

The Controversial Cauldron

Yule - The Winter Solstice 2009

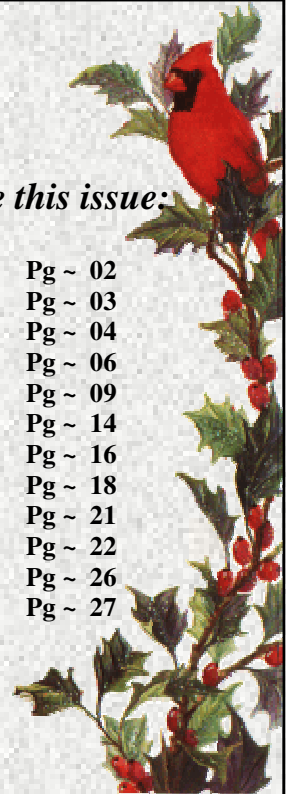
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Email
Witches



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Group Information:

- Members: 711
- Founded: Jul 17, 2002
- Language: English
- Representing:

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

Welcome to the Email Witches Newsletter

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

Best Wishes

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

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

Welcome Yule

The Winter Solstice

Yule, or the Winter Solstice, is one of the lesser Sabbats of the Witches' calendar, and this year 2009, in the northern hemisphere is celebrated on the 21st of December. Yule is a celebration marking the rebirth of the Sun in Midwinter, and is the second of two annual solstices dividing the year (the first being Litha, which celebrated the Sun at its peak in Midsummer).

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

Yule or the Winter Solstice, is known by various other names, including: Alban Arthan (Caledonii or Druid), Jul (Norse), Yuletide (Teutonic), Feill Fionnain (Pecti-Wita), Gwyl Canol Gaeof (Welsh), the Longest Night, Solstice Night, Mother's Night, Midwinter Rite, and of course Christmas from Christianity.

The Yule celebration was particularly important to our ancestors, occurring at a time when food stocks from the last harvest were beginning to run low. For many this Midwinter celebration would be their last feast before the deprivations of deep winter set in, and as the winter deepened, starvation would become a constant threat. Indeed, January through April were commonly known as "the famine months". Any cattle not needed for future breeding would now be slaughtered to provide fresh meat for the table and any leftover fruit made into wine and beer for drinking.

It was traditional at this time to decorate the home with Mistletoe, Holly and Ivy. Their colours brought a sense of life and gaiety into their otherwise drab houses and acted as a means of contact with the spirits of nature at a time when most other plants had withered and died. The Druids especially prized mistletoe which grew in the sacred Oak trees and on the Eve of the Winter Solstice, would harvest the plant with a Golden Sickle. The white berries of the Mistletoe represent the male aspects of the Sun God and were used in ritual to promote the fertility and healing powers of the Sun as it grew stronger.

The Druids equally prized the Holly, for when most all the other trees had lost their leaves the Holly's evergreen nature symbolised immortality by adding a splash of colour to the otherwise barren woodlands. The red berries of the Holly represented the sacred menstrual blood of the Goddess and again used in ritual to promote fertility. A wreath of Holly was hung on the doors of the home for protection, and a sprig kept throughout the year for continued good fortune. Ivy is another evergreen plant

and was associated with the ancient Egyptian god Osiris, a God of the Sun, Agriculture and Health. It was customary to give a wreath of Ivy to newlywed couples, as throughout the ages it was regarded as the emblem of fidelity.

Given the Druid's veneration of trees, it may come as no surprise that the tree should play an important part in the Yule celebrations. As a focal point in the household, a tree, normally a conifer because of its evergreen nature, would be brought inside the home and decorated. As the tree was a known home of the Fairies and other Spirits, they dressed the tree with strips of brightly coloured cloth, strings of shiny beads, fruit, gingerbread men and sweets of all kinds to appease them. Later however, with the arrival of Christianity, early Church leaders banned the practice in their efforts to stamp out pagan beliefs and associations.

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

Perhaps the most enduring tradition to have survived from old is the Yule Log. Traditionally the log used was either Oak or Ash and taken from a tree felled on the householder's land, or given as a gift by their landlord. Placed in the hearth of the home and lit on the eve of the Solstice, it was allowed to burn throughout the night and then left to smoulder for the next 12 days. Later when put out, pieces of the log were distributed around the house for protection against thunderstorms, and the ash from the fire used for healing purposes. Rubbed into hands and feet it helped to protect humans against chilblains, mixed with animal fodder it aided cows to calve, and when mixed with corn seeds it kept the poultry flock healthy for the coming year. A piece from the log was also saved and kept to light the following year's Yule Log.

Today it is hard to imagine the deprivations and hardships suffered by our ancestors, but to them Yule was all about community, friendship and helping others. This sense of community led to another old tradition called "Wassailing", a precursor to today's practice of Christmas Caroling. The word "Wassail" comes from the old Anglo-Saxon term "Waes Hael", which translated is a toast meaning: "Be Well", "Be Whole", "Be Healthy" or "Be Happy". The proper response to this is: "Drink Hael", making it a shared and mutual well wishing. Of old, as carol singers still do today, friends and neighbours would go from door to door on the eve of the solstice singing and bearing their "Wassail Cups", to be rewarded with seasonal drinks, fruit, bread or sweets from those who could afford to give it.

May I wish you all a very merry Yule 2009.

Yule Ritual By Crone

Use a white altar cloth, with boughs of holly and pine. Add a goddess figure on the right and a god on the left, and any other adornments you favor. Use as many unlit green candles of any size as comfort and safety dictate, with matches nearby. Begin the ritual in near darkness, grounding and centering with these words:

The darkness is upon me
On this, the shortest day.
The darkness is upon me
Yet I know it will not stay.
Alone in the darkness
I cast my fears away.
The darkness is upon me
Yet I know it will not stay.

Cast the Circle with bough of holly or pine, or use your wand or athame.

Without the dark there can be no light.
I honor the dark on this longest night.

Face each direction or move to the altar for that direction.

Come spirits of East, of chill wind and air
Come into my Circle with thought so fair.

Come spirits of South, bright spirits of fire
Bring with you warmth of love and desire.

Come spirits of West, of frozen ice chill
Bring feelings as deep as the snow on the hill.

Come spirits of North, in the Earth now asleep
Holding roots and buds in your womb, warm and deep.

At your main altar invoke the deities.

Empowering goddess of dark and light,
I ask that you be here tonight.
Nurturing goddess of light and dark
I ask that you instill a spark.

Consort god of warmth and cold
Be with me as in days of old.
Powerful god of cold and warm
Please keep my Circle from all harm.

Goddess and god here tonight
Guide my path from dark to light.

Now to me my path is clear
I am within my Circle here,
Between the worlds and without fear.

Beyond the bounds of day and night,
Beyond the bounds of dark and light,
Where sorrow and joy, death and birth
Meet as one, beyond the Earth.

Magickal Working

The night is dark, the sun is gone,
Yet I know the wheel turns on.
Through midnight's hour, solid dark,
Within my heart remains a spark. (Scott Cunningham)

On shortest day and longest night
I now receive the warmth of light.

Move around your Circle or your altar, lighting candles slowly and deliberately. As you stand before each candle, think of an event, experience, issue from the past year that has brought darkness into your life. Release that darkness by lighting the candle with these words:

Through warmth and light
Comes the force of power.
This light comes to me
In my darkest hour.

Go from candle to candle repeating the lighting, the thoughts, and the words.

Pause now in your brightly lit space, enjoying the light and warmth of the candles. Know that this light is around you and also within you. Know that you can call forth this light to empower yourself in any darkness that may befall you. When you are ready, proceed with these words:

Bright are the sun, the stars and the moon.
I know that the light will return to me soon.
Cold, dark and fear have been driven away
By the joy, warmth and light that I feel now today.
So mote it be.

Leave the candles burning until after you have opened the Circle.

Lady and Lord, my thanks to you.
I will help this magick in all that I do.
Grateful for your presence bright
I dismiss you now into the night.
Air and water, earth and fire
Thanks that you answered my desire.
Wind, coal, rock and rain
You may be on your way again.
Blessings and thanks to all who were here.
Though you are gone, may you stay very near.

The Circle is open but unbroken.
The peace of the goddess goes with me.
The strength of the god goes with me.
I am empowered with light as I go forth from this place.

Blessed be.

Legacy

The Dance of Sun and Moon

By Ardrian Cahill

In my family tradition we did not celebrate the stories of the Oak and Holly King's rivalry at the Winter Solstice. We have another myth that we call, the Dance of Sun and Moon. Two great energies, male and female, each rule either the Earth or Sky. He rules the Earth in Autumn and Winter while she rules the Sky. Then they change places where she rules the Earth in Spring and Summer while he rules the Sky. The dance goes something like this...



On the Autumnal Equinox, Lady Moon and Lord Greenwood dance face to face reflecting on their sage accomplishments. As the trees shed their colors, the evergreen Lord of the Harvest embraces his frosty domain; the Winter forests. We call him: Greenman, Father Forester, Lord of the Hunt, Lord of the Greenwood, Wildwood or Winter Earth. He toils beneath his mate and partner, the ruler of the Winter Sky. She who is called: Lady Moon, Mother Night and Queen of Heaven, who sheds her sparkling wisdom on his glistening domain.



As he rules the Earth, he blesses the Autumn harvest. He is the rutting Lord, protecting the mating Winter herds of elk and deer and overseeing the fertility of the sheep and goats. For as they prosper, we prosper who can no longer gather food from the dormant Earth. As Lord of the Hunt, he sees the people through the cold months with the forest's sacrifice. He leads us to the cold harvest of berries and pecans, chestnuts, hazelnuts and pistachios. He weighs upon the trees to drop their tired branches so there will be plenty of dead-fall to gather for the fires to stay the cold outside Winter walls. When the snow banks are high, the Greenman grows old. He travels into the

darkest part of the forest and sinks deeply into the warmth of the Earth to sleep. His rule of the Earth is over and at the Winter Solstice he is transformed for ruling a new kingdom.

On the Winter Solstice, Lady Moon rises fat and golden and at her greatest height she shines the brightest on the longest night. She is the supreme ruler of the Winter Sky and we celebrate her beauty and blessing of light in the deepest darkness. On this night, she gazes down upon the Lord of the Wildwood to call him forth and begin his ascension into the Sky to reclaim his Summer domain as Lord Sun and Sky Father. As he does so, she will slowly release her hold on the Winter Sky and begin her descent to her Summer domain. She will transform into Maiden Earth, ruler over the planting and sowing seasons of Spring. For a moment as they exchange domains, they dance, kiss and part.

On the Vernal Equinox both Mother Earth and Father Sun dance face to face at the joy of their youth and growing abundance. The Lady of the Flowering Earth is blushing with vibrant colors as she embraces her earthly rule. We call her Flower Queen, May Queen, Mother Earth, ruler of the world in Summer. She toils beneath the ruler of the Summer Sky, he who is the radiant Sun, Lord of the Day, who has grown from a robust youth to a golden God, blessing the fertility of Maiden

Earth with his warm feeding light. She is the fertility maiden, pushing each blade of grass through the melting snow in preparation to feed the newborn animals. She blesses the mating of the Summer animals; horses, bears and wolves and all the small animals whose young flourish under her generosity. As the May Queen she is patroness of all the flowering trees and meadows. She leads us to all the hidden hollows where seasoning and medicinal herbs grow. She is the rich Earth ready to nurture the slumbering seeds that will grow into the Autumn harvest. As Spring gives birth to the bounty of Summer, she begins to tire and grow old.

On the Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year when the Sun is highest in the Sky, he is Lord of all that he surveys. He is supreme ruler of the Summer Sky and we celebrate his glory and generosity. On this day he gazes down upon Mother Earth and calls her to ascend and reclaim her Winter domain as Lady Moon and Queen of Heaven. As she does so, he will slowly release his hold on the Summer Sky and begin to descend to his Winter domain again, to become Lord of the Hunt. For a moment as they exchange domains, they dance, kiss and part.

And so the endless dance continues by these two great monarchs.



The Sugarplum Tree

By Ardrian Cahill

In my home on Yuletide Eve it was the duty of all the little children to do three things. We were to leave cookies and milk for Father Christmas, light a candle and place it in the front window to light the Sun-child's way to our door and put out water for the reindeer. This last tradition was an early lesson in caring for animals.

Now, most of the children I knew left cookies for Santa but didn't do either of the other traditions. The candle lighting was a lovely last gesture before bedtime, but what we made sure to never forget, was leaving water out for the reindeer. If we remembered to leave water, we were rewarded for our thoughtfulness by the elves with a small tree covered in candy. This tree was called a Sugarplum Tree.

In Grandmother's day, the Sugarplum Tree was covered in chocolates, marshmallows, fudge, caramels, licorice, and a family tradition of dates stuffed with walnuts and rolled in granulated sugar. When I was a child there wasn't a whole lot of difference in what made it to the tree. It always had chocolates, caramels, marshmallows and stuffed dates. Some years there were jellied candies, gumdrops and orange slices. We nibbled on these goodies and fresh baked breads as we opened our presents.

Yuletide morning was one of the two days a year (the other morning was Ostara) that we could eat all the candy we wanted...even before breakfast!



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Ardriana Cahill lives in Western USA and is a Hereditary Witch, den of Clan McCormick and a Kell of Brigid since 1998. She has been a member of EW since 2004.

On the Rocks



Diamond

by Pari

As we prepare to celebrate and welcome the return of the blessed Sun - meet the most brilliant of the royal Fire Stones ~ the Diamond.

In recognition and celebration of the Sun's rebirth in the Northern Hemisphere, and for added light, strength and protection as the Sun slowly begins to slip away from those south of the Equator, the diamond is a most appropriate stone! But in either hemisphere and no matter what the time of year actually, this much sought-after crystalline gemstone can aid us in a multitude of ways. I have chosen it for Yule, though, because it is an extremely durable Solar stone that has long been associated with the Sun and which carries a strong projective energy that bestows strength, vitality and stability - something we can all use at this time of year.

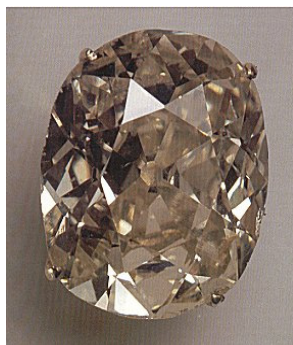
Chemically, the diamond is an isometric crystal made up of pure carbon. A fun comparison of the two basic structures of this element are surprisingly found in two near-opposite forms that yet share the same chemistry: Diamond and Graphite. Where Graphite is opaque and usually dark, Diamond is transparent and usually light or colorless. Where Graphite is dull and lackluster, Diamond is brilliant and highly refractive. Where Graphite makes a good lubricant, Diamond makes an excellent abrasive. While Graphite conducts electricity, Diamond is an electrical insulator but poor conductor. And as Graphite is one of the softest stones (the

writing material commonly found in pencils), Diamond registers the highest (a perfect 10) on the Mohs Scale, making it the hardest substance known to man; a diamond can only be scratched or cut by the use of another diamond. For this reason alone, this near invincible crystal has symbolically become known as the epitome of strength. In fact, Diamond's name originates from the Greek word "adamas" meaning "invincible" or "unconquerable". Here we see Diamond's association with stamina, endurance and longevity, and we can use this stone to help create or enhance all of those hearty traits within ourselves.

Diamond crystals form most often in the shape of octahedrons within alluvial deposits and plutonic rock, and only after many, many years of intense pressure and heat. Some specimens are known to be as old as 3 billion years. These amazing crystals, first discovered in India a little over 2,000 years ago, are actually quite abundant within the Earth, but some take a remarkable voyage within their lifetime in order to reach Earth's

surface. They originate some 300 miles beneath the surface and their crystals are transported upward via cylindrical rock plug formations known as "pipes", usually made of Kimberlite. The most notable locations today for finding diamonds are: Australia, South Africa, Russia (Siberia), Canada, U.S. (Arkansas), India, China and Brazil. The stone's color is most often clear or white, but can be found in light yellows, browns (often called "champagne"), blues and even reds depending on other included trace minerals. Oddly, the colored diamonds hold more monetary value today. Some famous diamonds include: the Hope Diamond (a blue diamond now on display in Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian Institute), the Koh-i-Noor Diamond (a clear diamond which was placed into the British Crown in 1877 and, according to an ancient Hindu text: "*He who owns this diamond will own the world, but will also know all its misfortunes. Only God, or a woman, can wear it with impunity.*" Good thing it rests with Queen Elizabeth!), and the Eureka and Star of South Africa (a champagne and clear diamond, respectively, both originally found in South Africa, the latter of which started the intense diamond mining there).

But it is the colorless diamond that, to me, holds the most brilliant and useful prismatic display of color, bursting forth like the Sun. Diamond's characteristic crystal clear appearance gives a clue to its added associations with purity, love and spirituality, making it a most useful road map to our Highest Self. And yes, while



any diamonds can reinforce and more perfectly align all of the body's Chakras, the clear varieties are exquisitely well-suited for helping to open our Crown and Brow (Third Eye) Chakras - the places where we can best connect and commune with Deity and the Higher Self. These Chakras are the Houses of the Holy...the way and means to the Divine...and the diamond - especially when placed on or near the forehead or crown - is the perfect stone for accessing and utilizing the knowledge and wisdom contained there. With Diamond's inner light acting as a prism and containing an extremely high frequency, it becomes a bridge for us to take - a bridge between the physical and the spiritual. In addition, Diamond will enhance our clairvoyance, intuition and meditations, and be that all-important stimulant of unconditional love towards each other and ourselves. It is said to promote the Buddha or Christ consciousness and a pathway to enlightenment.

Among all the stones that our world's fancy holds precious, the diamond stands preeminent. The diamonds that gleamed with such fire in an idol's eye before the rising of the Star of Bethlehem may be sparkling today with more dazzling radiance in the crown of an emperor.

J. Willard Hershey, *The Book of Diamonds*

Kings and Queens and other royal elite knew of and highly prized diamonds for all of their valuable gifts to mind, body and spirit, along with the added perk of being a way to strut their wealth and exhibit the extent of their aristocratic status. Since it was a common practice and looked upon as the duty of Kings and Queens to be able to act as an instrument and intermediary between their subjects and the Divine, diamonds (and other lofty precious gems) were often placed in their Crown's (instinctively near the Crown Chakra) to enhance their inner vision, intuition, clarity of mind, and to be the swiftest way for them to commune with and bring forth fortuitous information from Higher Spirit. In this same capacity, we can use the diamond to invoke a greater sense and acknowledgement of our own majestic Spirit and regal gifts. It will also clarify the path to our current



incarnation's life mission.

Throughout the ages, diamonds have been treasured for their beauty and metaphysical properties by more than just the royals, but were often worn in merely a polished state. It was only later, after man began to facet gemstones, that the diamond's brilliant fire was discovered and its value increased. But whether simply

polished or brilliantly faceted, mankind has revered this precious gem for more than one very good reason. Hindus believed that a diamond would protect its owner from evil spirits, snakes, poison, danger and illness. In ancient India these crystals were worn to ensure victory in battles, and in ancient Rome they were set into steel rings and used for strength, bravery and courage. These are but two of the many sets of qualities that diamonds are also used for today. Along with those qualities, though, Diamond promotes truth, purity, fidelity, longevity, harmony, abundance and love. It is no surprise that the diamond became the stone most commonly set into engagement and marriage rings.



This King of gemstones also exudes a passionate prowess, enhancing self-confidence with the opposite sex. In Greek myth, diamonds were thought to be cast off particles of the stars and thus can make us starry-eyed. Cupid's arrow is said to be tipped with diamonds, and so obviously is forceful in all aspects of love. This libidinous Stag Stone releases inhibitions or blockages in sexual behavior (which may be the first reason why men are more willing to purchase this expensive stone for their intended spouses. heheheh), and has been known to be able to help reconcile feuding lovers. (No surprise there, eh girls?..bahahaha) But seriously, this extremely powerful and versatile gem can surely turn up the heat! As a heat conductor, Diamonds are unparalleled - working five times better than their nearest competitor, Silver. Metaphysically, they can warm us and bring us closer to the much sought-after facets of abundant love and passion.

"O Diamond! Diamond! thou little knowest the mischief done!"

Isaac Newton (1642-1727)



Though not truly rare, only about 20% of diamonds found are of gemstone quality. The balance of what is mined is used in industry for making tools and dies or crushed for use as an abrasive powder. Also, as with any popular gemstone, the more available it is, the less worth it holds financially; so today's world supply of diamonds is strictly controlled in order to keep their value high. If all the diamonds that exist in the world were made available, they would be as common as any other semi-precious stone and reasonably priced. This pseudo-rare gem is April's birthstone and is associated with the astrological sign of Aries.

In healing, diamonds are metaphysically known to help purify the body through detoxification. They assist by increasing healthy function of the brain in both cell and bone, and can clear vertigo, anxiety and depression. Diamond is also good for increasing fertility.

In magick, the wearing or use of diamonds can help you achieve fame and fortune in whatever area of life you desire. Diamonds can be used in love and enhancement rituals, prosperity spells to manifest any form of abundance, and to facilitate our invocation and communion with our Guides, Guardians, Angels, Faeries

and, of course, Deity. They can be used to purify sacred space, and to amplify energy during the raising of the cone of power. Cleanse your diamonds frequently, for they are quick to absorb any negative vibrations around you. A nice smudge of Sage or a day in the sun will do the trick.

Diamonds are well known for their ability to produce a ring of protection around its wearer. Let them protect us as we traverse Winter's cold and unforgiving landscape. In their fire and heat capacity, let them stoke our passions and revive our relationships. And in their freely offered gifts of will and courage, let them help us brave those inner journeys that Winter is sure to invoke. As a strong "as above, so below" stone, let us use Diamond to help manifest our inner most sacred dreams. And in this royal stone's mighty ability for restoring vitality and enriching life-force energies, let the brilliant fire of Diamond, alongside your candles, hold strong vigil throughout the longest night of the year as we await and get ready to celebrate the return of the Sun Child!

A blessed Yule to one and all.

Sources:

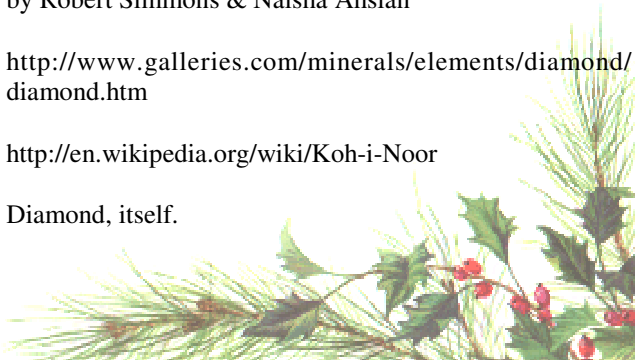
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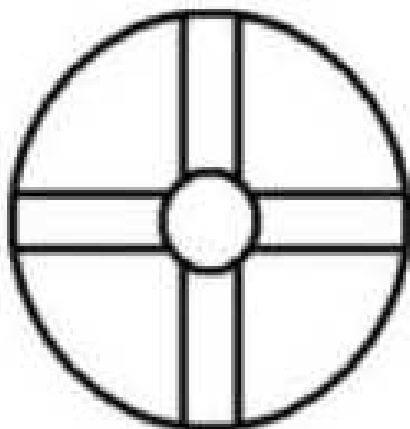
Diamond, itself.



7th December 2009 © Patricia J. Martin

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Pagan Symbolism - The Solar Cross

The Solar Cross symbol not only represents the Sun, but is also symbolic of the cyclic four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, as well as the four classic elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Because of its association with the Sun, the Solar Cross is commonly used at fire rituals honouring the Sun's decline or increasing power, such as the two solstices Litha (the Summer Solstice) and Yule (the Winter Solstice). As a fire sign, the Solar Cross symbol is associated with strong will and energy, which is representative of the masculine fertility of the God. While fire is generally seen as destructive, it can also be creative, and particularly at Yule the Winter Solstice when it can be used symbolically to burn away the old and re-birth the new.

The Pagan Kitchen *Yule 2009*

By OwlOak

MM Folks ~ The coming of Yule, the longest night and shortest day, heralds the rebirth of the "Child of Promise" and gives us much to be joyous for. The days are now getting longer and the new year is ready to burst forth its bounties. In celebration of this, I have prepared a sumptuous feast and some libations to accompany it.

For breakfast, we have a quick and filling meal which works for both the grown-ups and the kiddies:

Omelettes *by: OwlOak*



Ingredients:

8 eggs
2 tbsps of cooking oil
1/4 cup milk
1 tsp. dried parsley
1 cup shredded cheese (Cheddar or Jack) - divided
2 pita breads, or enough toast, rolls, English Muffins, waffles, etc. for 4 sandwiches
1 cup meat (optional) - cooked & chopped (ham, Spam®, bacon, sausage, or a combo)
2 whole scallions - finely chopped
1/4 sweet red bell pepper - finely chopped
1/4 cup mushrooms - finely chopped
Hot sauce - to taste (optional)
Salt & Pepper - to taste
Butter - as needed

Directions:

Cut the rolls, English muffins, or pitas in half.

Stir the eggs, milk, and 1/4 cup of the shredded cheese together in a bowl until blended and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Pour the egg mixture into a skillet over medium heat, to

which the oil and 2 tbsps. of butter have been added. When the bottom of the eggs is set, layer it with the meat, scallions, mushrooms, and bell pepper. Sprinkle with the parsley and top with the remaining 3/4 cup of cheese.

Continue cooking until the cheese melts, the egg is set and the bottom is golden; flip and cook the other side for 1-2 minutes, or until golden. Remove from the heat.

Divide into 4 equal servings and place each one in a pita pocket, or on 1/2 a roll, muffin or slice of toast which has been spread with butter and top with the other piece to make a sandwich.

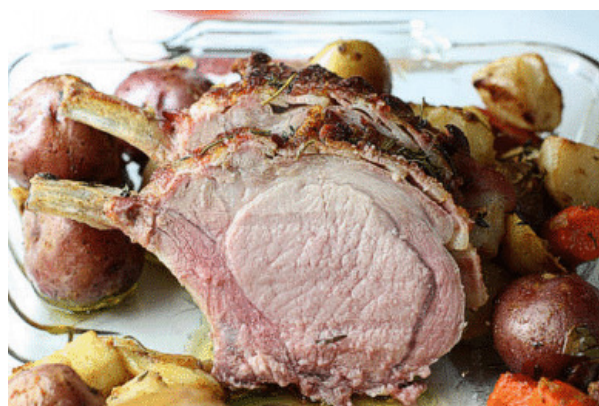
Sprinkle with additional cheese, hot sauce, or your favorite condiment, if desired.*

Serve immediately.

* What I particularly enjoy is omitting the hot sauce and spreading one side of the sandwich with a jelly or jam – strawberry, grape, apricot, etc.

For the main meal we have a delicious roast:

Wild Boar Rib Roast *by OwlOak*



Ingredients:

5 lb. wild boar/domestic pork rib roast
4 tbsps of cooking oil - divided
3 lg. onions - chopped
3 garlic cloves - minced
1 1/4 cups water
2/3 cup cider vinegar
1/4 cup whiskey
4 pie apples (Granny Smith or Macintosh) - peeled, cored, and diced
1/2 cup honey, or 2/3 cup granulated brown sugar
1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes (optional and to taste)
2 tsp. salt
Additional salt and pepper - as needed

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 F/177C.

Heat 2 tbsps of the cooking oil in a large heavy saucepan over medium heat and sauté the onions in it until caramelized (browned, not burned). Add the garlic and

sauté for 2 to 3 minutes longer. Then add the water, vinegar, honey, salt, whiskey, apples, and pepper flakes (if used). Cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Uncover and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes longer, stirring occasionally, until it reaches sauce consistency. Remove from the heat.

Season the wild boar/pork rack with salt and pepper. Place in a large pan with the remaining oil and sear the roast over high heat.

Remove the seared roast from the pan and place fat side up on a rack in a roasting pan. Baste generously with the sauce. Add 1 cup of water to the pan to prevent smoking and burning of the drippings.

Roast for about 35 minutes/lb., or until the internal temperature reaches 160F/71C (for medium), basting occasionally with sauce and pan drippings. Remove from the oven and let the roast sit for 10-15 minutes before carving.

Pour the pan drippings into the sauce and allow this to settle while the roast is resting, then skim the grease off and reheat the sauce.

Slice the roast into individual chops and spoon additional warmed-up sauce and pan drippings over each.

Serve immediately with your favorite side dishes.

For leftovers, if there are any, what better way to use them up than with boar burgers made with fresh homemade burger buns:

Beautiful Homemade Burger Buns

by Morigane
(EW Member since Nov. 2009)



This recipe was inspired by a recipe from KingArthurflour.com. These simple homemade buns are the best buns ever! They are perfect for burgers or any kind of sandwich with your choice of toppings, be you a carnivore or herbivore. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

3/4 to 1 cup lukewarm water*
1/4 cup sugar
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon instant dry granular yeast.
2 tablespoons butter
1 large egg
3 1/2 cups unbleached All-Purpose flour
Cooking spray
Cookie baking sheet

Directions:

Mix water, yeast, sugar and salt into the mixing bowl and let sit for 4 minutes.

Then, using a pastry cutter, cut butter into flour until it is in little pieces.

Combine the flour and yeast.

Beat the egg and add to flour and yeast mixture. Mix well and form into a ball shape.

Cover the dough, and let it rise for 1 hour, or until it's doubled in bulk.** Put oven on 200 °F (93 °C), with door slightly ajar and place bowl of dough on the edge to get the oven's heat. This will help dough rise and double in bulk.

Next, gently deflate the dough, and divide it into 8 pieces. Shape each piece into a round 1" thick; flatten to about 3" across. (I use a big round cookie cutter). ***

Place the buns on a lightly sprayed baking sheet and cover. Let rise for about an hour, until very puffy. Again set on oven's edge to rise.

When they have risen, brush buns with melted butter. Or, brush lightly with egg wash (1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water), and sprinkle with sesame seeds or whatever you like. ****

Bake the buns in a preheated 375°F (190°C) oven for 12 to 15 minutes, till golden. Cool on a rack.

*For best results (a smooth, slightly soft dough), use the smaller amount of water in summer (or in a humid environment), the greater amount in winter (or in a dry climate).

**When making anything with yeast, including these rolls, let the dough rise to the point the recipe says it should, e.g., "Let the dough rise till it's doubled in bulk." Rising times are only a guide; there are so many variables in yeast baking (how you knead the dough; what kind of yeast you use, etc.) that it's impossible to say that bread dough will ALWAYS double in bulk in a specific amount of time.

***What's the easiest way to shape buns? Gently deflate the dough, and form it into a smooth 8" log. Slice the log as though you were slicing cinnamon buns. Gently pull each slice into a circle.

****Brushing the buns with melted butter will give them a soft, light golden crust. Brushing them with an egg wash

will give them a shinier, darker crust. For seeded buns, brush with the egg wash; it'll make the seed adhere to buns.

For a beverage we have:

Non-alcohol Yule Punch

by OwlOak



Ingredients:

4 cups apple juice
3 cups pineapple juice
2 cups cranberry juice
1 cup orange juice
1 cinnamon stick
1 tbsp. whole cloves
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
1 medium lime - cut into wedges
1 small lemon - cut into wedges
2 liter - club soda or ginger ale

Directions:

In a large pot, combine all the ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain and allow to cool. Add the club soda or ginger ale, and gently stir to combine.

Serve chilled as is, or re-warm and serve in cups with a cinnamon stick.

Note: Re-warming will make it go flat, but the flavor of the ginger ale will still be there if you chose to use it. Also, if you are serving it cold and in a bowl, rings of fruit and slices of cored apples may be added as a garnish.

And, for dessert, we have a couple of versions of Plum Pudding:

A Plum Pudding

*"Recipes from American Cookery" by
Amelia Simmons (1796)*



Take half a loaf of bread, on which pour three pints boiling milk, when cold add six ounces ground rice, mix the bread and rice together, half a pound plumbs, four ounces beef suet cut fine, one pound currants, eight eggs, half gill rose water, one gill wine, lemon peel, sugar and nutmeg as may be agreeable.

Translation:

This appears to be a year-round plum pudding recipe.

Ingredients:

1/2 loaf bread
3 pints milk - scalded
2/3 cup ground rice
1 cup raisins
1/4 lb. beef suet (fat) - finely chopped
2 cups currants
8 whole eggs
1/4 cup rose water
1/2 cup wine
Lemon peel, sugar, and nutmeg - to taste

Directions:

Combine the scalded milk, bread, and ground rice.

Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well.

As for the cooking, no directions are given. Plum pudding at that time was normally placed in a pudding bag and boiled, or steamed. Based on this, I would treat it like a fruit-filled bread pudding and bake it, covered, in a water bath at 375F(190C) for 50-65 minutes, or until firm. For a pan, I'd consider a mold or a fluted bundt pan.

If anyone chooses to try this recipe, I'd be interested to hear how you made out.

Plum Pudding is traditionally served with a hard sauce and/or whiskey topping (See Hard Sauce Recipe below).

Now, for another plum pudding recipe which is for a version of the well-known 'Traditional' and seasonal one; and, to the best of my knowledge, is presented as it was published:

Superb English Plum Pudding

*Source: House and Garden, December
1963 - James Beard*

This pudding is really best when made a year in advance and allowed to mellow. It was customary to make it early in Advent - the religious season before Christmas - and use it the following year. Everyone in the family was supposed to stir the pudding once for good luck. If you can't make it the year before, at least give it a few weeks to age.

Fruit Mixture (to be made 4 days ahead)

1 pound seedless raisins
1 pound sultana raisins
1/2 pound currants
1 cup thinly sliced citron
1 cup chopped candied peel
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon mace
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 pound finely chopped suet (powdery fine)
1 1/4 cups cognac

Pudding

1 1/4 pounds (approximately) fresh bread crumbs
1 cup scalded milk
1 cup sherry or port
12 eggs, well beaten
1 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
Cognac

Blend the fruits, citron, peel, spices and suet and place in a bowl or jar.

Add 1/4 cup cognac, cover tightly and refrigerate for 4 days, adding 1/4 cup cognac each day.

Soak the breadcrumbs in milk and sherry or port. Combine the well-beaten eggs and sugar. Blend with the fruit mixture. Add salt and mix thoroughly.

Put the pudding in buttered bowls or tins, filling them about 2/3 full. Cover with foil and tie it firmly.

Steam for 6-7 hours.

Uncover and place in a 250 degree F oven for 30 minutes. Add a dash of cognac to each pudding, cover with foil and keep in a cool place.

To use, steam again for 2 to 3 hours and unmold. Sprinkle with sugar; add heated cognac.

Ignite and bring to the table.

Serve with hard sauce or cognac sauce.

Each pudding serves 12.

Hard Sauce

by: OwlOak

3 tbsp. unsalted butter
3/4 cup confectioners sugar, sifted
3 tbsp. water

3 tbsp. warm brandy, rum, or cognac (optional in place of the water)

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Remove from the heat and stir in the sugar and water, or alcohol of your choice. Beat until smooth.

To serve, spoon over the plumb pudding.

Now, I know you're all saying, "I don't see any plums in these plum puddings. Do you see any plums? I don't see any plums." Well, actually there are, but you just don't recognize them as such. Here's why....

A Brief Plum Pudding History

by: OwlOak

Plum (Plumb) pudding is a steamed or boiled pudding frequently served at holiday times. Although there are relatively recent recipes that contain chopped prunes, the "Traditional Plum Pudding", as we know it, has never contained the fruit of the plum tree.

"What?", you say. "No plums in Plum Pudding? That can't be true!"

Alas, I'm afraid it is true.

Although fresh and dried plums (prunes) were indeed popular in early medieval dishes by the 1500 & 1600's, for reasons I have yet to fathom, they began to be replaced with raisins. And, because of this, over time the term "plum" was being used interchangeably with raisin and the name "plum" carried through to former plum dishes in which raisins were now being used. By the 1800's, the use of the term "plum" to describe a raisin used exclusively in puddings, cakes and other baked goods had become firmly established; as noted in this definition of "plum" in the Oxford English Dictionary: "A dried grape or raisin as used for puddings, cakes, etc."

Originally Plum Pudding was a year round basic pudding, but over time it became more elaborate and this caused it to be outlawed by the Puritans for being "sinfully rich". However, by the time of Queen Victoria it had become an established seasonal holiday dish, most notably for Christmas, and was first recorded as being called "Christmas Pudding" in a novel by Anthony Trollope.

At one point, in England, it became traditional to bake small silver charms in the plum pudding (a silver coin would bring wealth in the coming year; a tiny wishbone, good luck; a silver thimble, thrift; an anchor, safe harbor) but, again, by the time of Queen Victoria this practice had pretty much passed and only the silver coin was used. One other tradition that has continued is that, while it's being made, every member of the household simultaneously grabs the spoon and gives the batter a stir while making a wish.

"So, what about those 'Sugar Plums' we hear mentioned? They're real plums, right?"

Nope, they ain't plums either.

Sugar Plums

by: OwlOak



The 'sugar plum bush/tree' is native to eastern North America and Canada from Nova Scotia west to southern Ontario, and in the United States from Maine south to Alabama. It is largely restricted to wet sites, particularly on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. It produces sweet, purple fruit which have seeds similar to those of an apple or pear.

However, these fruit are not the Sugar Plums which are widely associated with Christmas/Yule through Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" nor are they the ones referenced in "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

The Sugar Plums mentioned there were a lump of spiced sugar candy in a small round or oval shape which was used for decoration or symbolic purposes. It was also eaten as a treat and sometimes as a digestive aid after a meal. Consider the state of the times back then, I can see how a young one could easily drift off to sleep with visions dancing in their heads of those delectable hard candies awaiting them when they awoke.

Currently there are baked goods and confections called sugar plums, but they appear to be fairly recent and are so in name only. A classic, popular version of Sugar Plums are whole almonds coated with a sugar shell in various colors. Called mulabbas in Arabic, confetti in Italian, and Jordan almonds or sugared almonds in English, these confections have a long history and are traditionally associated with weddings and special celebrations. Throwing or handing out these candies at such occasions (hence the name for the multi-colored paper confetti which usually now replaces them) dates back centuries, and is meant to ensure prosperity, fertility, happiness, and good luck.

So, folks, now we know. Plum Pudding doesn't have real plums in it, and Sugar Plums aren't real plums but a confectionery treat. Please, don't even ask about Santa Clause or the Tooth Fairy.... I'm way to disappointed and

depressed to even think of going there.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm just going to go sit in a corner and pick raisins from my plum pudding while visions of Jordan Almonds dance in my head. And, while at it, drown my sorrows in a hot mug of:

Chocolate Mint Coffee

by: OwlOak



Ingredients:

2 cups half-n-half
2 cups hot coffee
3 oz. chocolate liqueur
1 oz. peppermint liqueur, or to taste
Whipped cream

Directions:

Heat the half-n-half and coffee together in a saucepan. Stir in the coffee and peppermint liqueurs.

Serve in a mug with whipped cream on top.

There we have it folks. A tasty and filling Yule feast to remember and some facts we might just want to forget - just kidding on the forgetting and sounding upset.

From my Circle to yours, here's wishing everyone a very "Happy, Joyous, and Merry Yule".

Huggs & B*B ~ OwlOak

The Herb Garden



Mistletoe

by Lyric Moonshadow

Of the many plants associated with the Yule Season, possibly the one most steeped in interesting lore is the Mistletoe. You may associate mistletoe with stolen kisses on Christmas Eve, as I do, but how did this come about? Come along with me and we will examine the intriguing Mistletoe.

Almost all varieties of Mistletoe are parasites or semi-parasitic. Once they attach themselves to trees they send down special roots which eventually penetrate the bark of the host from which they gain life sustaining nutrients. Some botanists consider the Mistletoe to be semi-parasitic because the relationship between the host tree and the plant can be beneficial to both. The tree offers shade to the Mistletoe during the summer months, and during the winter the Mistletoe, being an evergreen, thrives and provides photosynthesis to the tree when it is leafless.

The Mistletoe most commonly finds its homes on Apple, Larch, Maple and sometimes Oak. Mistletoe is almost always disseminated by birds who love the berries. Our antecessors observed that the Mistletoe plants would suddenly appear on branches, almost magically from the excrement of the Thrush. "Mistle" is the Angle-Saxon word for "dung" and "tan" is the word for "twig" – therefore Mistletoe or Mistletoe translated means "dung on a twig". The Anglo-Saxons were a pretty "earthy" lot!!! By the end of the 16th century botanists had figured out that the plant was disseminated by bird droppings.

Mistletoe is also referred to as the "Golden Bough". This reference dates back to Virgil's epic poem "Aeneid". The hero Aeneas was instructed by the prophetess Sibyl to find the Golden Bough in a grove sacred to Diana. Sibyl told Aeneas to pick the Golden Bough and take it with him on his journey to the underworld. She knew that the magical bough would give him the confidence to pursue his goal. Two doves guided him to the grove and showed him the branch on which "shone a flickering gleam of gold". Sir James Frazer's classic "The Golden Bough" (1922) is based on this scene from Virgil's Aeneid and explains the origin of the Golden Bough. Although Mistletoe is an evergreen, many evergreens do

go through a dormant period and appear to die. As a result of this dormant period the Mistletoe acquires a golden hue.

Ancient Druid Priests used Mistletoe in a special ritual held 6 days after the Full Moon following the Winter Solstice. The Priest would cut the Mistletoe from a sacred Oak using a golden sickle. So the mistletoe was harvested but the branches were not permitted to touch the ground. The Priest would divide the branches into many sprigs which were given to the townspeople. They would hang them over doorways to protect themselves from evil energies, thunder and lightning. Hanging a sprig on a baby's cradle would protect the babe from faeries, and giving a sprig to the first cow that calved after New Years would protect the entire herd all year long.



The Priest would cut the Mistletoe from a sacred Oak using a golden sickle.

Although the Mistletoe abounds in old English lore, the origins of "kissing" under the Mistletoe has its roots in Norse folklore: The most beloved son of the Norse Goddess of love and beauty Frigga, was named Balder. Frigga so loved Balder that she asked the elements, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, that nothing originating from the elements would ever harm her son. The trickster Loki found a loophole in the Mistletoe. He made an arrow from its wood and used it to kill Balder. Frigga's tears became the white berries of the Mistletoe. She was so distraught over her son's death that the other Gods returned Balder to the land of the living. In response, Frigga made the Mistletoe a symbol of love and kindness - so much so, that soldiers would lay down their weapons if Mistletoe was spotted in a tree during battle. This is how kissing under the Mistletoe first began.

There is an alternative theory regarding the roots of kissing under the Mistletoe. This dates back to the Roman Empire. The Romans celebrated Saturnalia during the Winter Solstice. This was a weeklong debauchery honoring Saturn, which included lots and lots of wine, music, exchanging of gifts and fertility rituals under the Mistletoe – thus the custom of "kissing" and probably far more, occurred under the Roman's Mistletoe.

As Christianity began to spread throughout Europe, and in an attempt to debase the happy go lucky, fertility-focused pagans, a nasty rumor began – the cross used to crucify Jesus was made from Mistletoe. Realistically, I'm not at

all sure how this could have been believed. Even large shrubs of Mistletoe are made up of sprigs and twigs. Surely it would have been far more efficient to create a crucifixion cross from a tree rather than a shrub. In any case, the ancient Christians believed that as a punishment the plant was not permitted to grow from the earth and was deemed to be a botanical parasite, and never allowed to darken the doorway of a Christian house of worship.

One of the most interesting aspects of this plant is its medicinal uses. Beginning as early as 50 CE, the Greek herbalist Dioscorides wrote that Mistletoe was used to cure external tumors. In his work, *Materia Medica*, he writes: "it has the power to disperse, soften, drawing and assisting tumors of the parotid gland and other lesions." More than 40 years later, Pliny the Elder claimed that Mistletoe was used to treat sores and epilepsy.

Although the healing characteristics of Mistletoe have been studied since the Druids and Greeks, the exciting advances in this arena are taking place now. According to the National Cancer Institute (an arm of the U.S. National Institutes of Health) there are studies being conducted worldwide investigating the use of Mistletoe in fighting cancer. In many European countries, Mistletoe products are of the most prescribed therapies for cancer patients. Iscadore, also called Iscar, is one of the more widely used products. Because Mistletoe is a parasitic plant, it takes on the characteristics of the host. For example, IscadorP is originally from the Pine tree and IscadorM is from the Apple tree. The host characteristics incorporated into the Mistletoe will determine the type of tumor the Mistletoe will best help eliminate. For more information on this development visit www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/cam/mistletoe/patient/page2

Being so rich in medicinal qualities, it only makes sense that the Mistletoe would also have an extremely rich magickal history as well. Mistletoe is associated with the element Air, gender is Masculine and the ruling planet is the Sun. Folklore names include: All Heal, Birdlime, Devil's Fuge, Golden Bough and Witches' Broom. Magick powers of Mistletoe are associated with the hunt, love, protection, fertility and it is a powerful agent against all misfortune. Mistletoe twigs placed under a bedroom threshold or beneath a pillow will assure a restful night's sleep and wonderful dreams. Burn Mistletoe to banish all evil and negative energy. Burn Rue, Mistletoe, Verbena and Benzoin on charcoal to take off jinxes affecting health. In a mojo bag, combine Mistletoe, Rue, Wahoo (Burning Bush root bark) and Oak bark to keep away evil. Add Mistletoe to a mojo bag for love spells or to protect against love jinxes. Place Mistletoe in a sachet for a woman who is having difficulty conceiving.

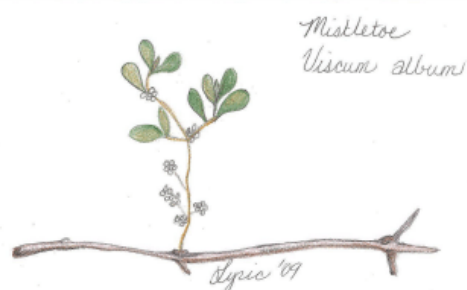
A word about toxicity and poisoning – there are many warnings on the internet regarding toxicity of Mistletoe. At the same time, there are postings from individuals who use the berries, leaves and twigs for medicinal purposes. Uses include everything from treating and preventing

frostbite to lowering blood pressure to an adjuvant to cancer chemotherapy. [For example, see Susun Weed and/or Maria Treben <http://www.healingwiseforum.com/viewtopic.php?f=19&t=16804&start=0>]. An article in the New York Times, December 11, 2007, states that "of the hundreds of cases of accidental ingestion (of Mistletoe) over the years, there have been no fatalities and only a handful of severe reactions." No doubt that Mistletoe, like any other plant, can be toxic if taken in large amounts or taken by particularly sensitive individuals, animals and children. However, the reputation of Mistletoe being lethal is not accurate.

I hope I have cleared up some questions, filled in some gaps and perhaps showed you something new about this most amazing and magical plant. So, this Yule Season, if you find yourself standing under Mistletoe, prepare to be "smooched", look up and ENJOY!!!

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Original Art by Lyric

December 2009 © Lyric MoonShadow

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A Metaphysical Guide

In The Spirit

The Universal Law of Giving and Receiving



By Tamra L. Construck

"There are laws that govern our universe called Universal Laws. These laws apply to everything, everywhere at all times in our universe. These laws enable our universe to function in an orderly fashion. Without these laws there would be chaos in the universe."

~Kathleen Rainbow~

No matter what religion or lack thereof we as individuals, families, communities' etc. practice and believe in, the annual commercial traditions of Christmas or some semblance of are recognized the world over. When you think of Christmas, Yule, or the Winter Solstice, what are the first thoughts that come to mind? Would they be of family, feasts, and fun festivities, or celebrating the return of the sun? Would they be of over-crowded stores, long lines and maxed out credit cards, or brightly wrapped gifts under trees dripping with decorations; Yule logs, mistletoe, eggnog...?

If you are like me, you are probably thinking all of the above and then some. But perhaps this holiday season the war, the battered economy and scarcity of sufficient employment is weighing a bit too heavily upon us, and our spirits are not as "high" as the cost of living seems to be. I for one have yet to conjure the excitement and motivation I normally experience during this time of year. I am distracted, depleted, and discombobulated; nowhere near in the spirit to deck my halls or anyone else's for that matter. My personal mid-life changes, both within and without have me misplacing everything from my car keys to my peace of mind.

Being a bright shiny neophyte of metaphysical philosophy, I could not in good conscious allow my *Bah-Humbug* emotional lethargy to diminish my energies and blindside my inner vision. Okay, that ship has already sailed, but I could still redeem myself. So I stepped up to my bathroom mirror, looked directly into my own eyes, and gave myself a nice sharp slap in the face to get the old adrenalin pumping. (Kids don't try this at home, I'm a professional). With the hard part out of the way, I dove into the abundance of information available to me in search of an inspirational floatation device.

First I decided on a topic that would relate to this holiday season on a metaphysical level. The most widely known hypothesis of metaphysics is the concept that whatever energies we release into the atmosphere, in the form of feelings, thoughts, words or actions, whether it is positive or negative, will attract more like- energies in abundance back to us. The number one *commercial* concept of Christmas aside from family togetherness, is the Giving

and Receiving of gifts. That will do. With my topic decided, I began my search.

In an earlier inquiry I had traced this ancient transcendental deliberation back to Heraclitus (c. 540 B.C.-480-70) Parmenides (c.515 B.C.-449-40), and Socrates (470 B.C.-399) as stated in *Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology*, first published in June of 2003. And no, I did *not* dig any deeper than a few names, dates, and documentation; "...distracted, depleted, and discombobulated," remember? I hazard a guess that in the span of so many lifetimes, anything and everything has most probably been explored through the premise of metaphysical philosophy. So I wasn't surprised when I so quickly stumbled upon a variety of "Laws" listed under titles such as, *"The Universal Laws"*, *"The Primary Laws"*, *"Cosmic Laws"*, *"Laws of Nature"*, *Laws of Science*" and so on. The numbers and names of these Universal laws seem to fluctuate in conjunction with the personal interpretation of each lists' author, but the theories along with scientific fact within the laws listed were more similar then not. And wouldn't you know it; one of these laws was the *Law of Giving and Receiving*.

There are other laws on other lists that present the same idea, but the Universal Laws closest to *Giving and Receiving* were *The Law of Attraction*, *Abundance*, *Grace*, *Vibrational Attainment*, and *Gratitude*. All of these Laws are intertwined within the universal energy flow. Matter is energy fluctuating between different frequency levels according to thought. *Our thoughts* are the catalysts of manifestation, attracting energy into matter. Thought creates action. Each of our individual thoughts is, in a sense, the virtual nuts and bolts, which together, run the machine, or Universal Source, Spirit, God, or whatever term you prefer to use.

That said; let's get back to the Law of Giving and Receiving. When we *give* out of pure love, without stipulation; without expectation, we are clearing a path within ourselves to *receive* pure love. By giving out of pure love, we are attracting even more pure love to flow freely back to us and so on. The giver cannot give unless there is a receiver to receive and visa-versa. *One cannot be without the other*. Giving and receiving are one and the

same. But this *exchange*, for lack of a better word, has to be sincere. If we give something to someone *expecting* to get something back for our troubles, these tainted thoughts can block the natural flow of *giving energy* back to us. What we end up attracting back to us is *expectation*, not pure love. This attitude of *getting back*, paints our giving in virtual negative energy sludge. The energy of *giving* is overshadowed. The energy of expecting, which vibrates at a lower frequency, will simply attract back more expectation; nothing else.

This raises the question of how do we give without the thought of receiving sabotaging our good deeds? Now that I know the mechanics of this law, I am sure to automatically think of what I might be attracting back to me. How can I not? When I was little someone once said to me, "There is no place too inappropriate to pray to or think of God, no matter where you are or what you're doing" For quite some time after that, *every time* I went to the bathroom I automatically thought of God. I have that kind of brain.

Several nights ago on my way home from the gym, I decided to stop at McDonalds for a quick bite. As I was approaching the door a homeless man stepped out of the shadows and asked me if I could spare 39 cents; not spare change; exactly 39 cents. It stopped me in my tracks. I asked the man if he was hungry and he lowered his head and said yes, as if he was embarrassed to admit it. I said, "Come on inside and I can get you something to eat." I was pretty sure this man needed food more then he needed the 39 cents. The man took a discernible step back, head still down and mumbled, "I don't want to go in there." His shame was palpable and I knew it well; shame so deep that it had turned to fear.

I stepped away from the door and closer to where he stood in the shadows. "Oh, okay. That's okay. What do you want? Want a big Mac?" The look in his eyes as he nodded his head made my heart bleed. Oh yeah; very familiar with this kind of pain. It was a desperate need more intense than any physical starvation, but for the kindness and authentic concern from another human being. "How 'bout a combo?" It just so happened I had a few extra bucks on me. "You want fries and a soda with that?" I giggled inside at my inquiry, which then triggered a memory of me working behind the counter of a McDonalds some 29 years ago, when I was a 16 year old couch-hopper, fresh out of a Texas Foster Home; technically homeless. (I'll just set this little tidbit aside for later contemplation.)

There was a hint of suspicion in the man's eyes, as he answered my question with a, "yes," and "thank you." I said okay and stepped inside to order. Once the food was in the bag I realized I didn't know what he wanted to drink, so I dashed back out the door and asked him. He made a gesture that said, "I don't know." I asked, "How

'bout a Coke, is Coke good?" I barely noticed the nod. I went back inside and retrieved the bag off the counter, filled the cup with Coke, and brought it back out to the man.

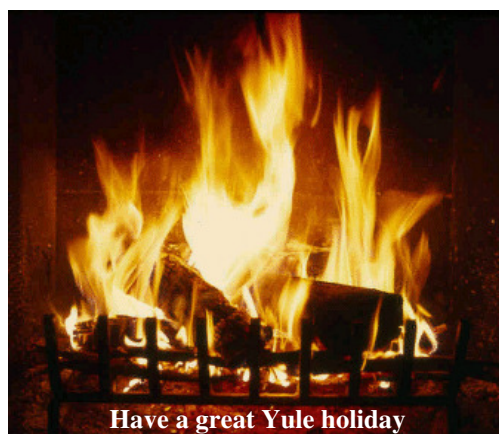
This next part was very surreal. The man thanked me, I said it was no problem, and then in a strange simultaneous, seemingly choreographed dance we both moved to hug each other, stopped, registered the same "WTF?" look in each other's eyes; did another simultaneous step back and dropped our heads. He then said, "God bless you." I said, "I need it." (My automatic response to anyone who feels the need to verbally bless me. Yeah, yeah I'll contemplate that too, later, later.)

As the fog of confusion and embarrassment cleared and the man was gone, I remembered why I had pulled into this parking lot in the first place. I never ordered my snack-wrap. Back inside and to the counter I returned and ordered *two*. What the hell, they're fairly healthy and under two bucks, I'll live a little. During that entire episode with the homeless man, The Law of Giving and Receiving had never entered my mind.

As I stood at the end of the counter waiting for my food, I caught something in my peripheral vision and turned my head. Only a couple feet to my left there was a free standing sign advertizing a special new combo deal or something to that effect. Then as my eyes focused I realized what I was looking at. Two words in big bright letters on the poster above the food, big and bright and unmistakable, were the words, "PURE LOVE!"

"Giving is the highest expression of potency. In the very act of giving, I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. This experience of heightened vitality and potency fills me with joy. I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness."

Erich Fromm (1900 - 1980)



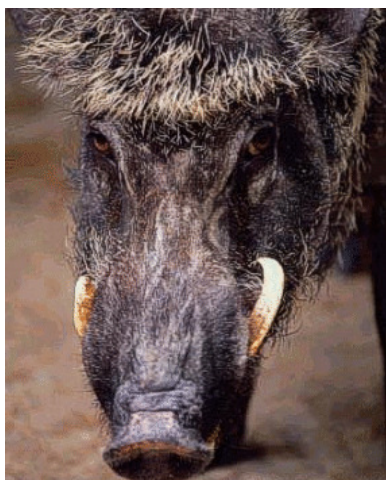
Have a great Yule holiday

7th November 2009 © by Tamra L. Consbruck

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

Wild Boar

*Written and compiled by
George Knowles*



In ancient times winters were particularly harsh, cold and bleak. For many people daily life was uncertain revolving as it did around seasonal changes intermixed with unpredictable natural phenomena such as thunderstorms, lightning strikes, floods, drought, earthquakes, fire and volcanic eruptions. Without the evolved developments of modern day science, all such phenomena would have seemed mystical and so, much reliance was given to the veneration and appeasement of the Gods. Therefore at major feasts such as Yule it was a common practice for animals (or humans) to be ritually sacrificed and dedicated to their honour. Today, while many of the old traditions and practices are being revived, actual sacrifice is no longer politic and only symbolic alternatives are used in ritual.

One Norse tradition connected with the Goddess Freyja was the Yule Oath Boar. In Scandinavian mythology, Freyja is the Goddess of fertility, married love and the hearth. Her sacred animal was a Golden Boar called Gullinbursti (Golden Bristles), which glowed with a golden light strong enough to drive away shadows and turn night into day. At Yule, the midwinter sacrifice of a boar was therefore seen as symbolic of the death of the old sun and the rebirth of the new on the solstice.

The boar also represented fertility and

the spirit of abundance and prosperity, and being sacrifice at the darkest time of the year was traditionally used for the swearing of sacred oaths to ensure the following harvest. On Yule Eve, once all the family had gathered, a boar would be led around the family members for each to lay on their hands and pledge a solemn oath for the coming New Year (similar to the New Year resolutions practice of today). After the oath ceremony the boar was ritually sacrificed in the name of Freyja, and its meat used in the celebratory feast.

While today ham, pork and boar meats are still the preferred fare at traditional Yule celebrations, loaves of bread or cakes are now baked in the shape of a boar, which symbolically replace the once sacrificed animal. In some traditions the bread is made from the last sheaf of corn saved from the previous harvest. This then takes pride of place in the centre of the table where it remains throughout Yule until New Year's Day. At this time the loaf is split and the first half shared amongst the family, while the second half is saved until the Spring then mixed with the new corn seed to encourage a bountiful harvest.

The Wild Boar

The Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) is a species of swine belonging to the family Suidae, of which there are at least 16 subspecies. Historically, the wild boar is the ancestor of the domestic pig (suborder Bunodontia) with which today it freely interbreeds. Wild boars originated in Western Europe and Northern Africa, but now range across the entire continent down into the Mediterranean basin, through India and South-East Asia to Japan, Sri Lanka, Java, Taiwan, Korea and Malaya. They have also become established in other parts of the world, where having been introduced for the sport of hunting, they escaped from captivity into the wild.

In the UK, Wild Boars are known simply as boars, but around the world they are known by a variety of other names, including: Wild Hogs, Wild Swine, Feral Pigs, Wild Pigs, Razorbacks, Pinewoods or Rooters. Depending on location, they can also

vary in size and colouration. However, in general, the coat of an adult boar is coarse with bristly short hair which is brown-to-black in colour and tending towards grey with age. They stand at about 3.5 ft (1.06 m) high at the shoulders, measure about 5 ft (1.52 m) in length nose-to-tail and weigh in at about 200 lbs (91 kg). The head, topped by small erect ears, tapers down into a pointed snout, and from the top of the head short wiry hair forms into a mane that runs along the spine ending at the rear in a straight long-tasseled tail.



The upper and lower canine teeth of an adult boar form into distinctive continually growing tusks, the upper of which can measure up to 2.5 in (6.35 cm) long, but instances of much longer tusks have been found. These upper tusks curve outward and upward from the mouth and are used for defense and digging, while the lower smaller tusks become extremely sharp from mashing against the uppers. In females (called sows), the canine teeth are smaller than the males, the upper tusks being only slightly bent upwards in older individuals.

Boars are omnivorous and can adapt easily to different habitats. They often live in herd groups of between 20-30 individuals (called sounders), which consist mainly of sows and their young offspring. Male boars reach maturity at about 1 year old after which they leave the herd group to roam on their own, only returning when they have gained enough size and strength necessary to fight and compete for females during the mating season. After fierce fighting, a dominant male has been known to mate with up to 5-6 sows in a mating season.

Boars are mainly nocturnal, and will travel fair distances each night when foraging for food. Plant life and vegetation makes up for about 90% of their diet which consists of roots, bulbs, tubers, fruit and berries (unearthed by rooting with their snouts and tusks). They will also feed on mice, bird's eggs, snakes, lizards, worms, beetles, centipedes and carrion. Diets change according to the seasons and variable food availability, and in times of shortages, they are likely to become pests raiding agricultural crops such as fields of maize, turnips and potatoes.

A sow (the female boar) will commonly produce just one annual litter of 4-6 piglets, sired by the dominant male. In temperate countries this will normally occur in the spring, while in tropical countries breeding takes place throughout a 6-9 month period, often during the moist seasons when food is plentiful. Sows have a gestation period of about 115 days, and about 3-4 days before giving birth, will leave the herd group to build a nest (called farrowing), which is basically a hollow scraped in the ground and lined and covered with a mound of twigs, vegetation and grasses. The actual birth only lasts between 2-3 hours, after which the sow and her piglets remain close to the nest for a further 4-6 days before rejoining the herd group.



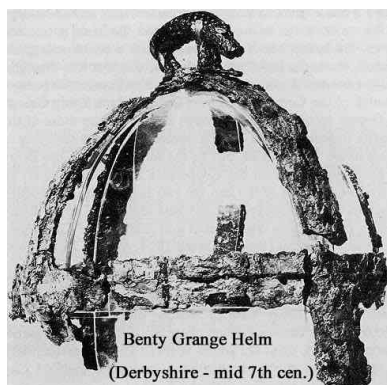
When born, piglets are generally lighter in colouration with pale yellowish stripes, but these are lost after 3-4 months as it gradually takes on a red colouration followed by adult colouration at approximately one year of age. Rooting behaviour develops as early as the first few days of life and they begin eating solid foods such as worms and grubs after about 2 weeks, becoming fully weaned after 3-4 months. Sows reach sexual maturity from about 8-10 months of

age, but don't generally breed until they reach 18 months old.

Wild Boars have exceptional hearing and sense of smell, but poor eyesight. They are very vocal and communicate with others through a series of grunts and squeals. When frightened or alarmed for example, they blow loudly through their nose creating a snorting sound, but when hurt they squeal and when content they rumble quietly. The life expectancy of a boar in the wild is about 10 years of age, but in captivity they have been known to live as long as 25 years.

Mythology and Symbolism

In times long gone, the boar was one of the most ferocious and aggressive animals a person was likely to encounter. It was also one of the best and most popular animals to hunt being admired for both its strength and courage. Many warriors' helmets bearing boars-head crests that have been found in archaeological sites are thought to have been worn as a symbol of the wearers courage in battle. In Beowulf, the epic Anglo-Saxon poem (c. 700), Beowulf himself led his warriors into battle wearing a boars-head helmet as a symbol of his power and leadership.



The Benty Grange Helmet is a fragmented boars-head helmet excavated by Thomas Bateman in 1848 from an Anglo-Saxon tumulus (or barrow) located in Derbyshire, England. It is what remains of an iron helmet with a bronze boar on the crest matching the description of the warriors' helmet in Beowulf.

To the ancient Celts the boar was thought to have great sexual power and was regarded as a symbol of fertility, abundance and future

prosperity. Charms and amulets made from a boar's tusk were commonly worn for protection, and the boar was depicted on many cult objects. One can clearly be seen on the Gundestrup Cauldron (circa. 100 BCE, discovered in a Denmark peat bog in 1891), as one of the animals attending Cernunnos the Celtic Horned God.



Plate panel on the Gundestrup Cauldron showing the animals attending Cernunnos

In a story from Greek mythology (told in Homer's epic The Iliad), the Calydonian Boar is one of the great beasts sent by Artemis to ravage the city of Calydon in Aetolia (a district of ancient Greece on the NW of the Gulf of Corinth), after its King failed to honor her in his harvest rites to the Gods. As the story goes, King Oeneus of Calydon regularly held his annual harvest sacrifice to the Gods on a sacred hill near the city, but one year forgot to include the Goddess Artemis in his offerings. Artemis (known as the "Lady of the Bow") was so insulted she let loose the biggest and most ferocious boar she could find to ravage the countryside of Calydon. As it rampaged through fields and vineyards destroying their crops, the people were forced to take refuge inside the city walls and there began to starve.

Seeing this, King Oeneus organised a Royal Hunt and sent out invitations to all the best hunters in Greece offering as a prize the boar's pelt and tusks to whoever could kill the beast. Known as the Calydonian Hunt, among those who responded were some members of the Argonauts who had sailed with Jason on his search for the Golden Fleece, Meleager - the King's own son, and a woman - the huntress Atalanta (known as the "indomitable", a daughter of Artemis). The inclusion of a woman in the hunt caused much

decension amongst the other male heroes for many believed women inferior, and they refused to hunt with her. Meleager, however, was smitten by her beauty and abilities and finally convinced them otherwise.

As the hunt progressed, it was Atalanta who first came upon the mighty boar and mortally wounded it with an arrow, but it was Meleager who finally killed the beast with a thrust from his spear. Because Atalanta had drawn first blood and made it easier for him to kill it, Meleager gallantly awarded her the prized pelt and tusks in tribute. However, many of the other hunters felt it a disgrace for a woman to receive the prize instead of a man, which led to the eruption of feuds and infighting amongst the heroes. This story just goes to show why it was so important for the people to properly venerate the Gods, lest in retribution they destroy their crops!!



Frieze showing the hunt for the Calydonian Boar at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Another story from Greek mythology concerns Adonis, the beautiful youth beloved by the goddesses Aphrodite and Persephone. He was born of the incestuous union of King Cinyras of Cyprus and his daughter, then concealed in a chest and placed in the custody of Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. When Adonis was slain by a wild boar while out hunting with Aphrodite, she pleaded with the god Zeus to restore him to her. Zeus decreed that Adonis should spend the winter months with Persephone in Hades and the summer months with Aphrodite. Again, here we can see the boar's association with the natural cycle of life and death in nature.

Throughout history, the boar and the boars-head have been used in

heraldry. One such is the boars-head that appears in the crest of the Clan MacKinnon in Scotland. According to the MacKinnon legend explaining a boar on their crest, a member of the clan was hunting on the shores of Loch Scavaig in Skye and after becoming separated from his hunting party, spent the night in a cave for shelter. While preparing a leg of venison for cooking on an open fire, he was attacked by a wild boar that had charged into the cave. Taken by surprise the MacKinnon drove the butchered deer's leg into the mouth of the boar, jamming it open, before killing it. There are of course many other representations in heraldry, way too many for me to mention.



A boar's head erased, argent, holding in its mouth a deer's shankbone, proper.

Wild Boar as a Totem

The Wild Boar is mostly seen as a masculine totem for it enriches all the male virtues of bravery, nobility and fierceness in battle, but the Sow (female) is also emboldened with many of the same attributes, including protectiveness and fertility. While they are generally fierce animals signifying the warrior's spirit, they are also clannish in nature and enjoy social interaction, but don't let this fool you for they are also wary of outsiders.

The Wild Boar possesses many powerful and valuable characteristics that anyone would be wise to

emulate. Those who do will gain the power of enhanced courage and fearlessness when faced with adversity as well as an increased ability to plan actions aimed at gaining success, for prosperity is also part of this totem's magic. If boar shows up as your totem, he could well be asking you to stand up, have faith, and move forward without fear. If you do this, whatever fears you had will soon become distant memories rather than present reality and life can be experienced in a new and more positive manner.

The boar's medicine is deeply connected to the earth energies for they can often be seen rooting and foraging in the undergrowth of plants and trees. Although they have poor eyesight, they have excellent hearing and a sense of smell that helps them remain alert and aware of everything around them. This teaches us to look beneath the surface at things that may be troubling us, to uncover what lies hidden and effectively deal with it by fine-tuning our senses and paying attention to whatever is around us.

Boar initiates transformation through self-discovery by using all our senses efficiently. Those with boar for a totem would be wise to follow his lead, for by doing so, you can strengthen and develop your character and improve the quality of your life. Boar is a powerful totem to have, but not an easy one to work with, for order and efficiency in all we do is a main part of his medicine.

Sources:

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The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion - by James George Frazer.

Animal-Wise: The Spirit Language and Signs of Nature - by Ted Andrews

Man, Myth and Magic - Edited by Richard Cavendish

Plus too many websites to mention.

December's Rune

By Runeman



Berkana

In a month where the darkest night of the year resides, Berkana offers a light of hope. Although, not directly associated with light, drawing this feminine rune of fertility grants a good omen for surviving the harsh winter and darkness ahead. Shaped in the likeness of a pregnant woman, this rune alludes to birth, personal growth (both physically as well as mentally), and a pledge for a new beginning.

Just as the seeds of fall absorb the nutrients of the soil beneath the snow and await their bloom in spring; this month is a time where in the confines of our sanctuary, be it a home or a spiritual sanctum, we sit and begin to slowly grow and nurture ourselves so that we may rise anew.

With December being the month of the Yule Festival, in the Northern Traditions, this was the supreme hearth gathering. Wintertime was harsh, and the family enclosed themselves indoors in order to avoid the unkind elements, and as they gathered around the hearth-fire they recited stories of their history and folklore which strengthened their bonds.

Berkana is supportive in that the rune's meaning of birth and growth may imply a new addition to a family, or perhaps the time to consolidate family bonds.

Rune Reading by: Diancécht Óndulfr Pálsson - aka Rune Man

The Magic of Mandalas

Part 1

By Graham D. Furnell

The circle is a sacred form that has been revered from ancient times as a symbol of unity, completion, the cosmos, and the divine feminine. Its boundary has no beginning or end, and thus it reflects the eternal cycles that govern all things. Within the circle lies a sacred domain – an inner sanctuary that is sheltered from the world outside and in which, energies can be captured and focused. The circle's center, being the primary axis, represents the seed of creation – the origin and ultimate return state of all things – a tiny microcosm from which the glories of the macrocosmic emanate to form the beauty of a flower, the lattice of atoms in a precious crystal, or the spiraling majesty of a star-filled galaxy.

There exists no circle in the world which is not made from within a single point which is located in the center...and this point, which is located in the center, receives all the light, illuminates the body, and all is enlightened.

The Zohar

When people gather to share the bond of friendship, they are naturally drawn together, like links in a chain, to the circle's harmonious form. Similarly, in the practice of sacred dance, the circle is a natural feature of movements that can elevate the spirit of the dancer to higher dimensions – Sufi Whirling Dervishes being a notable example of this. For the followers of Wicca, the casting of a circle is the most sacred of acts, creating a space between the physical and spiritual worlds. It is a holy place in which magical energies are raised and focused in the presence of deity. A Mandala is a sacred artistic creation that is fundamentally based on the form of the circle, and is thus a representation of all of the above. Mandalas have long been used as such, with the word Mandala literally meaning “magic circle” in the classical ancient Indian language of Sanskrit.

In this two-part article, we will embark on a journey to discover the origins, characteristics and applications of Mandalas in the religion and mysticism of various cultures. We will then examine some basic techniques for drawing Mandalas, which is by far the most beneficial aspect of their study. Our aim will be to enrich our lives by achieving a better understanding of this ancient mystical tool for self development and enlightenment; whether that be through admiring the creations of others, or by undertaking our own creative “Mandala Journey”.

The history of Mandalas can be traced back to some of human kind's oldest surviving creations, such as the tri-spiral (Triskele) rock carvings at the entrance to the famous megalithic complex at Newgrange, Ireland. These forms contain a deep symbolism, which includes

their association with the eternal cycles of birth, death and rebirth observed in Nature. Today, Wiccans continue to revere the Triskele as a symbol of the Triple-Goddess and Her three life-stages of Maiden, Mother and Crone.



Entrance stone to the famous megalithic complex at Newgrange

... there must be a transconscious disposition in every individual which is able to produce the same or very similar symbols at all times and in all places. Since this disposition is usually not a conscious possession of the individual I have called it the collective unconscious, and, as the bases of its symbolical products, I postulate the existence of primordial images, the archetypes.

C.G.Jung

Concerning Mandala Symbolism, 1950.

Native North Americans have traditionally drawn Mandala designs onto shields to promote protection and good luck. The power of the shield is further enhanced by making it from natural materials such as buffalo hide, eagle feathers and horse-hair with the intent of sympathetically charging the shield with the characteristics of those animals (e.g. horse hair is used to promote swiftness and mobility). Medicine Wheels are another form of Mandala used by Native North Americans. They are constructed using stones laid out on the ground in the form of a wheel with radial spokes, defining a sacred space used for healing, teaching and ritual.



A traditional Native North American shield.

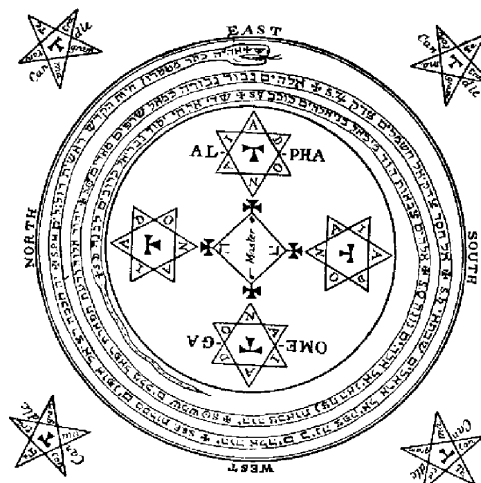
The creation of Mandala forms has long been an important part of Western Occult practice. These forms range from inscriptions on talismans, to sacred space templates for the conduct of ritual magic. Two notable examples are as follows:

The *Sigil of Dei Ameth* (or “Seal of the truth of God”) which first appeared in a 13th century grimoire of unknown origins, but came to be widely associated with Dr. John Dee - scientist, astrologer and consultant on occult matters to Queen Elizabeth I. The complex design of the sigil incorporates correspondences to the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, the seven Lords (planets) of medieval astrology, the seven Archangels, and seven Secret Names of God. Inscribed onto a disc of pure wax approximately 27 inches in circumference, the sigil was used by Dr. Dee and his associate Edward Kelly to support scrying instruments such as their famous shew-stone, as it was believed that it would provide protection from unwanted external influences.



The Sigil of Dei Ameth

The *Magical Circle of King Solomon* is a template for constructing a sacred space from which it is claimed one may evoke and control spirits according to rites outlined in the “*Lemegeton*” - the popular name for an anonymous 17th century grimoire that was later translated, edited and published by S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Aleister Crowley as “*The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King*”. The size of the circle is prescribed to be 9 feet across, with its axes oriented to the cardinal directions. A coiled serpent running round the boundary contains the names, written in Hebrew, of the Deity and Angels and Archangels corresponding to the first nine Sephirot of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Quoting from the above text “*This is the Form of the Magical Circle of King Solomon, which he made that he might preserve himself therein from the malice of these Evil Spirits.*”



The Magical Circle of King Solomon

In the East, Mandalas have their origins in that most ancient Indian religion, Hinduism. Dating back to well beyond 1000 BCE, the books of the *Rig Veda* (a collection of sacred hymns that form one of the four canonical texts of Hinduism) are actually called Mandalas - possibly because each book represented “a round” of

hymns, whose sacred sounds (Mantras) were believed to contain the essence of the universe. In this manner, the Mandala was thought of as a bridge between our microcosmic existence and the macrocosmic universal whole, in both a material and etheric sense. From the perspective of Hinduism, the visual manifestation of the

Mandala is the Yantra. However, in many sources, these two terms seem to be used interchangeably. For the purpose of this article, we will also do this, so that when the term Mandala is used, our focus will be on its visual Yantric aspect. Nevertheless, the broader context of the term Mandala should be acknowledged, particularly in regard to its aspects of Mantra (sound) and Yantra (sight), which can be thought of as two sides of the same coin.

A thorough discussion of the deeply religious, symbolic and metaphysical concepts associated with Yantras would go well beyond the scope of this article, and the author's knowledge for that matter! However, to provide an introduction, the following is a list of some significant structural characteristics of Yantras:

Bhupur: Derived from the Sanskrit root words bhu (earth) and pura (city), it represents the outermost perimeter of the Yantra. Like the protective walls of a city, the Bhupur takes the form of a square with cardinally-aligned sides. A protruding “gate” is located in the centre of each side, through which one may enter, leaving behind the terrestrial world for the sanctuary of the celestial one within.

Circle: Encountered next after the Bhupur is the circle, symbol of wholeness and completion. It is the Yantra's archetypal shape,

and contains all of the remaining shapes within its sacred domain.

Lotus Petals: A symbol of love, happiness, renewal and spiritual purity – the lotus has long been renowned for its ability to rise up from its muddy origins to display an unblemished, beautiful bloom. This reflects one's journey within the Yantra, where the soil and complexity of the external world is left behind as one moves ever inwards, towards the clarity and purity of enlightenment.

Triangle: The most basic closed form that can be created from straight lines, the triangle is symbolic of the trinity -

the perfect union of two, to become one. An upward pointing triangle is associated with the element of Fire, masculine energy, transformation, and the directing of energy to higher realms. A downward pointing triangle is associated with the element of Water, feminine qualities such as receptiveness, intuition and creativity; and the drawing down of energy into the earth. The six-pointed star (otherwise known as the Star of David or Seal of Solomon) resulting from the combination of upward and downward pointing triangles is a powerful symbol representing the merging of spirit and earthly realms.

Square: The form of the Bhupur - its sides define the four cardinal directions, while its corners define the four inter-cardinal directions of the terrestrial world. A symbol of stability, the square represents the four elements (earth, water, fire and air) from which the physical world is constructed – a world that is transcended within the Yantra.

Bindu: Is the focal point and most fundamental feature of the Yantra – a dot located at its centre, it represents the ultimate seed of creation, where divine male (Shiva) and female (Shakti) energies merge to create limitless possibilities, the contemplation of which draws one into communion with the Divine.

Colors are regarded with great reverence by the followers of Hinduism. When colors are added to a Yantra, the Yantra becomes charged with the energies of those colors. The harmonious merging of both shape and color within a Yantra can result in truly powerful symbolism. To provide some insight into this, listed here are the names of nine Yantra designs (taken from the book by Tomlinson) with major colors that were used in each:

Radiance: Bright yellow, orange, red.

Nourishment: Silver, pastel blue, mauve.

Passion: Bright red, pink, bronze.

Intellect: Green, blue-green, light brown.

Expansion: Yellow, gold, white.

Bliss: Pale blue, mauve, pink.

Organization: Dark blue, deep yellow, white.

Uniqueness: Warm purple, pink, mauve.

Spirituality: Sage green, ochre green, gold.

According to the book by Buhnemann, Yantras may be classified into three types, depending upon their use:

(1) *Yantras for Establishing a Foundation:* Made from raw materials such as sacred river clay or cow dung, these Yantras generally feature simple geometric shapes, such as the

triangle or circle, and are used as bases to support ritual implements such as lamps or vessels in religious ceremonies and magical rites.

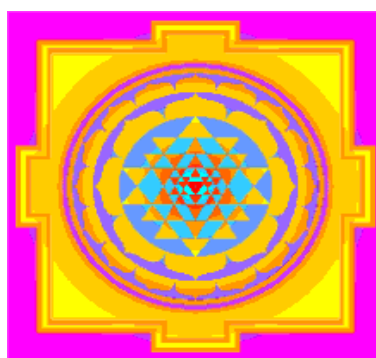
(2) *Yantras Employed in Regular Worship:* Made from durable materials such as copper, these Yantras generally feature common geometric shapes, but do not normally have Mantras inscribed on them. However, during worship, Mantras are used to invoke deity and the emanations thereof into the Yantra.

(3) *Yantras Employed in Optional Desire-Oriented Rites:* Falling within a category sometimes referred to as “Occult Yantras”, they are often made from perishable materials such as birch-bark or paper, and are drawn using special substances such as blood or cremation ashes. Applications may be for healing, to attract wealth, love, protection, or possibly darker purposes; and involve the “Six Rites of Magic” referred to in tantric and other sacred texts such as the *Atharva Veda*. These rites are: Appeasement, Subjugation, Immobilization, Enmity, Eradication and Liquidation.

The choice of materials is considered to be extremely important for the success of the rituals, and follow correspondences according to the nature of the application. For example, a cruel rite such as for the liquidation of one’s enemy would require equally repulsive choices, such as writing the Yantra onto human bone using poisonous substances. Following the ritual, the Yantra may then be placed in a sealed capsule or amulet and worn, buried, tied to a tree, or otherwise concealed; ritually destroyed or even crushed and eaten, depending upon the prescribed magical formula.

Revered as the greatest of all Yantras is the *Sri Yantra* (also called the *Sri Chakra*). Its interwoven pattern of four upward and five downward pointing triangles symbolizes an evolutionary creation of the universe through the union of male and female energies. The web-like nature of the pattern reminds one of the interconnected nature of existence, an existence which does not distinguish between subject and observer. Sacred to the great Goddess Lakshmi (who is known by the name “Sri”), the Sri Yantra is the visual expression of the much venerated Om Mantra (pronounced “Aum”) – said to be the first vibration that emerged from the formless void that preceded all creation, and considered by some to be the sacred Name of God.

Mandalas have evolved within the religion of Buddhism (particularly Tibetan Buddhism) to very high levels of complexity. Here they



The Sri Yantra



Symbol of the Om Mantra

depict divine realms of enlightenment, and are used as aids for meditation and the expression of sacred teachings. Generally, the structure of these Mandalas is such that they consist of a set of outer rings, which surround and symbolically protect the four walls and gates of an inner "palace". Similarly to the design of Yantras, the cardinal alignment of structures such as these palace walls is important. Within the palace typically reside a number of sub-deities, who serve as consorts to the primary deity located at the very centre of the Mandala.

Famous amongst Buddhist Mandalas are Sand Mandalas, which display a remarkable level of detail and intricacy, and whose fate is such that following their laborious construction, they are swept up and offered to a body of flowing water, in an act that is intended to carry forth the blessings of the Mandala to the world. These actions powerfully demonstrate the Buddhist teaching that all things are impermanent, no matter how grand or beautiful. The actions can also be thought of as having a magical context, as they mirror the Desire-Oriented rites associated with Hindu Yantras, where the Yantra may be destroyed following its creation to complete the magical ritual. A classic example of a Sand Mandala is the Chenrezig Mandala (Chenrezig is the Tibetan name for the Buddhist deity (or Bodhisattva) who exemplifies the ideal of Compassion). Every aspect of this Mandala (as with all Mandalas) is designed with a meaning in mind. For example, the four palace gates are decorated with precious jewels, and represent the Four Immeasurable Thoughts of Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity. The Chenrezig Mandala teaches the most important of Buddhist practices – Compassion – sensitivity to the sufferings of others and the attempted relief of suffering, with the realization that all things are interconnected.



The Chenrezig Sand Mandala

The great 20th century psychologist Carl Gustav Jung was fascinated by Mandalas and their symbolism. In his words, he considered a Mandala to be "*the psychological expression of the totality of the self*", and used the spontaneous drawing of Mandalas as a means for gaining

insight into the realm of the collective unconscious. More recently, Joan Kellogg conducted pioneering work on the use of Mandalas in Art Therapy, developing a systematic approach, the (Mandala Assessment Research Institute) MARI Card Test, for assessing and enhancing people's psychological health and well-being. In Part 2 of this article, we will continue our journey by examining some basic techniques for drawing Mandalas so that we too, regardless of our perceived artistic skills, may create our own personal expressions of this age-old portal to other worlds, and in doing so, further immerse ourselves in, the magic of Mandalas.

(Part 2 will continue in our next issue - Imbolc 2010)

... a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained.

C.G. Jung

I had to abandon the idea of the superordinate position of the ego. ... I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point -- namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation... I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate.

C.G. Jung – Mandalas, 1955.

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7th December 2009. © Graham D. Furnell

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The Bards Corner

Yuletide Thoughts

Leaves fallen, branches bare, snowflakes chasing the winter hare.
As we look across the plain, the sun is sleeping once again.

We plan our days with careful sight, as nightfall brings our first cold night.
Druids listening to the crier, time to light the beacon fire.

Yuletide comes around once more, the Winter Solstice knocks the door.
Morning breaks on winter's day, the cold wind has it's say.

Making holly wreaths to hang, roast chestnuts going bang.
Granny's cooking smelling good, time to have some Yuletide pudding.

Wishbones broken, thoughts in tatters, full stomachs that's what matters.
Chocolates, nuts, things to eat, time to rest your weary feet.

We celebrate this golden time with some tasty beers.
The cycles of the seasons have clocked up two thousand years.

To all who listens may I say, "Merry Yuletide" on this day.
The year's last words I leave with thee, enjoy yourself and Blessed be!

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Nature's Glory

Photos from our members



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Nature's Glory
Photos from our members



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



The Controversial Cauldron is published each Sabbat

October (Samhain)
December (Yule)
February (Imbolc)
March (Ostara)

May (Beltane)
June (Litha)
August (Lammas)
September (Mabon)

Next Issue:
Imbolc
02nd February

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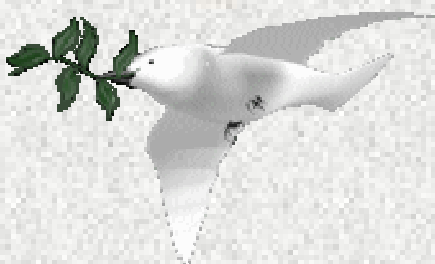
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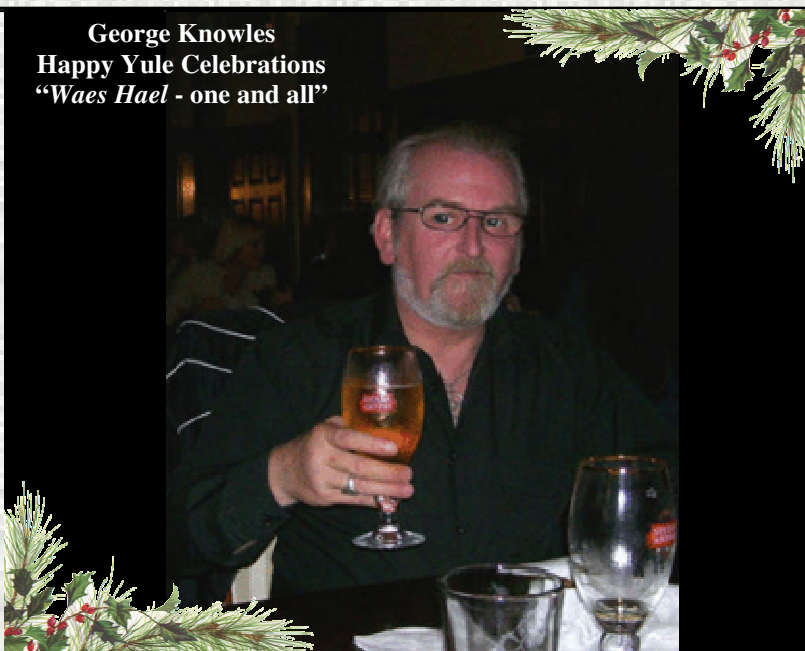
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George Knowles
 Happy Yule Celebrations
 "Waes Hael - one and all"



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