. Seeds, beans and phallus-like flowers were gathered and scattered around for the same reason.





"Flora - Capitoline Museum, Rome"



Circus Maximus

Along with these rites, couples engaged in lovemaking with joyous abandonment, not only for its promise of fertile abundance, but also as a celebration of the blessings of the season. On the final day of the celebrations, dedicated chariot races were conducted within Rome's premier venue for such events, the Circus Maximus, with the green chariot faction popularly backed to be favored by Flora.

So...in the midst of Spring, and in the welcome of Summer...let the games begin!

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The month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom and to bring forth fruit; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, likewise every lusty heart that is in any manner a lover, springeth and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May.

*Le Morte d'Arthur (c. 1470)*  
Sir Thomas Malory (d. 1471)



Original Art © Patricia J. Martin - April 2009.

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## The Bards Corner



### Beltane

Beltane is a time for fun, to celebrate the day.  
 Happiness and frivolity takes place on the 1st of May.  
 The May pole is erected for all to have a chance.  
 To join in all the festivities, to be happy and have a dance.

The people dress in merry clothes with stories they have to say.  
 They dance their way, a happy time, along with the queen of May.  
 There are pink blossoms on the hawthorn tree; we pluck them with our  
 hands.  
 We celebrate this special time with the flowers from our lands.

The marriage of the sun king, a happy man in life,  
 Takes place with the earth queen, to grant him a new wife.  
 The blessing of the ceremony makes them hand in hand.  
 The celebrations give their blessing for the fertile land.

*Mike*



# A Fascination for Fire

## By Nan Berrett

**F**ascinating fire – if we don't have enough of it we die, if we have too much of it we die – it's an element which requires exquisite balance.

Greek philosopher Plato, who lived around 360 BCE, wrote that Demiurge, the creator god, made the world out of the four elements: Earth, Air, Water and Fire. This world included the Earth, and the celestial spheres of Moon, Stars and Sun.

150 years earlier a Sicilian philosopher, Empedocles, had already identified these four elements as essential to all life, a concept which formed part of Aristotle's fundamental teachings.

While Cunningham said so-called Fire Magick was generally nothing more than a euphemism for the mystical reverence of sex, there have been several religions that worshipped fire as a symbol of divinity.

Fire is a trouble maker -

Robert Graves explained how fire was given to humans according to Greek mythology.

Prometheus was the creator of mankind. The goddess Athene taught him architecture, astronomy, mathematics, navigation, medicine, and metallurgy, and he in turn taught them to humans. Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods, became angry at Prometheus for making people powerful by teaching them all these useful skills.

When the gods chose Prometheus as arbiter in a dispute, he fooled the gullible Zeus into picking the worst parts of the sacrificial bull by hiding them under a rich layer of fat. To punish Prometheus, Zeus withheld fire from men. "Let them eat their flesh raw," he declared. In response, Prometheus, snuck up to Mount Olympus, lit a torch from the sun, and hid a burning piece of charcoal in a hollow stalk. He slipped away with it and thus delivered fire to mankind.

Zeus, as revenge, tried unsuccessfully to trick Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus, into accepting the beautiful but mischievous Pandora as a gift. Epimetheus, mindful of earlier advice from his brother, refused. Even madder now that his trick had failed, Zeus had Prometheus chained naked to a pillar in the Caucasian mountains. A griffon-vulture ate at Prometheus' liver all day long. During the bitter cold of the mountain night, the liver became whole again.

So it went day after day, year after year. Epimetheus married Pandora in an effort to free his brother. Pandora -- as devilish as she was beautiful -- opened the famous box in which Prometheus had shut up all the evils that might plague mankind: Old Age, Labor, Sickness, Insanity, Vice and Passion. Only years later, at the behest of Heracles (Hercules), did Zeus free Prometheus.

And all this nastiness was caused by fire.

In formal magic, the four elements are seen as providing natural energies for transforming wishes into actuality. The elements are not chemical elements found in science, but symbols of the four forces which traditionally make up life on the physical, mental and spiritual plane throughout the universe. The four elements combine to form the fifth element of pure spirit – akasha.

Psychologist Carl Jung saw the four elements as four types of human personality traits and functions. He saw earth as being associated with sensations, air with thought, fire with intuition and water with feeling. The elements and their traits also appear in astrological birth signs.

### Fire

When I first began thinking about Fire I initially looked at it in relation to the other elements. Out of all four, Fire is the most magickal and mysterious. Early man knew the earth; he walked

upon it, fed from it. He drank from the streams, washed in the rain and watched how water from the sky would make plants grow. He recognised air, as it blew past stirring the earth and the water, he breathed it in.

Fire was the distant sun, providing warmth, but the elemental fire which burst and jumped and crackled only after an equally mysterious lightning strike, or maybe occasionally ignited from a cross volcano's lava flow – this was real magick.

Fire became valuable. Its embers were nurtured and carried ceremonially from campsite to campsite so it could ignite anew. Early man initially didn't have the knowledge to create fire for themselves.

Air was always available, so was earth, water was easily found in most places, but fire – that was different. It must have seemed like a gift from the Gods. Without fire to light the deep and dark caverns, ancient man would never have been able to create cave paintings which were used to give power to the huntsman and which depicted the mysteries that became cemented into tribal religious beliefs. Fire is still sacred today – it consumes our offerings, lights our ritual, offers a portal to the otherworld

I thought about the four elements and what they needed from each other and how they interacted with fire – earth provides fuel, air provides oxygen and water controls it. But fire is the only element which seems to need control – a measure of the complexity and danger of fire.

Fire is brilliant, bright and flashy, but it's also unstable and follows no logical pattern. Fire jumps instinctively to live in the moment, with little thought of what is around it. Fire is reckless and passionate and it is unique out of the elements, because before it can create it must destroy – it pushes us to accept the new by destroying the old. There is no turning back when you work with fire.

This element represents light, the Sun, lightning, fertility, power, joy, ambition, inspiration and achievement, and also the destruction of what is now no longer needed. Like Air, it represents the male / yang / god in the form of the Sun deities. Its elemental creature is the salamander, a mythical lizard (though the name is now given to a species of amphibious newt) which lives within fire. Salamanders often manifest as dragons.

Its colour is red. Quarters are south or north.

Fire is edgy and dangerously unpredictable and any fire workings can end in fireworks or tears of you're not careful. I am a fire sign (Leo) and have an affinity with fire energy - in lots of different ways. I am a great one for burning myself up before starting again - often having to go through agonising and very difficult processes as I make the transition. I think I am at a level now where I am easier in my skin and not so keen to burn before I learn - but it's still a bit of a tightrope for me as I struggle to keep a balance.

Some deities associated with the Fire element include: Gods: Vulcan, Ra, Agni, Horus, Atar, Bel and Mars; Goddesses: Brede, Freya, Hestia, Pele, Vesta, Durga, Elena, Sekhmet, Bast.

## **Magick**

If you are performing magick and want to know which element is best suited for a particular situation you can draw a tarot card to help you with your choice (fire – wands or staves; water – cups or chalices; earth – pentacles or discs; air – swords).

Fire magick can be used for change, renewal, destruction (of negative energy), sex, healing, to gain authority and power, purification, cleansing and protection.

To use fire properly, you must first contain it – fire is dangerous. Whenever we plan to light a fire, whether it is indoors or outdoors, no matter what the weather, we need to make sure we have a few precautions in place – water and sand buckets outdoors, bicar-

bonate of soda indoors, maybe fire blankets and extinguishers.

For magick, candles are ideal for focussing fire energy – often of different colours, according to the spell. The interesting thing about candles is, that although they represent the fire element – they encompass all elements and become the only tool needed for magick to happen. (The candle itself represents earth, the melted wax is water, smoke air and flame is fire). A simple candle spell only needs intent, focus, and a few words:

*I call upon the strength of Fire.  
To give me that which I desire.  
So mote it be.*

Flames are wonderful scrying tools – you can stare into the embers, or you can focus on a single flame, using a simple candle as your tool. Look into the candle flame on your table, let your eyes become unfocussed and soft. Relax, breath gently and slowly. Centre yourself. Feel energy flowing in through your crown chakra as you relax, the energy flows through to your feet and into the earth below the floor. Look into the candle flame. Take a few minutes to capture any images or thoughts, sensations, smells our sounds.

## **Rituals**

Fire rituals often include drumming and dancing around a bonfire, walking barefoot over hot coals, fire twirling or simple candle magick.

Fire rituals should be used to discard old habits, traits, behaviours. Use the fire salamanders to eat up what you want to get rid of from your life – write down your discards, or even throw an item which signifies what is holding you back, into the fire – just remember to also ask for a replacement for the item – something better, something more positive.

Fire is extremely powerful and was the focal point of a ritual put out by Raven Grimassi in 2004. Grimassi put out a call for “needfire” following the horrific events of September 11:

He said one of the most empowering aspects of being a Pagan, Witch, or Wiccan was not living life as a victim. Personal power means that we are full participants in the affairs of our lives. How then do we respond when the world around us seems to be falling apart?

In ancient times when troubles beset the land, and the Kingdom seemed to be in peril, the people turned to a practice known as the needfire. Fire represented the spirit of the land, which gave life and purpose to everything in the realm. Therefore when troubles arose within the Kingdom it was a sign that the fire had been contaminated. The spirit of the land had grown ill and required renewed vitality.

The custom of lighting a needfire called for specific types of sacred wood to be used to feed the fire: birch, elm, hazel, holly, oak, pine, rowan, willow and yew. Each of these sacred woods served to pass desired qualities and blessings into the needfire. Through this practice the people were able to refocus their spiritual values, generating a new vitality with which to enliven the spirit of the land.

In ancient times there were some who used an analogy between goats and sheep to describe Pagans. Goats are active, independent, and difficult to herd together. Sheep are passive, easy to herd, and tend to follow anyone who will, lead. As modern Pagans this is part of our situation, for we are not sheep. This makes us powerful, and therefore we pose a threat to those whose agenda requires sheep.

As Pagans, Witches and Wiccans we know that people are not powerless. Our ancestors understood that everything is connected and inseparable. What becomes of one thing then influences another. This is not unlike a standing row of dominos, and when one is tipped a chain reaction occurs. Such a concept is foundational to the principle of magic.

A more modern view of the value of the needfire is reflected in dealing with computer problems. Sometimes it becomes necessary to re-boot the computer, which restores the integrity of the original settings. This is not

unlike the custom of extinguishing all the fires in the land and then relighting the sacred bonfire. Perhaps it is time to reboot the program and restore the operating system here in our own land.

The ancient needfire was kindled by friction and then fed with logs of the nine sacred trees. Torches were then lighted from the bonfire and carried to each home to relight the hearth fire. In this way the renewed spirit of the land passed into each home within the Kingdom.

Raven suggests replacing the nine logs with nine pieces of paper upon which the names of the trees are written. Beneath each name can then be written a desired quality. Using a metal bowl or cauldron the papers can be fed to the flame in a symbolic passing of each specific nature. These natures will then reside within the needfire. To create the needfire we can use a wooden match, which will honor the ancient custom of employing friction to ignite the needfire.

The following is his suggested list of correspondences:

Birch - Forthright  
 Elm - Enduring  
 Hazel - Wise  
 Holly - Tenacious  
 Oak - Truthful  
 Pine - Visionary  
 Rowan - Courageous  
 Willow - Honoring  
 Yew - Intuitive

The basic idea is to pass these traits into the needfire, which in turn passes them to the spirit of the land. And Raven asked the pagan community of the United States to participate in the creation of this particular needfire to begin healing during troubled times. The ritual was undertaken under the October full moon 2004.

There are infinite ways to call in and respect the fire element within ritual:

Oberon Zell Ravenheart and Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart have a nice calling:

*O golden Lion of the burning North  
 Ruler of the flames and lightning,  
 Come to our circle from out of the fire  
 And bring us enlightenment.  
 Grant us your blessings and spare us  
 your fury  
 Hail and welcome*

The Farrars invoke fire with:

*Ye Lords of the Watchtowers of the South, ye Lords of Fire, I do summon, stir and call you up, to witness our rites and to guard the circle."*

Ray Buckland uses a simple invocation – lighting the fire quarter candle with:

*"Here do I bring light and fire in the south, to illuminate our temple and bring it warmth."*

### A Fire Ritual

Cast circle

At a waxing moon - write down a habit, an attitude or a personality trait you would like to bring into your life – or at a waning moon write down something you wanted to discard.

Call in the elements:

#### Water:

*I invoke and welcome water – to give balance and control to fire.*

#### Earth:

*I invoke and welcome earth – to give purpose and fuel to fire.*

#### Air:

*I invoke and welcome air – to give direction and life to fire.*

#### Fire:

*I invoke and welcome fire – the flame of life.*

Light candle on altar (white candle will do) and say:

*"May the flame burn within me"*

*"Fire, fire, Spirit of the Sun; I offer this flame, my will be done"*

Carefully burn paper in candle flame (make sure you have a fireproof container and drop paper into it as soon as it catches alight) and say:

*"I embrace the darkness, because without it we would not recognise the light."*

Farewell to the elements, beginning with air

*Air: We thank air for its presence and bid you farewell.*

*Earth: We thank earth for its presence and bid you farewell.*

*Water: We thank water for its presence and bid you farewell.*

*Fire: We thank fire for its presence and bid you farewell.*

I'll finish with a quote from Aleister Crowley's - Magick in Theory and Practice:

*"I am the flame that burns in the heart of every man, and in the core of every star. I am life, and the giver of Life, yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death."*

And from Terry Pratchett:

*"Build a man a fire, and he'll be warm for a day. Set a man on fire, and he'll be warm for the rest of his life."*

#### Sources:

*Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, Moyer Bell Ltd., 1955.*

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

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



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