



The Controverscial Cauldron

Email Witches Yahoo Group Newsletter



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Issue: Litha
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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 (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](http://www.controverscial.com) are welcome, so feel free to join us and make new friends.

Best Wishes,

<http://www.controverscial.com>
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Email_Witches



Symbol on the Email Witches home page.

Group Information

- Members: 676
- Founded: Jul 17, 2002
- Language: English
- Countries Representing:
Australa, Bulgaria, Canada, England, France, Greenland, Hawaii, Hungary, India, Italy, Kuwait, New Zealand, Nova Scotia, Panama, Scotland, Slovenia, USA and Wales.

Litha 2008 ~ The Midsummer Solstice

Written and compiled by George Knowles

The Litha festival is one of the lesser Sabbats of the Witches annual calendar and today (in the northern hemisphere) is normally celebrated on the 21st of June, this however can vary from the 20th to the 23rd of June depending upon the Earth's rotation around the Sun. The festival of Litha celebrates the arrival of summer when the hours of daylight are their longest and nights at their shortest. Litha is also known as: Alban Hefin, Alben Heruin, All-couples day, Feill-Sheathain, Feast of Epona, Gathering Day, Johannistag, St. John's Day, Sonnwend, Thing-Tide, Vestalia, Whitsuntide or Whit Sunday.

Litha celebrates the peak of the suns annual rise at the Summer Solstice, the first of two annual solstices dividing the year (the second being the Winter Solstice at Yule in December). The word "Solstice" is derived from two Latin words: "sol" which means "sun", and "sistere" meaning "to stand still". As the summer solstice approaches, each day the sun rises higher in the sky, but by the day of the solstice itself, its rise is almost imperceptible compared to the day before it. In this sense and for the period of midsummer, the sun seems "to stand still" having reached its peak.



Litha (con't)

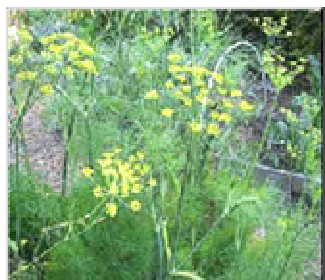
“He furnishes the world with light and removes darkness; he obscures and he illuminates the rest of the stars; he regulates in accord with nature’s precedent the changes of the seasons and the continuous rebirth of the year; he dissipates the gloom of heaven and even calms the storm clouds of the mind of man”

Pliny the Elder - A Roman naturalist.

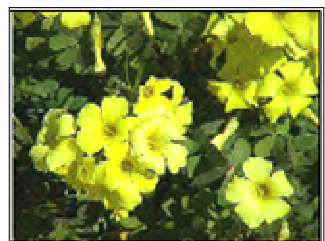
In legends of old, the summer sun begins to grow in strength at Beltane (the 1st of May) and starts its decline at Lammas (the 1st of August), with Litha midway between the two, marking Midsummer. At this time the God is in his prime and the Sun is at its strongest, the Goddess is pregnant of the God and her fertility is reflected in nature. As the powers of nature reach their highest point, so its bounty will soon be ripe for harvest. After the hard work of the planting and before we reap its rewards, the rituals of Litha celebrate the sun's life giving energy while all the riches of nature are in full bloom.



Rue



Fennel



St. John's Wort

In days long ago the rites of Litha were boisterous communal affairs with Morris dancing, singing, storytelling and feasting all taking place in the village. Traditionally it was the time for handfasting and weddings, when couples who met at Beltane, joined hands and jumped the broom to ensure a long and happy marriage. Another custom was to dress the home with seasonal plants and herbs, and to collect and store those containing magical and medicinal properties for use throughout the year. Amongst some of the most favoured at this time of year are: Rue, Roses, Fennel, Orpine, Saint-John's-Wort and Vervain.

More commonly associated with the Winter Solstice and Christmas time, Mistletoe (the “Golden Bough”), Holly and Ivy are equally sought after plants used at the Summer Solstice. The Druids of old specifically prized the mistletoe that grew in Oak trees (which they held to be sacred), and on Midsummer Eve would harvest the plant with a golden sickle. Equally sacred was the Holly, which the Druids believed was special because its evergreen nature added colour to the earth when trees such as the Oak had shed their leaves. The holly's berries were also thought to represent the sacred menstrual blood of the Goddess.

Traditionally the Mistletoe, Holly and Ivy were used at the solstices to decorate homes and churches, later however, Church leaders banned their use in churches because of their pagan associations. Since then their use was confined to the home, except for weddings and handfastings where it was strictly observed that only men wore Holly and women wore Ivy. Jointly they were believed to possess mystical and magickal qualities, they were used in rites of divination, to cure various illnesses, and to protect the home and person from unwanted influences.

Midnight on Midsummer Eve or at noon on Midsummer Day is the best time to collect plants and herbs for use in magick. Divining rods and wands cut at midnight were thought to be more powerful, while plants and herbs harvested at midnight doubly efficacious. Many of the herbs collected at midnight were also used as charms to protect the house from fire or lightning, the family from disease and ill health, and to ward off negative witchcraft and the attentions of the pesky Fairy Folk.

In England and across Europe it was an old custom on the eve of the Solstice to light a large bonfire after sundown; these served the double purpose of providing light for the revellers and warding off evil spirits. In addition to the fires the streets would be lined with lanterns as torch lit processions paraded through the villages. Led by Jack-in-the-Green and his maidens, and followed by Morris

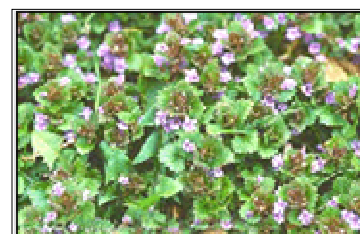
“...it was strictly observed that only men wore Holly and women wore Ivy.”



Oak Mistletoe



Holly



Ivy

Litha (con't)

dancers and hobbyhorse riders, giant effigies of wicker men and dragons were paraded before being burnt on the bonfires in symbolic sacrifices to the sun.

The fire was a major part of the Litha celebrations and of old was used in many ways. The most common was rolling a flaming wheel down a hill, a powerful solar symbol imitable of the sun's course through the sky. As the fire wheel (Catherine wheel) rolled down the hill, if the fire went out they could expect a bad harvest, but if the fire remained lit, the year would be blessed with abundant crops. Another function of the fires was to sympathetically boost the sun's energy so it would remain potent throughout the rest of the growing season ensuring a plentiful harvest.

People believed that the Litha fires possessed great power, and by jumping through the fire it would bring prosperity and protection for the coming year. The charred remains of the fire would later be used to create charms against injury, bad luck and bad weather. Ashes from the fire would be mixed with seeds not yet planted, and spread around fields and orchards to protect their crops. After the embers had cooled farmers would then drive their cattle through the ashes to purge them of disease and illness.

Water is also an important ingredient of the Litha celebrations and is an excellent time for gathering magickal water for your spell work. Many people who live near the coast conduct their rituals on the beach, others near sacred wells, rivers, or streams, and naturally use water in their rites. If you don't live near the sea, then gathering rainwater or dew from the trees or water from a free flowing brook will suffice, more particularly after a storm with lightening. Water should always be collect in glass containers, never metal, and stored on a shelf off the ground or its power may be dissipated. When needed it should only be used for magickal purposes.

According to folklore, Midsummer Eve was a night second only to Halloween for its importance regarding the Fairy Folk, who especially enjoyed riding about on this night hoping to catch the unwary. To see them you had only to gather ferns at the stroke of midnight and rub them onto your eyelids, however be sure to carry a piece of Rue in your pocket to guard against capture. For protection and to evade capture simply turn your jacket inside out, which should keep you from harm's way. When travelling through the woods on this night, you should seek out one of the "ley lines", the old tracks used to link ancient landmarks and places of worship, and stay upon it until you reach your destination. Ley lines were popularly associated with mystical powers of protection and should keep you safe from any malevolent power, as will crossing a stream of "living" (running) water.

In mythology, Litha symbolizes the end of the reign of the Oak-King. As the sun nears the peak of its waxing phase (represented by the Oak King) and begins its decline into its waning phase (represented by the Holly-King), the two do battle. The Oak-King is defeated by the Holly-King and then rules over the second half of the year until they meet again at the Winter Solstice. This in essence is an enactment of the annual cycle of life, growth and death in nature. The Oak King is the growing youth who reaches his peak in mid-summer, while the Holly King is the mature man whose life declines into winter.

References: Microsoft® Encarta® 2006. © 1993-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

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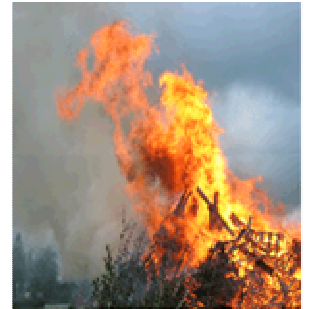
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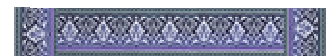
***The glorious sun
Stays in his course and plays the alchemist,
Turning with splendor of his precious eye
The meager cloddy earth to glittering gold.
~ William Shakespeare***



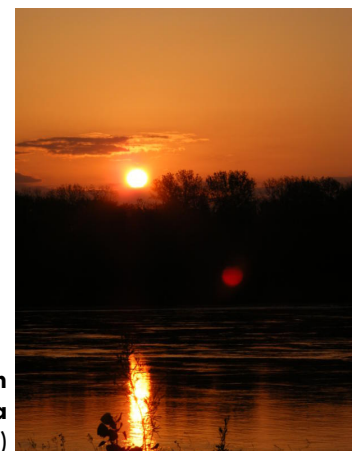
Bonfires are traditional at MidSummer festivals.



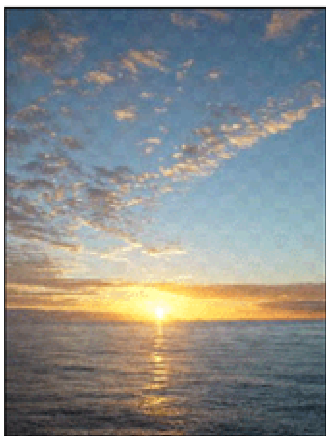
Chalice Well at Glastonbury, UK. Pilgrimages to sacred wells are traditional.



Pagans believe that the Litha/MidSummer fires possess great power. By jumping through the fire, one insures prosperity and protection for the coming "dark-half" of the year.



Power of the Sun
Photo by: **Gemma**
(EW member since 2005)



Sun Gods

Aegea

Greek/Sun goddess

The Adityas

Hindu/Group of 12 Sun gods

Ah Kin

Mayan/Sun god

Aja

Mesopotamian/
Babylonian/Sun goddess

Amaterasu

Japanese/Shinto/Sun goddess

Amun-Ra

Egypt/Sun/Creator god.

Apollo

Greek and Roman/
Sun god

Apu Punchau

Incan/Sun god

Aten

Egypt/Sun god

Baal

Mesopotamian/Sun god

Freyr

Norse/Sun/Fertility god

Garuda

Hindu/Sun/Bird god

Litha/MidSummer Ritual

by Lady Edenbolake

Circle Casting Chant

HP* I cast with love this circle round
I make my mark upon the ground
With athame of power sound
The temple is erected
where love abounds

HP* Lights the fire and stands in Goddess position and says:

We celebrate the Solstice light
when the powers that be are at their height
When powers of the sun at high tune
outreaches the length of the summer moon
Great Lady of the Moon
Lord of the sun
Gather all members (in my family it was Nemote') the magick's begun.

HP Reads summer realm poem, he is speaking to Mother Earth here.

Summer Realm

Come now! within the realm of summer's embrace
Blossoms now bloom upon thy face
Covered now with life anew
Washed over with the glisten of the morning dew

Fairies dance with sparkle and glee
and share with earth their energy
Come the shadows as the night birds sing
as we work our magick in the sacred ring

There within where magick enfolds us
We gather to meet the Summer Solstice
Be it done

All magicks may be done at this time. Any magicks that are geared toward new beginnings and Spiritual, financial growth can be done.

Food is served (Traditionally fruit of the season and homemade wine)

Closing Circle Chant

HP* Erase all evidence of this place
from every eye, from time and space
Let it be touched only by time and wind
'til circle round be cast again.

The circle is closed.

Written by and © to Lady Edenbolake 2008
Lady Edenbolake lives in Southern USA and is a Hereditary Witch of the Dark Moon Coven. www.darkmooncoven.com

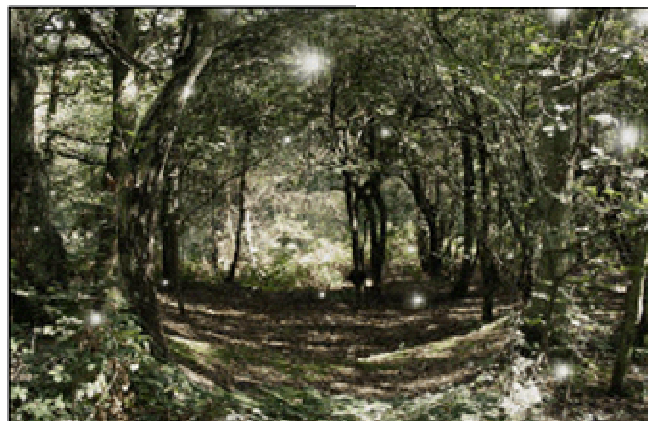


*Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
Our queen and all our elves come here anon*

*A MidSummer Night's Dream
By William Shakespeare*

Fairies

Digital Artwork by: **Martin**
(EW member since 2007)



Drawing Down the Sun

by **Ardriana Cahill**

A literal way of "Drawing Down the Sun" at the height of his strength, is to capture the Sun's energy using a magnifying glass during this small solitary ritual. (We don't cast circles unless we are doing group magick.)

Needs:

1 - 9-day red glass-enclosed votive candle
Magnifying glass
Fireproof container
4-5 " round mirror
10-12 inch square cloth, bag or placket

Begin:

In the full greening season, Mother Earth has ruled the land through fertile Spring and fruitful Summer. She now begins Her ascent into the sky to become the swollen Mother Moon, Queen of the Heavens. Today we celebrate the Sun Lord's full strength as Great Father before he begins to shrink from the sky to reclaim his role as Lord of the Hunt through ripening Fall and sleeping Winter. Tomorrow, he begins his descent to earth to become the grain sacrifice at Lughnassadh, the fruit sacrifice at Samhain and the animal sacrifice at Midwinter, when he is again, reborn of the Ripened Moon as the new born Sun.

**We celebrate Midsummer
By Drawing Down the Sun**

Using a fireproof container, start a small fire of dry twigs with the magnifying glass.

Saying:

**Radiant Father, lovingly guide
Your energy far and Your energy wide
Will at this point, the whole unite
To warm and bless and bring new light.**

Also "trap" the light of the Sun in the mirror and place the mirror into the bag. Do not open the bag until next Midsummer's Eve when it is to be renewed.

Light the red votive candle with the Solar Fire conjured in the fireproof container.
Saying:

**May the spirit of this flame
light my way through the solar year.**

**By Day and Evening, Crest and Dawn
Radiant author of each new day
From your light-giving, Life is drawn
We give you thanks and Farewell**

End

Tend this flame throughout the year from one vigil candle to the next and light all your candles from this perpetual flame. Let the flame die on Midsummer's Eve to be replaced again with this ritual.

If you can't or find it unsafe to keep the flame alive all year, place the Solar Mirror under all your candles as a perpetual flame through sympathetic magick.

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Ardriana Cahill lives in Western USA and is a Hereditary Witch, den of Clan McCormick. She has been a member of EW since 2004
<http://www.ardrianacahill.com>

Sun Gods, con't

Helios (Helius)
Greek/Sun god

**Huitzilopochtli
(Uitzilopochtli)**
Aztec/Sun god

Inti
Inca/Sun god

Jesus
Hebrew/Sun god

Liza
West African/Sun god

Lugh
Celtic/Sun god

Malina
Eskimo/Greenland/
Son goddess

Re (Ra)
Egypt/Mid-day Sun god

Sol (Sunna)
Norse/Sun goddess

Sol Invictus
Roman/Sun god

Surya
Hindu/Sun god

Tonatiuh
Aztec/Sun god

Utu (Shamash)
Mesopotamia/Sun god



The Pagan Kitchen - Litha

by OwlOak



MM Folks.

Litha marks the midpoint of summer with the sun being at its strongest and the day being its longest. What better way to celebrate this glorious occasion than with the ritual of the cook-out. So to that end I have compiled some of my recipes to delight your taste buds.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day...or so they say. And, in keeping in the spirit of that and Litha a good breakfast might include cereal, fresh fruit, berries, melon, cheese, eggs, and whole grain breads. However, for the more decadent of us, some of these items can be combined into a scrumptious dish called:

Strawberry Stuffed French Toast

1 Pint fresh strawberries
 2 Pkgs. cream cheese, room temperature
 2 Tbsp. sugar
 Powdered Sugar
 4 Eggs
 1 1/2 Cups of milk
 1 Tsp. vanilla
 1/2 Tsp. cinnamon
 1 Loaf of Texas Toast cut bread, or thickly
 sliced (1 to 1 1/4 inch) white bread
 1/2 Stick butter, or cooking oil, as needed
 Maple, or regular, syrup.



Wash, remove stems, and chop strawberries into small pieces and mash. The back of a fork works great. Place cream cheese in a bowl and add the mashed strawberries and 1 Tbsp. sugar. Blend. Cut a pocket in each bread slice and fill with 2-3 Tbsp. of the filling. In a large bowl, combine the 4 eggs, 1 Tbsp. sugar, milk, vanilla, and cinnamon. Whisk until well mixed. Heat a frying pan, or griddle, and add butter or oil. Dip the bread into the egg mixture and place in the pan and cook until lightly browned on both sides. Remove and place on a wire rack until all pieces have been fried. Place rack in a 300 degree oven and bake for about 10 minutes. Remove the rack of French toast and place each on a plate. Add one pat of butter and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve the maple syrup on the side.

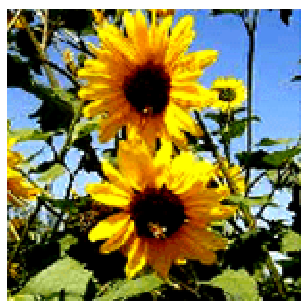
Variations:

1. Any type of berries, fruit, or combination can be used in place of the strawberries.
2. Reserve 1/4 cup of the mashed fruit or berries and combine with 1/2 cup syrup in a sauce pan and gently heat. Pour over the french toast, and serve. (For adults, a small amount of fruit or berry flavored brandy can be added to the sauce for added flavor and kick.)

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008



"...For adults, a small
 amount of fruit or berry
 flavored brandy can be
 added to the sauce for
 added flavor and kick."



Bee on a Sunflower

Photo by: **Graybeard**

(EW member since 2005)



Flowers have an expression of countenance as much as men and animals. Some seem to smile; some have a sad expression; some are pensive and diffident; others again are plain, honest and upright, like the broad-faced sunflower and the hollyhock. ~ Henry Ward Beecher

The Pagan Kitchen , con't

by OwlOak

As the day grows warmer a cooling drink is looked forward to, and what more symbolizes summer and Litha than:

Grandma's Lemonade

1/2 dozen lemons, juiced (about 1 cup of juice), reserve rinds

6 cups cold water

1 cup sugar, or to taste

Turn stove on low.

Place lemon juice and sugar in large non-aluminum pan and stir until sugar is dissolved.

Turn off heat and add water and rinds.

Stir well, adjusting sugar if needed.

Place in fridge to cool.

To serve, pour over a glass of ice.

Note: To get the most juice from the lemons wait until they are room temp, and roll them on the counter with the palm of your hand, before juicing.

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And:

Summer Punch

1- cup granulated sugar

1- cup fresh lemon juice

2- cups cranberry juice

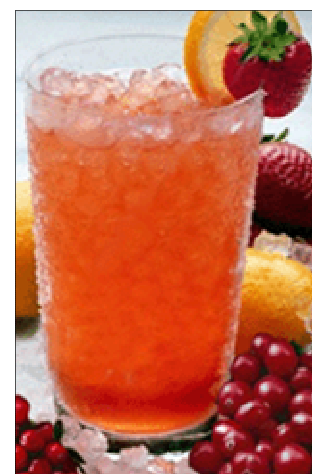
1- Large can chilled apple juice

2- 1 liter bottles of ginger ale

Mint leaves

Turn stove on to low heat. Place lemon juice, apple juice and cranberry juice in a large non-aluminum pan. Slowly add the sugar to the juice and stir until it is all dissolved. Remove from the heat and chill in the fridge. To serve, pour into a punchbowl and add the ginger ale, mint and some ice. Comes lunch time we are beginning to feel the rumble of our tummies, so start looking for something light and quick....and cool.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008



Grilled Shrimp Skewers

1 lb. raw medium shrimp, shelled and deveined

1 red bell pepper and 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and cut into chunks

Italian salad dressing

8-10 wooden or metal skewers

Alternately thread the shrimp and pepper chunks on the skewers leaving a slight gap between them.

Brush the skewered shrimp and peppers with the salad dressing. Place the skewers on an oiled grill for 5 or 6 minutes per side until the shrimp turn pink. When done remove from the grill and serve.

Note: If using wooden skewers, soak them in water for 10-15 minutes before placing on the grill.

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Tomato and Basil Soup

8 to 10 tomatoes, coarsely chopped

4 cups chicken broth, cooled

1 handful fresh basil leaves

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1/4 cup olive, or corn oil

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

Combine tomatoes, basil, vinegar and garlic in a blender until smooth. Pour into a large bowl and stir in olive oil and broth. Add salt and pepper to taste. Chill in refrigerator. Serve cold. Garnish with a couple of whole basil leaves or sprigs of parsley.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008

"Comes lunch time we are beginning to feel the rumble of our tummies, so start looking for something light and quick....and cool."





Sun Herbs

Almond
Angelica
Ash
Bay Tree
Burnet
Butterbar
Chamomile
Celandine
Centaury
Cinnamon*
Cowslip
Eyebright
Frankincense
Galangal
Heart Trefoil
High Joan
Juniper*
Laurel
Lovage
Marigold
Mayweed
Mistletoe*
Olibanum
Olive
Peony
Pimpernel*
Rice
Rosemary
Rue*
Saffron
St. John's Wort
Saxifrage
Storax
Sundew
Sunflower
Tormentil
Vine
Walnut

* Poisonous

The Pagan Kitchen , con't

by OwlOak

Spinach Roll Ups

1-1/2 cups ricotta cheese
1/2 cup grated Swiss cheese
1/2 stick butter
1/2 onion, chopped
salt & coarse ground black pepper to taste
4 pieces cooked bacon, crumbled
1-1/2 lbs. spinach, washed and stems removed
4 pita breads split in half (like you would an English Muffin)

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and add the spinach. When the water starts to boil again turn off the heat, drain the spinach and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking. Squeeze it as dry as possible then coarsely chop it up. In a frying pan, melt 1/2 stick of butter and add the chopped onions and cook until soft....not caramelized (dark brown). Add the spinach, salt, pepper, crumbled bacon, and Swiss cheese. Cook over low heat for a couple of minutes until the cheese melts.

Turn off the heat and add the ricotta cheese and mix well. Add more seasoning if needed. Spread a couple of tablespoons of warm filling over pita half and gently roll up and set aside. When all are done they can be served as is, for a side dish, or placed in the fridge and cooled and cut into rounds for appetizers.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008

Lavender Cookies

1 1/2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
1 teaspoon lavender flowers
powdered sugar

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Whisk together the eggs, butter, sugar, and lavender. Sift together the flour, salt and baking powder into a large bowl. Stir in the egg mixture until well blended. Drop a teaspoon of dough at a time onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until lightly browned. Remove from oven and when cool dust them with the powdered sugar. © James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008

Later as evening approaches comes the time to settle in for a substantial meal to hold us over the night...

Jim's Mojo Juice Marinaded Grilled Steak

1 Cup dry red wine (red for beef, white for pork & chicken)
1/4 Cup olive oil
2 Tsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 Tsp. Italian seasoning
5 Cloves garlic (minced)
2 Tsp. Seasoned salt
1 1/2 Tsp. Course ground black pepper
1 Tsp. Parsley flakes
1 Tsp. Rosemary flakes
3 Drops Liquid Smoke

1 Tsp. Thyme
1 Tsp. Ground ginger or finely minced ginger root
1 Small onion (minced)
1/4 Cup Balsamic vinegar
2 Tbsp. Soy sauce
3 Tbsp. Honey
1 Tsp. Celery salt
1 Tbsp. Prepared mustard
Your favorite cut of steak.

Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix. Place meat in plastic bag and add marinade. Refrigerate for 1 1/2 -3 hours, turning bag occasionally. Preheat Grill to medium. Remove meat from marinade and place directly on grill for 15 minutes for medium rare, turning once. Discard any leftover marinade.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008





The Pagan Kitchen , con't

by OwlOak

Tossed Salad

- 1 bunch of mixed greens, rinsed and squeezed dry
- 1 globe onion, peeled and cut into rings
- 2 stalks of celery, cut crosswise into 1/4 inch thick pieces
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into strips lengthwise
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into strips lengthwise
- 1/2 lb. fresh mushrooms, washed, trimmed and thinly sliced lengthwise
- 1 pkg. grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1 large cucumber cut into thin rounds, peeling is optional
- 1 can large pitted black olives, drained
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Cover and toss until well mixed. Serve with your favorite dressing. Top with crumbled bacon, fresh grated cheese, and croutons.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008



Squash Casserole

- 3 medium zucchini cut in 1/4 inch thick rounds
- 3 medium summer squash cut into 1/4 inch thick rounds
- 1 medium onion cut into rings
- garlic powder to taste
- salt & pepper to taste
- 1 stick of butter

Place the squash and onion rings in alternating layers in a glass casserole dish. Cut up the stick of butter into patties and spread evenly over the vegetables. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 20 minutes in a preheated 375 degree oven.

Variations:

Microwave: cover with waxed paper and bake on high for 20 minutes.

Packets: Place all the ingredients in an aluminum foil pouch and cook on the top rack of the grill until veggies are tender.

© James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008

Pumpernickel Bread

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 2 1/4 cups warm water | 2 packages yeast |
| 2 tablespoons soft butter | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 2 tablespoons molasses | 2 teaspoons instant coffee powder |
| 3 cups white flour | 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder |
| 1 1/2 cups rye flour | 1 egg |
| 1/2 cup whole wheat flour | |

Combine warm water and yeast in a large bowl. Stir until yeast is dissolved. Mix in rye and whole wheat flour. Cover bowl and let it sit out overnight at room temperature. The following day, add molasses, salt, butter, instant coffee, cocoa powder, and the egg. Beat until well mixed. Stir in enough white flour, about 2 cups, to make a soft dough. Turn out on a lightly floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes. Put dough in a greased bowl, and turn it over and around until the surface is lightly coated with the shortening. Cover with a dish towel and set in a warm place to rise until it doubles in size. (1 to 2 hours) Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Grease 2 cookie sheets or large pizza pans and sprinkle them with corn meal. Punch down dough in bowl, and divide in half. Shape into round loaves and place on greased baking sheets. Lightly score tops with a sharp knife and let rise for 30 - 45 minutes. Place in oven and bake for 35-40 minutes. Remove from oven and place on cooling racks for about 1/2 hour before cutting.

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Key West Sunset Ritual

Photo by: **Ardriana**

(EW member since 2004)





The Pagan Kitchen , con't

by OwlOak

Herb Butter

1/2 cup soft butter (1 stick)
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
1 tablespoon minced fresh basil
1 tablespoon minced fresh chives

1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
1 teaspoon minced fresh dill

Place the softened butter in a small bowl. Fold in the herbs, salt, and lemon juice. Beat with a whisk until well combined. Cover and place in fridge until firm.

To make a stick - Remove from fridge when slightly firm and place on a piece of waxed paper and roll into a log. Return to fridge to chill until firm. To use, just unwrap the stick and cut off what you need and rewrap the remainder and return to the fridge. © James Rancourt, aka OwlOak 2008

Zucchini Bread

3 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 cups sugar
2 cups grated zucchini
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 eggs
1 cup vegetable oil

Optional- chopped walnuts, pecans, or butternuts
(1 handful, about 1/2 cup)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Grease and lightly flour two regular loaf pans. In a large bowl, beat eggs until well blended. Add vegetable oil, sugar, and vanilla and stir until well mixed. Add the grated zucchini and stir until well combined. Sift together the flour, salt, baking soda, baking powder, and cinnamon and stir into the egg mixture (the nuts can be added at this point if you choose to use them.) until well blended. Pour the batter into the loaf pans and bake for about 1 hour, or until done. Remove from the oven and place on wire racks to cool before serving.

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Here's wishing you all a safe and very happy and merry Litha full of sun, fun, good food, family, and friends.

*B*B ~ OwlOak*

This article contains recipes of my own, either original or adapted from those I've acquired over the years, and family recipes that have been handed down to me by dearly departed family members. Any duplication of recipes created by others is coincidental and unintentional.

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



*The sun, centre and sire of light,
The keystone of the world-built arch of heaven.
~ Philip James Bailey, Festus (sc. Heaven)*

Muse-Kissed

by TJ

The Twin Kings

A fire god doth split in two
These mighty trees soon aft' they grew
One Oak, one Holly, strong and true
In turn each fades and grows anew

Six short months to each is given
these brothers' hearts are greatly striven
The maid, the bride, the mother reigns
Her choice each season preordained

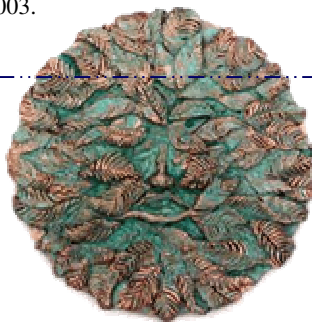
Each year two battles must take place
When one will win his love's embrace
The Oak in brightness leads the fight
Till Holly comes to take the night

When one grows old he's driven down
The younger one will win the crown
Until in time he grows in age
The other brother takes the stage

Though both are mighty, strong and true
Six months a year each twin will rule
Beside his queen in jubilation
Their love, the source of all creation

© 2008 Tamra L. Consbruck

Tamra L. Consbruck lives on the West Coast, USA and is an Eclectic/Metaphysical Witch.
She has been an EW member since 2003.



*For what is it to die,
But to stand in the sun and melt into the wind?
~Kahlil Gibran*



The Oak Tree

The Oak tree (*Quercus robur*) is one of the sacred trees of Wicca and Witchcraft, and is associated with the month of June (10th - 7th July). June is also the month of "Litha" and the Summer Solstice, which is one of the 4 lesser Sabbats of the Witches celebrated on the 21st June. In the early age of mankind the Oak tree was thought to have been a primary focus of worship before the ancient Druids gave equal significance to other trees.

It was believed that the Oak was the first tree created by God, and its fruit, the Acorn, the first food of mankind. The English or Common Oak was for many centuries the main forest tree of England and is intimately bound up in its history and culture. As an emblem of Britain a spray of the Oak was engraved on the sides of the old sixpence and shilling pieces, before the British Lion emblem replaced it. The Oak tree today is widely cultivated and distributed across Europe and the Northern Hemisphere, but while British forests are somewhat depleted, it is still regarded as a quintessential English tree.

Over the centuries the Oak tree has been subjected to a good deal of variation and now there are over 400 hundred species. Oak trees can now be found as far a field as Java, in the Mountains of Mexico and in South America. In Britain our once proud parks and forests are slowly being eroded and re-planted with a growing number of Oaks from foreign origins.

Written and Compiled by George Knowles

The two principal varieties of Oak trees native to England are the English or Common oak (*Quercus pedunculata*) and the Sessile or Durmast Oak (*Quercus sessiliflora*). The Common oak is distinguished by having acorns in ones and twos attached to its twigs by long stalks, the leaves having scarcely any stalk at all. The Sessile' leaves are bigger and are borne on long stalks while its acorns are attached to the bough instead of stalks. The Sessile variety of Oak is generally found in the lower parts of Britain and North Wales, and doesn't live as long as the Common Oak. Its wood has a straighter fibre and finer grain, and is generally thought to be less tough and less resisting than the Common oak.

Of the many foreign Oaks now grown in Britain, the longest established variety is the Evergreen or Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), which is common to the south of England and Europe. The name "Holm" is thought to be Anglo-Saxon for "Holly", for it can often be found growing in close proximity to it, as well as sporting Holly shaped leaves. The Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) is the most prolific of the foreign Oaks introduced into Britain. This is a beautiful tall tree, which when fully grown produces abundant acorns in mossy cups.

The Oak in general is a slow growing tree of imposing stature and lives to an incredible age. On average the tree will reach heights of 110 feet (33 meters) with girths of some 30 - 40 feet (9 - 12 meters), but there have been some notable exceptions down through the centuries. The most famous perhaps is the Major Oak, located in Sherwood Forest and once associated with Robin Hood. Still standing today, although it requires support to prevent it collapsing, it measures 64 feet (20 meters) around its girth. The Fairlop Oak in Hainault Forest measured 36 feet in girth, the spread of its branches extending above it reach out to some 300 feet in circumference. The trunk of the Newland Oak in Gloucestershire measured 46 feet 4 inches, while the Courthorpe Oak in Yorkshire reportedly had the extraordinary girth of 70 feet. In folklore tales from history, one story has it that King Arthur's Round Table was made from a single slice of Oak, cut from an enormous bole.

Of old, the strength and elasticity of the Oak made it particularly valuable for house building and shipbuilding. The "Wooden Walls of England" is an old phrase of many connotations; one meaning refers to the stately homes of England, which gave rise to another phrase "Hearts of Oak", for the Englishman literally made his home from Oak. Many of the



The Oak Tree (con't)

surviving old Manor Houses were constructed using huge oaken beams, walls were decorated with fancy Oak carved panels, and large solid Oak doors secured the house from intruders and unwanted visitors. Oak was also used in the construction of Churches and Cathedrals; indeed the roof beams of Westminster Abbey are made from Sessile Oak.

The “Wooden Walls of England” is another phrase associated with the Oak and refers to forts and castles constructed from Oak built around the coast to defend us from invasion, as well as the “ships made of oak” used in our defence against the Spanish Armada. The Oaks of the Forest of Dean provided much of the material used for this, and Philip of Spain is said to have declared: “that all the Oaks of the forest must be destroyed if victory is to be achieved”. This he failed to do but some two centuries later, so many of the Oaks had been felled and dispatched to naval dockyards for use in ships building, that Nelson drew up a special petition to the Crown advising the need to replant all the forests with Oaks.

After the Oak has passed its first century, it's growth increases by less than an inch a year. This slowness of growth matures the wood in such a fashion that it becomes practically indestructible. As a timber, the most valued qualities of the Oak are its hardness and toughness. While the Ebony tree may be harder, and the Yew and Ash tree tougher, none of these trees possess both these qualities to such a degree as the English Oak. Although no longer used for building of ships of war, it is still in great demand for other purposes, sharing with Ash in the making of railway carriages and other forms of transport.

As well as its strength for building purposes, the Oak is much prized for the beauty of its grain and texture, and the richness of its colouring after polishing. As such it has always been a favourite wood of carpenters and cabinetmakers for use in panelling, doors and furniture. Beautiful cupboards, chests, tables and chairs were made of Oak, and due to the wood's durability many of these have survived down through the centuries. Initially pale brown in colour, Oak wood darkens with age.

Other uses of Oak were the fighting clubs of ancient man, the hammers and long boats of the Vikings, and the shafts of daggers and knives made from its roots. Barrels and casks were also made from Oak and used to store liqueur, wines and spirits, it being impervious to the effects of alcohol. Coffins were made of Oak by using large sections of the trunk, these were split lengthwise and hollowed out to contain the body, but this was only done for state funerals or people of great stature and importance. The shrine of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey is of Purbeck marble, but the tomb-chest or coffin (circa 1510) is of Oak, which has outlasted the changes of some 700 years.

Folklore and Myths:

Since time began the Oak was revered by many cultures, the Greeks held it sacred, the Romans dedicated it to Jupiter, and the Druids venerated it. The Greek historian Herodotus 484 - 424 BC (often called the “father of history”.) reported that the sacred Oak grove at Dodona had the greatest reputation for the gifts of prophecy. Situated at the foot of Mt. Tomarus, Dodona was the oldest and most hallowed sanctuary in Greece. An ancient legend tells of two black doves that flew from the Egyptian city of Thebes, one flew to the Libyan Ammon and the other flew to Dodona. Each alighted on an Oak tree and so began the oracular Oak cults dedicated to the Gods and Goddesses. The cult at Dodona was dedicated to the goddess Dione (Diana) but was later seized by Zeus who claimed it for his own, though he retained the services of her priestesses to read his oracles. This they did listening to the cooing of black doves, the rustle of the Oak's leaves in the wind, or the clanging of pots and pans hung in the tree's branches to produce sound. They claimed that within the sounds could be heard the voice of Zeus.

The most famous of Zeus' interpreters was an old priestess called Pelias, who prophesied Zeus' messages from a sacred spring at the foot of a giant Oak in the grove at Dodona. The voice of Zeus was also heard in the sounds of thunder, and it was believed that more thunderstorms raged over Dodona than anywhere else in the classical world. The Oak tree due to its enormous size and low electrical resistance, attracts and is struck by more lightening than any other tree species, and so the Oak became associated with the Gods of Thunder. Zeus' Roman counter part Jupiter was also worshipped as a God of Thunder, and was able to control rain, storms and

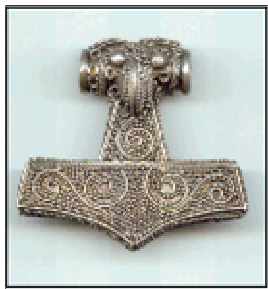


The Oak Tree (con't)



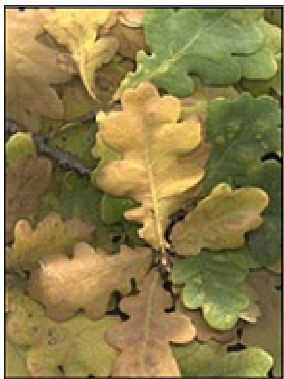
lightening. It was said he revealed the future to mankind by the flight of birds. Birds were known as the “Messengers of the Gods” and the Oak with its massive frame and huge limbs is a natural resting place and home to many types of birds, as such the Oak became associated with Protection, Strength, Stability and Comfort.

In ancient times great Oak forests covered much of Britain and Western Europe and many sacred holy groves were formed in them for worship, dedicated to the gods by the many different cultures that inhabited them. Growing in close proximity to each other, the Oaks of the forest were often struck by lightning and visibly hit by the “fires from heaven” as it cracked and flashed overhead. To the ancients this was a channel through which the power of the thunder gods reached down to mankind and so the Oak became associated with the element of Fire.



Thor's Hammer
Photo by: **Ardriana**
(EW member since 2004)

The God most associated with the Oak tree is Thor (also known as: Thorr, Thunor, Thonar, Donar, Donner, Thur, Thunar, or Thunaer), who in Norse mythology was the supreme God of Thunder and the Sky. Thor was the eldest son of Odin, and was second only to him in the hierarchy of the Norse pantheon. He was also one of the most popular of the Gods due to his relationship with mankind. Thor is often depicted as a tall, muscular and vigorous man with a red beard. He had an enormous appetite and his ability to eat and drink great quantities is featured in several of his legends. Thor was the principal champion of the Gods and the chief protector of humans against giants, trolls, demons and other evil beings. His booming voice and flashing eyes could incite terror in his enemies. He was thought to be good-natured, courageous, benevolent, valiant and always ready to fight to help mankind, but he was also easily irritated and when roused to anger was apt to smash his adversaries to death with a single blow from “Mjolnir” his magical hammer.



Thor was widely worshiped by Norse warriors, but because of his capacity to create rain for the crops, he was also revered by farmers and peasants. Mjolnir the magical hammer was reputedly made by dwarves from the wood of a sacred Oak tree, and not only represented the destructive power of the storms, it was used by

Thor to create “the fires from heaven”. The image of “Thor’s Hammer” has been used as a fertility symbol in marriages (in its connection with rain and crops), in funerals (as a symbol of death and rebirth), and for accepting newborn children into the community (as a symbol of strength and protection). Such was Thor revered that the fifth day of the week ‘Thursday’ (Thor’s day) was named after him.

When travelling Thor rode in a chariot made from Oak drawn by two goats, Tanngrjostr (Tooth-gnasher) and Tanngrisnir (Tooth-grinder), and when moving across the heavens dispensing weather, it produced the rumblings of thunder and sparks of lightning from its wheels. Thor and his followers undertook many expeditions to Jotunheim (Iceland) the land of the frost giants, and there erected high-seated pillars made of Oak. Within these they created hallowed ground from where the assembled Gods could protect their people in new lands.

Thor fought many legendary battles against the frost giants defending and protecting mankind as well as the Gods. His greatest adversary was the World Serpent called “Jormungand” whose many coils encircled the world. After many battles between them which neither won, they were destined to meet and fight for a final time at “Ragnarok” (the mythical end of the world). At that fatal meeting Thor, the best fighter amongst the gods, succeeded in killing the serpent. However being busy with his own fight, he was too late to aid his father Odin who died fighting the fierce wolf Fenrir. After killing the serpent Thor stepped back and died himself from poison the serpent had spat at him.

Oak through the ages was revered by many cultures particularly for its protective qualities, and in Britain it still stands proud as the “King of the Forest”. In early Celtic times certain Oaks were marked with a protective symbol, a circle divided into four equal parts (symbolic of the four elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water), this was probably a forerunner of the magic pentacle (an up-right five pointed star inside a circle, symbolic of the four elements plus “spirit”). Most likely this was an old Druidic custom, for the Druids revered the Oak above all other trees, believing it hosted the energy, power and strength of their Gods. Due to its size and longevity the Oak was known as the “Garden in the Forest”, for it attracts the growth of various forms of plant life. Normally



The Oak Tree (con't)

the trunk of the Oak is covered in fungus, particularly stinkhorn and lichen, which grow alongside tendrils of Ivy, but just occasionally Mistletoe will also grow on it. When this happened the Oak became especially sacred, for the white berries of the Mistletoe were thought to represent the sperm of the Gods, and so the Oak became associated with the male's procreative qualities and fertility.

Other myths and legends involving the Oak include "Merlin" the mystical wizard, magician and seer who helped King Arthur. It was believed that Merlin was born in Carmarthen in Wales, from where he worked his magick in a grove of Oaks, and supposedly used the topmost branch of an Oak tree as his wand. An old Oak that used to stand in Priory Street was credited to him and called "Merlin's Oak", but this has since been removed. Robin Hood the outlaw, another legend, together with his followers reportedly roamed the green depths of Sherwood Forest near Nottingham. There they lived a carefree life passing away time playing games of archery, and hunting the King's deer. Any rich people passing through the forest were robbed of their riches, the spoils of which they shared with the poor. The "Major Oak" a massive tree still standing today is said to have been the meeting place of his Merry Band of Men.

According to history, the Oak tree was a place of worship where the people could be preached too, the trees used for this purpose became known as "Gospel Oaks". Edward the Confessor is said to have preached from under a Gospel Oak in Hampstead in order to gain support for his kingdom. During his reign Edward was noted for his weakness as a ruler and his piety as a man, but his greatest legacy to England was Westminster Abbey, the roof beams of which (and still are) made from Sessile Oak. Also according to history Charles II hid in an Oak tree after his defeat by Cromwell during the Battle of Worcester in 1651, thereafter the Oak was given the name "Royal Oak". On his return to the crown after ten years in exile, Charles made his birthday a public holiday and called it "Royal Oak Day". The people celebrated, Oak sprigs and leaves were gathered and used to decorate hats and clothing, boughs were tied to the doors of

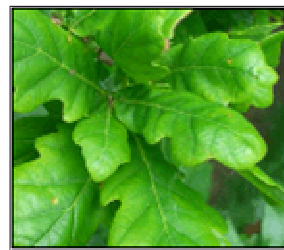
houses symbolically to bring back luck, prosperity and fertility, and an Oak Man was dressed up in Oak leaves and danced around the streets before claiming his May Queen. Today many of these traditions have been absorbed into the Mayday celebrations, and are still enacted each May around the country.

In Ireland, "St Bridget" (circa 453? - 523?) is one of the three patron saints. According to Celtic lore she founded Ireland's first nunnery for Holy women at Kildare, called the "Cell of Oak". It is thought that St Bridget evolved from the Goddess Briget (also known as Brigid, Bridhe, Brigantia, Bridgadu), a solar Goddess who prophesied and healed by virtue of the waters of inspiration. The nuns of Kildare were said to have burned acorns on perpetual fires for food and heat. Back in England, the spirit of "Herne the Hunter" is believed to inhabit an ancient Oak tree. He was the Oak-God of southern Britain (often depicted wearing antler-horns) who leads the legendary Wild Hunts. His spirit is said to haunt Windsor Forest.

Bark:

Oak bark is grey-brown in colour and distinctly gnarled and furrowed. It contains some 15–20 per cent of tannin, and is used universally for tanning leather as well as making dyes. The bark is collected from the tree normally during April and May it being easier to strip at this time before the leaf buds open and its sap begins to flow again. For dyeing purposes an infusion of the Oak bark mixed with a small quantity of copperas yields a dye of a purplish colour, and was used by Scottish Highlanders to dye woollens and yarn. Mixed with "alum" it produces a brown dye, with "salt of iron" a black dye, and with "salt of tin" a yellow dye.

In North America the (*Quercus tinctoria*) species of Oak produces (Quercitron Bark), which is used for dyeing yellow, and the bark from the (*Quercus prinus*) species produces a red dye that Native American Indians used to dye their skins red. Oak sawdust was once used for dyeing corduroys and velveteens, and also for tanning, but it was found to be inferior to the bark for these purposes. After the Oak bark has been used for tanning, gardeners then use it to make a decoction called "Tan". Tan is used to cover new plantings, which encouraging them to grow through the warmth it generates. However care needs to be taken for it sometimes favours the growth of fungi, and this can be harmful to certain



The Oak Tree (con't)



plants. Tan is also used as a cover for racetracks and circus rings, and as an adulteration of chicory and coffee. In Brittany, tan compressed into cakes was used as fuel.

Leaves, Fruit and Flowers:

The Oak tree can take some 60 years to mature and produce its first full crop of fruit. Depending on seasonal conditions, tufts of pale green leaves appear on short stalks (English or Common oak) during April or May, which by June turn dark green and thick with a strong central vein and deeply lobed edges. Should the young leaves be damaged by frost or destroyed by insects, the Oak has a canny ability to re-leaf itself. In August at the height of the summer when most other trees are wilting from the heat, the Oak tree produces a new leaf called "Lammas shoots", which adds new colour and freshness to the tree. These new leafy shoots are golden-pink when young, turning from pale to dark green as they harden. In autumn the Oak tree is at its most majestic as its leaves change colour again turning from dark green to various shades of yellow, orange, russet and a pale golden brown. The leaves sometime stay on the tree until the following spring or until the new buds forming for the next year push them off.



In April together with the leaves, the flowers of the Oak form in clusters of male and female catkins. By May the males have grown in size to 1-3 inches, becoming long and pendulous and filled with pollen. At this stage the female catkins open as upright flowers awaiting pollination from the males. Each has cup-shaped scaly involucre containing seed vessels, which produce as fruit an acorn 1/2 to 1 inch long. The acorn ripens in the autumn changing colour from green to pale yellow to dark olive brown. Once ripe the Oak drops its fruit providing food in abundance for many of the forest animals. Left uneaten, the acorn will sprout tiny shoots and root in any fertile earth, thus producing a new sapling tree and the cycle of life and growth begins again.

In times of old the acorn was a valued source of food for livestock, and particularly for feeding swine. There was also much famine in England during those times and the starving peasantry

were thankful for their share, even making bread from it. This naturally depleted the crops resources and as land was measured and valued for its swine feeding capabilities, by the end of the seventh century special laws were enacted called pannage or pannage, relating to the feeding of swine. This was later recorded in the Domesday Book, (the record of a survey ordered by William the Conqueror (1086) to determine economic conditions in England). Acorns contain a substantial proportion of carbohydrate and fat, and in many country districts are still collected in sacks and given to pigs, but they must also be mixed with other vegetable food to counteract their binding properties.

Medicinal uses:

Most parts of the Oak tree are used medicinally and their healing effects are many and varied. The distilled water of the Oak leaf bud can be taken internally or used externally to relieve minor inflammations. Bruised Oak leaves applied externally to wounds and haemorrhoids will also help reduce and ease inflammation. The bark of the Oak tree is the part most used in medicine, it being a tonic, astringent and antiseptic. As with other astringents it is also recommended for use in agues and haemorrhages.

The medicinal qualities of the bark can be extracted both by water and by spirit. As a decoction it has a strong astringent and bitter taste with a slightly aromatic odour. To make it, collect some bark (best in the spring April or May) from some young trees and dry it in the sun before chopping it. Use 1 oz. of bark in a quart of water and boil it down to a pint. It can then be taken in a wineglass measure or dose, and used as a gargle mouthwash for chronic sore throats, or applied locally to bleeding gums and piles. It is also used in hot baths for chilblains and frostbite or as a hot compress for inflamed glands, hernias and haemorrhoids. A stronger decoction taken by the spoonful is useful in chronic diarrhoea and dysentery.

Oak bark when finely ground and powdered makes a remedial snuff that can be inhaled to arrest nosebleeds. It has also proved beneficial in the early stages of consumption. Sprinkled onto bed sheets it will help to alleviate bedsores. A pinch of powdered Oak bark mixed with honey and taken in the mornings will help and aid ladies with menstrual problems. Ground and powdered acorns taken with water was considered a useful tonic for diarrhoea,

"In August at the height of the summer when most other trees are wilting from the heat, the Oak tree produces a new leaf called 'Lammas shoots.'"

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and a decoction of acorns and Oak bark made with milk, was used as an antidote to poisonous herbs and medicines. In old times, the thin skin of the acorn was used to cover open cuts or wounds, and ground and powdered acorns taken in wine was considered a good diuretic.

Magical Uses:

Due to the Oak trees many associations and characteristics, it is used symbolically on many ritual occasions, for instance in February during the festival of Imbolc, the spirits of the Oak tree can be invoked to aid and lend strength to the Goddess as she sleeps having given birth to the new God. It can also be asked to aid and acknowledge the new God as he grows in strength to become the new light of the year. In March at the festival of Ostara (the Spring Equinox), the Oak tree can be invoked to aid the Goddess as she blankets the earth with fertility bringing new life to the lands and pastures, also to lend strength to the new God as he stretches and grows to maturity inducing all living creatures out of hibernation to mate and reproduce.

The Beltane festival in May marks the courtship of the Goddess and God and the renewal of the ancient marriage of polarity. The oak tree is invoked for its associations with weddings and fertility. In June, Litha the Summer Solstice festival embraces the beginning of summer when earth is awash with the fertility of the Goddess and God, at this time the Oak tree is again invoked for its associations with the Gods of thunder and rain to aid the growth of crops. At the Lammas festival in August it's the time of the first harvest and the time when the plants of spring begin to shrivel and die. This time the Oak tree is called for its regenerative powers, for as the other plants begin to wither and die, so the Oak tree produces its Lammas shoots in conformation that the cycle of life will continue.

September (Mabon) is the Autumn Equinox and

completes the harvest begun at Lammas. Nature declines and draws back its bounty in readiness for the winter, and it's a time of rest. At this time the Oak tree drops its own harvest of acorns, these then feed and nourish the forest animals as they stock their larders in readiness for hibernation and the bleak cold months of the coming winter. In October (Samhain) the God dies as a willing sacrifice and descends into the earth to the Underworld, there to await his renewal and rebirth by the Goddess. The Oak trees spirits can be invoked and all its attributes called upon to ease the Gods decent with strength, courage and comfort while aiding the Goddess with its male procreative qualities and powers of fertility.

The protective qualities of the Oak were well known and used in magick, and many of the old customs are still practiced in country villages. Carrying a small



piece of Oak on your person will bring about a sense of security and well being, as well as protecting you from harm. Two twigs of Oak tied together with red thread to form an equal armed cross is an age old talisman that can be worn or hung up in the home for protection, strength and security against evil. Acorns placed on

window-ledges will guard against lightning strikes. As the Oak tree is so firmly planted and deep-rooted it symbolizes permanency, and as our feet are constantly in touch with the ground this symbolism can be used magically to aid our feet. Before going on a long journey, be it in your own country or abroad, soak your feet in a footbath infusion of Oak bark and leaves. This will not only relieve weary feet, but also guide you on your journey and ensure your safe return.

To catch a falling Oak leaf will bring you luck and prosperity, and you shall suffer no colds throughout the winter. If someone is sick or poorly in the home, place an Oak log on the fire to warm the house; it will help to "draw-off" the illness. Carrying an acorn is thought to guard against illness and pain, it is also thought to aid longevity and preserve youthfulness. The acorn with its symbolic representation of the "glans penis" was much used in love magick and fertility rites, for which use phallic shaped wands were made and tipped with an acorn. In olden days young women would place two acorns

"In June, Litha the Summer Solstice festival embraces the beginning of summer when earth is awash with the fertility of the Goddess and God, at this time the Oak tree is again invoked for its associations with the Gods of thunder and rain to aid the growth of crops."

The Oak Tree (con't)



in a bowl of water to find out if she had found true love, if they moved together “yes” if they moved apart “no”.

The ancients and Druids of old used the Oak tree for divination purposes when planning the next seasons farming work. By carefully studying the leafing sequences of different trees, they could determine when to plant the next season's crops. An old proverb relating to this has been passed down through the centuries and is still used to predict the weather in many country districts:

*“If the Oak's before the Ash,
Then you'll only get a splash;
If the Ash before the Oak,
Then you might expect a soak.”*

“The ancients and Druids of old used the Oak tree for divination purposes when planning the next seasons farming work.”

Another more precise method of divination is the use of “Oak galls” or “Oak apples” as they are commonly known. I can do no better here than to quote a paragraph from one of the many books I have used to compile this writing, a brilliant book called “Tree Wisdom” in which Jacqueline Memory Paterson quotes from John Gerard's “Herbal or General History of Plants” who states:

“Galls were broken into at specific times of the year (probably spring and autumn) and what was found in them foretold the sequence of the coming seasons. If an ant was found inside the gall it foretold plenty of grain to come, if a spider, there would be “a pestilence among men”, if a white worm or maggot, there would be a “murrain” of beasts or cattle. If the worm flew away (presumably found at its metamorphic stage of becoming a gall-wasp or flying insect), it signified war, if the worm crept, it foretold scarceness of harvest, and if it turned about, it foreshadowed the plague”.

Such a record also gives us an indication of the concerns people had about the weather and other conditions (plague and illness) of earlier times.

Galls:

The longevity of the Oak tree and its statuesque nature makes it a veritable “garden in the forest”. Animals, birds, plant life, fungi and insects of all kinds find and make a home within its massive frame. Of all the insects that find sanctuary, the most persistent and harmful is the “gall wasp”. The gall wasp (Cynipidae) is a tiny hymenopteran insect that attacks the tree and lays its eggs. The eggs develop into larva, which in turn produces the galls. The galls (commonly called Oak apples) appear sometime on the leaves but mainly on the bare branches of the tree during winter. Looking like hard brown balls at the end of its twigs and feeding on the sap of the tree, they do much damage and mischief to the tree by checking and distorting its growth.

The larva that hatches from the eggs secretes a peculiar fluid, this stimulates the defensive mechanism of the tree to produce an abnormal growth resulting in the knotted knees and twisted elbows typical of the tree we see today. The larva now enclosed in a knotty spherical mass produced by the trees defences, begins to feed off the trees natural resources such as starch and other nutritive material. The growth of the gall continues so long as the egg or larva lives, or reaches maturity and passes into a chrysalis from which the fully developed gall wasp emerges and escapes into the air through a hole bored with its mandibles in the side of the gall.

Galls are used commercially in the preparation of gallic acid and tannic acid, and are extensively used in tanning and dyeing as well as for the manufacture of ink. The best galls come from Asiatic Turkey, called Aleppo galls from the (*Quercus infectoria*). They are also known as Mecca Galls or Sodom Apples, “the fruit that never comes to ripeness - the fruit so pleasant to the eye and so bitter to the taste”. In commerce they are simply known as blue or green galls. The main constituents of Aleppo galls are 50 to 70 per cent of gallotannic acid, 2 to 4 per cent of gallic acid, mucilage, sugar, resin and an insoluble matter called lignin. Other commercial galls are imported from Persia and to a lesser extent from Greece.

If collected before the insects escape, those of good quality are hard and heavy and without perforations. They are dark bluish-green or olive green in colour and nearly spherical in shape, measuring 12 to 18

The Oak Tree (con't)

mm in diameter. These are the blue and green galls known in commerce. If collected after the insects have escaped they have a pale yellowish-brown hue, are spongy and lighter in weight and are perforated near the centre with a small hole. These are known in commerce as white galls. White galls contain less gallotannic acid than the blue or green galls. The English Oak galls or Oak apples are smooth, globular and brown. They are usually perforated and much less astringent than Aleppo galls, containing only 15 to 20 per cent of gallotannic acid. As such they have no real commercial value.

Medicinally galls are the most powerful of all vegetable astringents. It is used as a tincture internally in cases of dysentery, diarrhoea and cholera, and as an injection in gonorrhoea and leucorrhoea. Preparations of galls are usually applied as a local astringent externally, mainly as a gall ointment (1 oz. of powdered galls and 4 oz. of benzoated lard) and applied to painful haemorrhoids. It can also be used to arrest haemorrhages from the nose and gums. An infusion may be used as a gargle for inflamed tonsils etc.

The Oak is known by many folk names such as: Father of the Woods, King of the Forests, Royal Oak, Tree of Britain, White Oak, Duir, Jove's Nuts, Gospel Oak and Juglan. Its deity associations are with: Hecate, Dione, Diana, Rhea, Cybele, Circe, Athene, Demeter, Bridgid, Bridhe, St Briget, Blodeuwedd and Cerridwen. Zeus, Hercules, Pan, Jehovah, Esus, Odin, Thor, Dagda, Herne and Janus. Its planet ruler is Jupiter, with close associations to the Sun. Its associated element is Fire. It is used to attract the powers needed for: Protection, Health and Healing, Fertility, Luck, Money, Joviality and Potency.

Astrologically Oak people (i.e. those who are born during the month of June) are robust, courageous, strong, unrelenting, independent and sensible. They do not like change, keep their feet on the ground, and are people of action. Even when faced with over riding stress, hurt or pain, Oak people come out on top better and stronger and more grounded than before. Instead of bending under stress, hurt and pain,

they adapt and grow until they overcome it.

End.

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Updated the 07th June 2008 © George Knowles
George Knowles lives in the UK and is a student of history pertaining to witchcraft.
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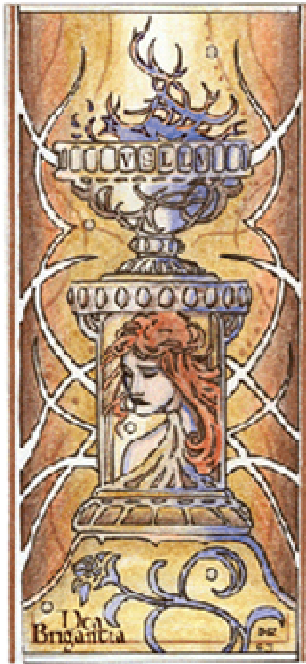


"Its deity associations are with: Hecate, Dione, Diana, Rhea, Cybele, Circe, Athene, Demeter, Bridgid, Bridhe, St Briget, Blodeuwedd and Cerridwen. Zeus, Hercules, Pan, Jehovah, Esus, Odin, Thor, Dagda, Herne and Janus."



An Aussie Yule

by Nan



"My circle is dedicated to the Goddess Brigid of healing and hearth (among other things) and what I call "dragon" energy."

Flipping the wheel of the year over from the northern to the southern hemisphere doesn't work very well in some parts of Australia, because our seasons are not so well defined. When Europe is in the grip of winter, plant life and many animal species become dormant or slow their metabolism to wait out the cold and hungry times.

But in Australia it is during the height of summer that is our "dead" time, when there is little or no growth, when the sun's burning rays dry up rivers and lakes, shrivel grasses and send animals and birds to sit quietly in the shade.

Nevertheless, Yule and Litha are solar festivals, so it is with great joy that we celebrate the return of the sun, even if we are not in the grip of snow and ice.

I live in a valley, reasonably high above sea level – about 1000 ft – where the climate is mildly Mediterranean.

The result is a winter with little frost, no snow and a bit of rain. Currently we're in the grip of a cruel drought which has drained our watercourses and put a strain on those who live from the land.

Every year Yule, on June 21, has become one of my family's biggest traditions and special day. We live on a small acreage, which is dense with native trees and shrubs. During summer and autumn we collect fire wood from deadfall and other

discarded burnable bits and pieces and begin building our bonfire.

We have a large bonfire area surrounded by big logs and enormous wooden "cotton reels", which once held industrial electrical wire. The logs are for seating the cotton reels for drinks!

The bonfire area is near our ritual space, which has been built using 800 million year old slate stone mined from a nearby quarry – there are triangular slate pavers surrounding the circle, making it look a little like a sunburst, with slate pillars at the four quarters, entry plinths made from the same grey stone and a stone altar. My circle is dedicated to the Goddess Brigid of healing and hearth (among other things) and what I call "dragon" energy – both entirely appropriate for Yule (and Litha for that matter).

energy – both entirely appropriate for Yule (and Litha for that matter).

We are not always able to have our main Yule party on the shortest day, but will organise it for the nearest weekend. As a personal observance I always have a small ritual on the correct day, making an offering of fruit and wine and thanking deity for being there to support the cycles of the weave. I also greet the dawn sun and see it set.



Sun Symbols



We invite both pagans and non-pagan friends to attend, and participation in the ritual is optional – although we find that non pagans usually opt to come into ritual and experience what we do.

Yule is shared with my friend and her husband and their family and friends and normally sees 30 or more people enjoy the experience. My friend and I write the ritual, usually a month or so before the event, which gives us time to rehearse and gather any special tools.

We treat the occasion as a “fire festival” and behave accordingly.

One year we developed a medieval theme, put up small tents/pavilions, made tabards out of old sheets, sewed banners and flags and dressed everyone up with a tabard or other appropriate clothing on arrival – apart from those who sensibly chose to come in costume, rather than let us dress them.

The ritual often begins with a short briefing of expectations, and then a walk through our woods – we begin with a stop at a tree stump topped with a tray of small glasses of port. We then walk through a circuitous route, stopping at various “landmarks”, such as goddess statues and images of gods, to make comment and help us move into a “ritual mind space”.

Decorations include hundreds of tea-light candles hanging from jam jars in the trees and around the circle.

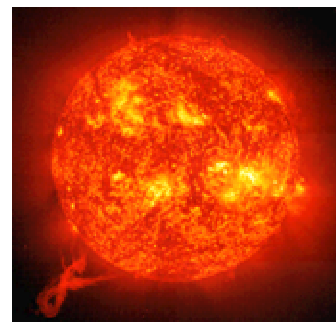
As they reach the entry to the sacred space they are greeted by our guardians, smudged, anointed and welcomed. The ritual is always about renewal – discarding the unwanted and opening ourselves up to the possibilities of change and improvement.

We have had all kinds of fiery symbolism in our rituals, including a wonderful papier mache sun – the sun was made by gluing string around a pretty big balloon and then covering the dried string ball with red and yellow tissue paper. The balloon was popped, and we left a large hole at the top and a smaller one at the bottom of the “sun”. A tail of string was tied inside and dropped through the bottom hole. During the ritual, the sun was hidden behind the altar, with the string tail soaking in kerosene. During the ritual it was ceremonially lifted up on a platform of black wire (which became invisible in the dark – our rituals are held at night) and carried by two men to the central fire pit in the circle – the sun ball appeared to be floating between their hands.

Prior to this occurring ritualists had written down something they wanted to discard from their lives on pieces of paper and placed them in a small cauldron. This paper was, as part of the ritual, placed inside the sun as it hovered above the circular stone fire pit, which looks a little like a small wishing well.

Once all the paper was in the sun, it was lowered over the fire, and the string tail caught alight. The flames rushed up the string, burning the papers and the ball was ablaze on the inside – quite a sight! Before the entire thing ignited fairly spectacularly.

Once the ritual is over we move over to the bonfire for fire twirling, drumming, singing and other fun stuff.



“...the ball was ablaze on the inside – quite a sight! Before the entire thing ignited fairly spectacularly.”

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Nan Berrett lives in rural South Australia, is an eclectic Wiccan, hereditary hedgewitch and healer. She has been an EW member since 2008.



Legacy

by Ardriana Cahill

Memories of MidSummer

When I first met my husband, he told me he'd never met a family who planned their lives from holiday to holiday. Until he said that, I didn't actually realize that that is what we did. As a hereditary witch, we celebrated the seasons, not so much as witches, but as pagans. Midsummer wasn't just the Solstice for us. Like our Winterfest

celebrations, Midsummer was celebrated for days, from the 19th or 20th through the 24th.

Father was in the Air Force so Midsummer was celebrated on the road. We had a 30-day vacation every summer and that usually meant a trip from west to east to visit family. When we traveled we often camped along the way. Perhaps it was because we didn't have much money. Perhaps it was because, it was more fun. I have a hundred fond memories of people and places that I cannot name.

All the standard elements were there for Clan McCormick's Midsummer celebration.

Morning would bring the children out to hunt for fairy rings and wild flowers. If there was a stream or lake nearby, we all went swimming and threw the flowers in the water afterwards in thanksgiving. Feasting was whatever we picked up from the local markets and roadside stands; fresh fruit and

vegetables here, nuts and eggs there. Often wherever we camped, we met other nature lovers who would join in the revelry and add their bounty to ours. The children left milk out for the Fey Folk and then danced around the bonfire, writing their names for good luck or special wishes in red-orange sparkler light that glowed against the night sky.

When we grew tired, Mother would tell the story of a Midsummer Night's Dream, where fairies toyed with young lovers for sport. If divinations were done, fortunes would be told with an innocent deck of playing cards. Finally, the family sat around the fire and sang songs, deep into the night, until sleepy children dropped away, one by one. The elders would tend the bonfire, singing or talking, through the night so light could greet the Solstice Sun.

Even when we were in the city for Midsummer, we celebrated with sparklers, a bonfire and perhaps a concert under the stars. In the same way that silver bells are traditional at Midwinter, we had our own tradition for Midsummer, wearing golden (brass) bells around our necks to ring in the longest day of the year. Even now, my adult children are asked what that strange tinkling sound is when they are at work.

Nothing about the day is sad regarding the Sun, who now will begin to fade from the sky. Life is too strong, too bold to think of the cold that lay ahead. We celebrate the day in youth and strength and joy. We celebrate in gratitude for the blessings of love and family and life at the height of its abundance.

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Ardriana Cahill lives in Western USA and is a Hereditary Witch, den of Clan McCormick. She has been an EW member since 2004.
<http://www.ardrianacahill.com>



*In the warm shadow of her loveliness;--
He kissed her with his beams.
~ Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Witch of Atlas (st. 2)*

Animal Wisdom

by Pari

Lion Totem Spirit & Medicine

Though there are many animals under the sun that are closely associated with summer and the Fire Element, I chose Lion specifically for this Summer Solstice issue, for, to me, who better symbolizes this long, sultry day than the Sun King himself! Even in astrology we find Leo the Lion ruled by the Sun, and the traits of our precious life-giving fireball preside strongly over this magnificent creature too.

The Lion ~ regal, majestic, powerful and strong, yet nurturing, devoted, playful and calm. The King of the jungle is respected by all, and when Lion Totem comes, it's nearly impossible to ignore his call! A native of the continent of Africa and one who roams the lush savannas in that part of the world, the lion is master of his domain. For those who find Lion as their totem, the various types of cats should be looked at and studied for the benefit of seeking greater communion and guidance from this king of the felines, (or mighty queen of the felines, if you happen to be working with the female lioness).

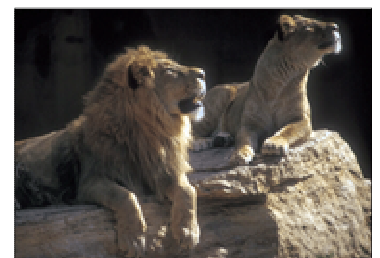
So revered is this king of the cats, that, out of respect, many cultures still refrain from calling them by name. The word "Lord" is often substituted by local tribes who share their habitat with the lions. As your totem, you will find yourself commanding this same respect from those around you, but not for no reason - you will have earned it, as Lion teaches leadership amidst cooperation. Just as lions live in groups called prides, so you may find yourself placed in uncommon situations of leadership or at the very least as an integral part of a group endeavor. The next lesson with Lion that you can count on receiving is one of cooperation and how best to work with others. Within the pride, it is the female who does most of the hunting. But by



hunting alone she would not do quite as well, and so she relies on her mate to do his part. He sits and roars, scaring the prey toward her. She then takes the lead and brings down dinner. Antelope is their main choice of fare and it is recommended that those with Lion Totem study the qualities of Antelope as well. In the above, Lion shows that cooperation and group endeavors can be very fruitful, but that each member must do his or her share if things are to run smoothly. Between the two, the lioness does most of the work. She is the huntress, the caretaker and nurturer of her cubs, the teacher of survival to her family, and the temptress to her mate whose main job is to protect his family. Lion will ask you to also examine your own participation and usefulness to the world around you. He will also ask you to honor and respect the feminine, for the Sun has not always been seen as masculine and attached to male deity. It helps bring forth new life with its warm nurturing rays. This suggests that the balance of

"...we find Leo the Lion ruled by the Sun, and the traits of our precious life-giving fireball preside strongly over this magnificent creature too."

*Most glorious art thou! when from thy pavilion
Thou lookest forth at morning; flinging wide
Its curtain clouds of purple and vermillion,
Dispensing life and light on every side.
~ Bernard Barton*



Animal Wisdom (con't)

by Pari



yin and yang is ever-present. The Sun and the Moon are lovers, and we should not forget to honor the role of the nurturing Goddess during this Sabbat. Lunar energies are also very much present within the teachings of Lion.

Lion is a strong spirit, and one of the most influential of all animal totems. Even the physical symbols associated with the lion suggest this is true, and they are; the Sun, the precious metal Gold, the god Mithras, and a king's throne to name a very few. With the Sun, and especially the rising sun which implies hope, promise, and the dawning of greater things to come, Lion Totem yields the secrets to propelling oneself higher in community stature, increasing one's self-esteem, and energizing the physical body. Lion medicine teaches you how to advance and maintain, and how to balance what may need to be balanced in one's life. It is no coincidence that the lion in his astrological aspect of Leo rules over a prime summer position in the northern hemisphere from c. July 24 to August 23, the hottest span of days in the solar year. I find it interesting, the lion, so mighty is he, that he even holds a place in the starry night sky. But then again, the stars are our glorious mini suns. Royal power, regal strength, along with noble courage and fearlessness are just some of what Lion medicine will bring to your table, day or night.

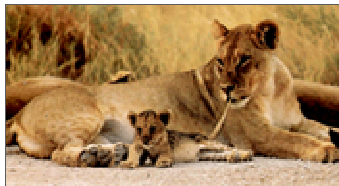
Lions, though fiercely independent, can be extremely jealous and protective of their mates, and those with Lion Totem may find themselves exhibiting this same trait. If a predator enters their territory, the lion will fearlessly protect the pride. In all other situations, though, he cannot be bothered with confrontation and will leave the scene with a slow regal gate and royal air, for Lion never fights just for the sake of fighting - that is beneath him, and as it should be. Lion will lend you the power to know when to fight

and when to walk away. And though he practically demands you stick up for what is rightfully yours, he asks you never to lash out without good cause. A lion will never hunt for the mere pleasure of it, and in this is the teaching that they are not only noble creatures, but do not waste energy and time on things that do not suit them. It is wise for us to do the same.

Lions are well-known for their large manes and mighty roar, but Lion Spirit is not totally all about pomp and power. There is a marked softer and gentler side to this totem. Playfulness and the understanding that there should be a balance between a time for work and a time for rest is another totem message from Lion. In fact, lions revel in a very calm, almost lazy life, basking and preening and frolicking for many hours in the shade of the vast lands they inhabit. As cubs they pretty much lead a carefree life under the protective eyes of their patient parents, and affection roams free. With Lion Totem you can expect to also experience a certain measure of this carefree sense of freedom. As a parent, you may find yourself spending more time nurturing and protecting your own children. And overall, you will find yourself more playful and affectionate. Lion can teach you how to de-stress and relax.

Sensual, graceful, charismatic and passionate are all adjectives that also aptly describe Lion. With Lion as your teacher, these characteristics will be enhanced within your own persona and you will learn how to use them well and often to your advantage. Your own personal magnetism will increase, and romance and passion are likely to enter your realm.

Lions are stealthy creatures, able to blend into their surroundings in order to take stock of any threat or opportunity. Their greatest success lies in their knowledge of knowing when to roar and



"Bring to me your strength and courage, your devotion, protection and good fortune, for I have harkened to your mighty call."

*Failing yet gracious, slow pacing, soon homing,
A patriarch that strolls through the tents of his children,
The sun as he journeys His round on the lower
Ascents of the blue, washes the roofs and the hillsides with clarity.
~ William Ernest Henley, Rhymes and Rhythms*

Animal Wisdom (con't)

by Pari

when to stay silent. Your own greatest success will come when you learn this valuable leonine lesson. Like a lion, you will need to stay patient and watchful, learn how to take better control of your emotions, and pay added attention to timing in order to learn how to recognize just when is the proper moment to pounce on the opportunities that present themselves. And there will be opportunities! Just as a lion will prey on animals large enough to feed them for several days at a time, you will be taught how to go after the big tasks...the things you desire most...with stealth and focus. Lion medicine brings good fortune in that it teaches you how to create your own. Ancient Egyptians saw the lion as a symbol of power and wealth, and they were right on the money in their musings. To Buddhists, both lions and tigers are greatly honored and respected, and according to Buddhist belief, these two magnanimous creatures rule the direction South, the land of fire, action, passion, and energy.

When Lion Spirit begins to make his presence known in your life (and you WILL know when he arrives), a new and brighter you will leap to the surface. Will-power,

new strength, and a flurry of optimism will begin to flow. Intuition, creativity, and devotion will grow. You will begin to feel safe and secure in your own majestic powers, and opportunities will abound and be as self-evident as a bright sunbeam lighting your path. With Lion as your Totem, all of these things will help bring sunshine and bounty to your life!

Lion Chant:

*O Sekhmet! Tefnut! Matit! Men'et!
Urt-hekau! Merui! Apedemak! and Pekhet!
Companions to the Sun Lord,
let me know your lion heart.
O King of the Wild and Lord of the Free,
As you guide the golden chariot of Cybele,
so guide me in all your ancient wisdom.
Bring to me your strength and courage,
your devotion, protection and good fortune,
for I have harkened to your mighty call.*

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Pari lives on the East Coast, USA and is a Shamanic Witch. She has been a member of EW since 2003

<http://www.peacefulpaths.com>

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Lion, himself

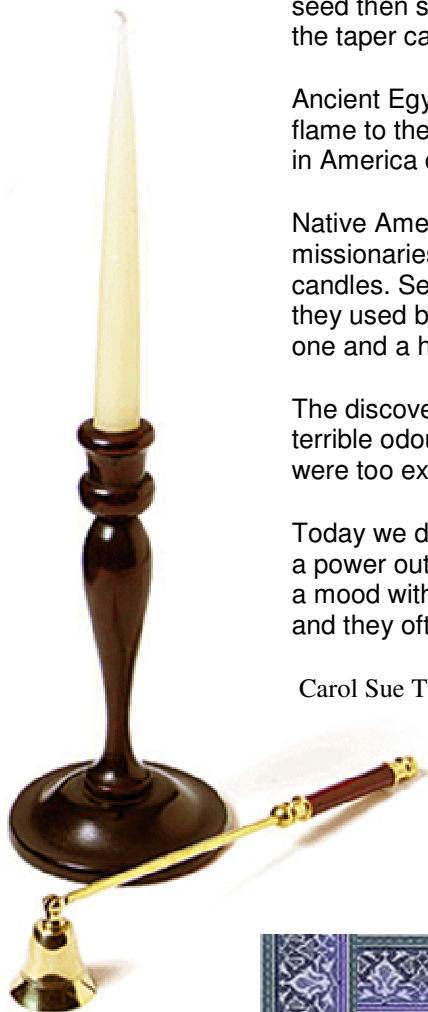


***"Lion is a strong spirit,
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precious metal Gold,
the god Mithras, and a
king's throne to name a
very few."***

Early Candle History

by Carol Sue Tompkins (Lady Candlemaker)

"Some of the artifacts found date as far back as the fourth century B.C. and were found in Egypt."



The candle as we know it today was very different from the caveman or cave dwellers version. Soot stained stone dishes found in ancient caves in France show that stone-age man used a crude candle/lamp to light the cave walls as he painted upon them. The saucer shaped stone appears to have held a piece of animal fat that could be set afire to give off light. Since there is no historical record of the first candles used by man, only artifacts found by archaeologists record the early use of available resources for heat and light. Some of the artifacts found date as far back as the fourth century B.C. and were found in Egypt.

Early Chinese and Japanese candles were made from a derivative of insects and seeds moulded in paper tubes. In India, cinnamon bark was boiled along with the insects and seed then skimmed from the water to get the wax needed for the paper tubes to make the taper candles used in the temple.

Ancient Egyptians were known to drip beeswax or tallow on rush stems. They would set flame to the tip of these "Rush Lights" to provide them with light. The first known candle in America dates back to the first century A.D.

Native Americans burned oily fish (candlefish) wedged into a forked stick. Early missionaries in the southwestern U.S. boiled Cerio tree bark to get the wax for making candles. Settlers in New England used the boiling method to obtain the wax needed but they used bayberry berries. Cost of the bayberry wax became a concern since it takes one and a half quarts of the bayberries to make an 8 inch taper candle.

The discovery of paraffin in the 1800's made the use of tallow obsolete because of the terrible odour when burnt. Beeswax and bayberry wax were used less frequently as they were too expensive and labour intensive to make candles in large quantities.

Today we do not rely so much on candles for lighting our homes, except in the event of a power outage. Candles today are used for decoration or religious purposes, to create a mood with their hypnotic glow, their soothing fragrances please our sense of smell, and they often represent symbols of our personal faiths.

Carol Sue Tompkins © Copyright 2008

Hand painted *Roses* bee's wax candle
Cattail chunk paraffin candle.
By Lady Candlemaker



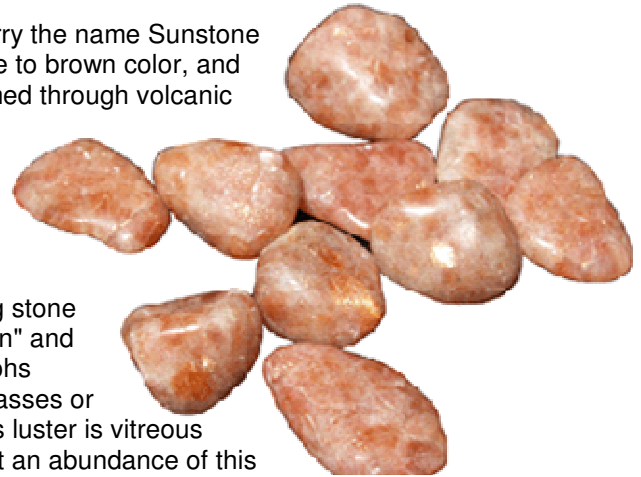
*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace
will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow
their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy,
while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn
~ John Muir*

On The Rocks - Sunstone

by Pari

As the longest day of the year approaches, when the Sun is at its peak and sits highest in the sky, what better stone to help celebrate the Summer Solstice than Sunstone!

To start, it is wise to mention that there are several stones that carry the name Sunstone ~ one being a type of Aventurine that is a sparkling reddish-orange to brown color, and another being a transparent orange to yellow crystal that was formed through volcanic activity and birthed within basaltic lava flows - a true fire stone that usually goes by the name of "Golden Sunstone". But for this article I have concentrated on what is considered to be the oldest known and most widely used Sunstone - the shimmering plagioclase Feldspar Sunstone, also formed within lava fields.



The name "Sunstone" is self-evident of course, but this captivating stone has another name - Heliolite, from the Greek "helios" meaning "sun" and "lithos" meaning "stone". It is a hard stone registering 7 on the Mohs Scale which is right up there with Quartz, and forms in granular masses or tabular euhedral crystals within magmatic and pegmatitic rock. It's luster is vitreous (glassy) to dull, and its streak is white. Favorite locations that host an abundance of this type of glistening Sunstone are India, Norway, Russia, and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and North Carolina in the U.S. Another kind of Sunstone, whose inclusions are of Copper instead of the usual Hematite, is located in Oregon, and is called Oregon Sunstone by the trade. In 1987, this Sunstone was made Oregon's state gemstone.

Sunstone is most often found in hues of orange, peach, yellowish brown, and sometimes green or gray, but each with areas of iridescent salmon-colored schiller. This sparkle and lustrous shimmer, though revered by the ancients as a captured and imprisoned piece of the Sun itself, is actually caused by the refraction of minute and very thin platelets of Hematite or Goethite inclusions. But none of this takes away from the true magick of this mystical stone, as you will see.

Myth & Lore

Sunstone has a long list of mythical lore attached to it, but here are some of the highlights.

In ancient Greece, Sunstone was used to represent the Sun God, Helios (or Apollo). Ancient Greeks believed Sunstone invigorated and greatly improved the state of the physical body and the spirit, bringing renewed strength and good health to both. They also believed it brought abundance, prosperity, and protection - so much so with the latter, that they would adorn their drinking vessels with this stone in order to prevent poisoning. In India, natives wore Sunstone to protect themselves against any intrusive or negative forces.

Sunstone was used by certain Native American Indian tribes to assist their medicine men in contacting Spirit Guides. Placing the stone in the center of their medicine wheel, it was believed to assist in harnessing the healing powers of the Sun. It was said that the stone would glow a bright golden color if successful contact was made. Another "glowing" spot of lore regarding Sunstone is that Pope Clement VII was said to be in possession of a piece which held within it a glowing spot, one that would actually move across the surface of the stone from east to west in conjunction with the sun.

***"In ancient Greece,
Sunstone was used to
represent the Sun God,
Helios (or Apollo)."***



On The Rocks (con't)

by Pari

"Sunstone has been discovered in Viking burial mounds and is thought to have been placed there to aid one's journey to Valhalla."

In myth, ancient Vikings used what they called a "sunstone" to aid their navigations... perhaps both in life and death, as in fact this Feldspar type of Sunstone has been discovered in Viking burial mounds and is thought to have been placed there to aid one's journey to Valhalla. Current speculation is that their navigational "sunstone" may have been the Sunstone we know today, but the double refracting Iceland Spar (a form of Calcite) is also a possibility, as is the transparent mineral Cordierite which turns from yellow to blue whenever held at right angle to the sun. Either way, the theory is well thought out, as these stones exhibit the exact property which would be needed to navigate by the position of the sun - the property of refraction. Refracted light makes it possible to locate the sun during storms, fog, or darkness. So just as certain insects use refraction of light to find direction, so may have these remarkable ancient mariners.

Aztec Sun Stone



Crystal healers of today use Sunstone to rid one of depression and alleviate stress, anxiety and phobias. Medicinally, Sunstone is said to be helpful with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), depression, emotional heartache, anxiety, and stress, along with regulating the nervous system and calming the discomfort of ulcers. This stone may also be used in treatment of cartilage problems, spinal irregularities, and for relief from rheumatism and arthritis.

***NOTE:** Stone therapy should NOT take the place of medical evaluation and procedures, and should be used merely to enhance one's health and well-being.

Magickally, you can use Sunstone in all solar workings. This stone excels at attracting wealth, prosperity, promotion and good fortune of all kinds. Its powers are in health, vitality, energy, protection, and sexuality. Sunstones are often used in Solstice rituals. To cleanse and clear these dazzlers, place in fresh running water and then set them in the sunlight to dry.

Metaphysical Properties of Sunstone

Sunstone is a power stone, projecting the male god energy, and is connected with both the Sacral and Solar Plexus Chakras. This stone's strength and vitality are unmistakable, and it can kindle the fire within one's own spirit as it increases its user's own vitality, strength and stamina. Known for its energizing and empowering properties, this optimistic stone brightens the self-esteem and self-confidence of those who wear it or work with it.

As with any stone, merely holding one will have some effect on its user. A stone's own intrinsic vibrational energy can and will affect a person's aura, physical body, or mood. Sunstone's energy is very vital and uplifting, and its flashes of glowing iridescence can't help but make you want to explore its life force. Like its sister stones, Labradorite and Moonstone, Sunstone exudes an inner light that bursts forth and practically shouts, "Look at me!" Where Labradorite and Moonstone may ask you to look inside, Sunstone will ask you to bring what's inside... out. Working with this stone, that is noted for helping expand one's consciousness and creativity, can help you determine not only what your special talents are, but how best to bring them forth and use them for the benefit and good of all. I do agree with Robert Simmons, co-author of *The Book of Stones*, who wrote, "Sunstone is the yang which balances the yin of Moonstone."

On The Rocks (con't)

by Pari

Excellent at banishing fears and phobias of all sorts, Sunstone removes inhibitions and releases feelings of unworthiness. It is also believed to be able to clear away any lingering and unwanted entities or energies that may have attached themselves emotionally or physically to another. Independence and freedom are definitely highlighted in the attributes of this stone.

Many say that Sunstone brings "good luck," but the true definition of "luck" simply means being in the right place at the right time... more so a fortunate synchronicity. The way Sunstone brings on this synchronicity is by prompting its user into the spotlight where he or she is more noticeable and visible to the world. This, enhanced by the stone's projective energy and willful abundance, will provide you with many of the key factors - the courage and strength, the discipline and conviction, the optimism and energy - which are needed to keep things flowing in that "lucky" fortunate direction.

Sunstone brings warmth and openness, romance and sexuality, clear vision and originality, leadership and ability, and is prized as the bringer of good fortune. It strongly promotes a positive attitude and cheerfulness, not to mention a sunny disposition. ;)

This bright and illuminating stone says, "Come dance with me and you shall see the veritable joy that life can be."

Sunstone is associated with the astrological sign of Leo, and its Element is Fire ~ a most appropriate stone as we gather to honor and celebrate the Sun, and as we look forward to the rich bounty of Summer's offerings.

Sun-Blessed may you be!

© Patricia J. Martin - June 13, 2008

Pari lives on the East Coast, USA and is a Shamanic Witch. She has been a member of EW since 2003

<http://www.peacefulpaths.com>

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Sunstone, itself.

**"Sunstone will ask
you to bring
what's inside...
out."**



Newgrange Sun Stone

*"The Sun, with all those planets revolving around it
and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes
as if it had nothing else in the universe to do."*

~ Galileo Galilei



The Bard's Corner



The Stone Circle

The stone circle stands like a portal to the earth,
Civilizations worshipped inside it since their birth.
The stone circle with one side not quite right,
Was built that way for the angled light.

The stone circle, a place to perform rites,
A system that's lasted, a system that's right.
The stone circle, that's magically seen,
When you step inside it, it feels like a dream.

The stone circle, majestic at night,
Spirit of place, power and might.
The stone circle, temple of the god of sun,
Druids at Summer Solstice gather as one.

The stone circle witnessed all that was true.
It captured the light and the facts that they knew.
The stone circle, life's regeneration,
Peace, health and meditation!

~~~

By Sun, by Moon and of course...by Stars,

By Nature1

***The Stonehenge complex was built in several construction phases spanning at least 3000 years, although there is evidence for activity both before and afterwards on the site, perhaps extending its time frame to 6500 years.***

***Stonehenge was used to observe the motions of the moon as well as the sun.***

***It lies on the Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, S England.***



## The Temples of the Sun



Surya's Temple of the Sun - Orissa, India



Temple of the Sun - Machu Picchu



Temple of the Sun - Palenque, Mexico



Temple of the Sun - Osian, India



Temple of Apollo - Syracuse, Sicily



Temple of Mithras - Carrawburgh, Northumberland

*"Doubt is the vestibule  
which all must pass  
before they can enter the  
temple of wisdom."*

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Best Wishes,  
Georges Knowles

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May (Beltane)

June (Litha)

August (Lammas)

September (Mabon)



**Ring around the Sun.**

Photo by: LIL  
(EW member since 2005)

**Next Issue**  
Lammas/  
Lughnassadh

