



The Controversial Cauldron

Ostara 2010

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Welcome to the Email Witches Newsletter

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

Best Wishes

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

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



Ostara 2010

(The Spring Equinox)

Written and compiled by George Knowles

Welcome to the Spring Equinox edition of the Controversial Cauldron as we celebrate the old customs and practises of Ostara, one of the lesser Sabbats of the Witches' annual calendar. Today in the northern hemisphere Ostara is celebrated on the 21st March, while in the southern hemisphere the equivalent Sabbat is Mabon, the Autumn Equinox. The two equinoxes were important dates for our ancestors marking as they do both points of Spring and Autumn in which the Sun's path crosses the celestial equator making day and night equal in length.

Ostara is an old Anglo-Saxon term for Eostre, the Teutonic Goddess of Spring and fertility, but is also known by various other names, such as: Alban Eilir, Lady's Day, the Rites of Spring, the Festival of the Trees or Eostre's Day. As was to happen with many popular pagan festivals, when Christianity arrived, Ostara was renamed and many of its customs and symbolism incorporated into the Christian holiday of Easter. Easter again takes its name from Eostre, the same Goddess of Spring associated with our pagan forbearers, and likewise its date is variable, being calculated as the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox.

In the mythology of the Sabbats, Ostara celebrates the return of the Goddess from the Underworld, when warmed by the growing strength of the new born Sun, she awakes bursting forth from her sleep and blankets the earth with fertility. As the young Sun God stretches and grows to maturity, he and the Goddess walk the fields and forests and, delighted by the abundance of life and nature, encourage all living things to mate and reproduce.

With the arrival of Spring and the renewal and rebirth of nature after the cold dark days of Winter, farmers make ready their ploughs and prepare their oxen for the work ahead, and seeds saved over from the last harvest are checked to ensure their quality and suitability for planting. To our ancestors, the success of the new planting season and the harvest to follow was of life and death importance, for the bounty to be gained from the new plantings would be needed to sustain them through the hardships of the next Winter.

Today, given modern farming techniques and mechanisation, the hardships endured by our ancestors are but a distant memory. Despite this, in some of the more remote parts of the country, the customs and practises of our ancestors are still used to ensure a

good harvest. One old custom was to light bonfires on top of nearby hills, and at the appointed time, normally at sunrise, a Sun-wheel made from wood, straw and branches was set alight and rolled down the hill through the fields below symbolic of the Sun warming and thawing the earth. Later, charred sticks from the Sun-wheel would be saved and taken home as a talismanic charm to protect the home from fire and lightning. Similarly, ashes from the bonfires would be spread in the fields to protect them against future thunderstorms.

The main focus of Ostara is that of fertility, and great lengths were taken to honour the Gods and Goddesses whose blessings were invoked to safeguard the new planting season. In many of the world's creation myths, the Goddess takes on the form of a Snake, which due to the constant shedding of its skin was seen as a symbol of new life. It was in the form of the snake that the Goddess laid the "World Egg" or the "Cosmic Egg of Creation". The inside yolk of the egg represents the Sun God, while the outside shell is seen as the womb of Goddess - the whole, therefore, is uniquely symbolic of creation, birth and new beginnings.

From this symbology arose the old custom at Ostara of collecting eggs. These were then painted to match those of the local wild birds and placed in baskets woven from straw, imitable of their nests. Birds were commonly believed to be the messengers of the Gods, and so baskets of coloured eggs were given away to friends and neighbours for good luck and prosperity. Eggs were also ritually eaten at Ostara and the shells buried in the fields to promote fertility. As happened with many old pagan traditions, when Christianity arrived the symbolism of the egg was adopted and became known as the Easter Egg.

Another animal associated with the Goddess and fertility at Ostara is the Hare. Hares are prolific breeders; they start mating at a very young age and can produce several litters each year. The hare was also regarded as a sacred animal of the lunar Goddess, as an image of a hare can often be seen silhouetted in the full moon, and it was from this illusion that Witches were once believed to shape-shift into hares. Today the rabbit is considered more prolific than the hare, and is now another common symbol of Easter.

As with all pagan celebrations, food plays an important part in the festivities. To our ancestors, the arrival of Spring was a time for joyous celebration. Ostara to them marked an end to eating cured and salted meat with dried rotting vegetables saved over from the last harvest. As animals came out of hibernation fresh game became available, and as the Sun climbed higher, herbs and new young plants replaced the old. As such the Ostara feast was always one to remember, and may you enjoy your own.

01st February 2010 © George Knowles

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Ostara Ritual

By Crone

Cover your altar with a plain white cloth. Put a pair of candles, one black and one white in the center of your altar and either on its four corners or on direction altars, if you use them. The only color should be bright spring flowers, either in a vase/bowl, or scattered loosely on the altar. Your garment also should be of bright pastel shades. Create a large yin - yang symbol from paper or fabric for the center of your altar. Add other altar tools of your choosing, such as goddess and god figures, a censor with incense, wand, athame, etc.

Grounding and Centering:

Morning star comes out at night,
Without the dark there is no light.
If nothing's wrong, then nothing's right.
Let it be a dance.

Let the sun shine, let it rain,
Share the laughter, bare the pain,
And round and round we go again.
Let it be a dance.

* From "Let It Be a Dance", Ric Masten

Cast the Circle using athame, wand, or one of your tall spring flowers to channel your energy, with this chant:

Today marks the balance between dark and light.
I will keep them in balance and both in my sight.

Invoke the directions and deities.

Spirits of the East, spirits of air,
Awaken me with the spring breeze
Fill my lungs, and join me
In celebration of the endless renewal of light and life. (light the black and the white candles in the East)

Spirits of the South, spirits of fire,
Warm me with the rising sun

Quicken my heart, and join me
In celebration of the lengthening of the day. (light both South candles)

Spirits of the West, spirits of water,
Wash me in gentle rain
Revive my longing, and join me
In celebration of boundless possibility. (light candles)

Spirits of the North, spirits of earth,
Clothe me in the finery of new growth
Support my steps, and join me
In celebration of a world made green again. (light candles)

* Direction invocations adapted from "The Practical Pagan"

Goddess, lovely Maiden fair
With you comes the warmer air.
Rebirth of light is what you bring
As I enter into Spring.
Now I leave the dark behind.
Be here as my light I find.
As Earth, reborn from night to day,
Guide me now along my way.

God and consort of the bride
Be with me as the night we hide.
Move forward at this time with me
With balance and stability.
Direct my steps as I move on
Into the light that comes with dawn.

Balanced now between the worlds
Between darkness and light
Between joy and sorrow, music and silence,
age and youth, birth and death.
I am balanced in this moment
When they are one.

Magickal Working

Ostara is a time of new awakening, of increased light, of fertility—spiritual, mental, emotional, physical. It is a time when the Earth is renewed, refreshed, and reborn. Take this opportunity to renew yourself in dedication to the Goddess and the God. Be reborn in your commitment. Light the remaining altar candles with these words:

O Mother Goddess,
O Father God,
Answers to all mysteries and yet mysteries unanswered;

In this place of power I open myself
to Your Essence.

In this place and in this time I am changed;
From henceforth I walk the Pagan path.
I rededicate myself to you, Mother Goddess and Father God.

*Rest for a moment, silent, still.
Then continue:*

I breathe your energies into my body, commingling, blending, mixing them with mine, that I may see the divine in nature, nature in the divine, and divinity within myself and all else.

O Great Goddess,
O Great God,
Make me one with your essence
Make me one with your essence
Make me one with your essence.

*Adapted from Self Dedication Rite By Scott Cunningham

Opening the Circle:

Dismiss the directions and deities with thanks.

I thank you for your presence, North.
With blessings you may now go forth.

I thank you for your presence, West.
By your presence I am blessed.

I thank you for your presence, South.
I give praise with heart and mouth.

I thank you for your presence, East.
You are the last but not the least.

Lady and Lord, it's joy you bring
As I enter into Spring.
My thanks that you were here with me
With balance that is meant to be.
I open now my life to you
With vows I've chosen to renew.

My Circle is open.
I move forward from this place
Balanced, renewed, refreshed
Into the beauty that is Spring.

Legacy

Spring Cleaning

By Audriana Cahill

Historically, spring celebrations had two themes. One of the celebrations centered on rituals and blessings upon food and/or children. The other rituals centered on the theme of throwing out winter or death. Spring Cleaning is our modern tradition for throwing out winter.

When the days brighten with warm sun and cool breezes, it was time to air out the house, the head and the soul. Grandmother would say nothing changes your point of view faster than washing the windows. Once clean, the windows are thrown open to let light and fresh air into the house. Then, bright music was put on and the party began (...because in my house we turn everything into a party!)

After a season of shadows and contemplation, it is time to find the corners of the house. We attack the darkest corners first by starting with the closets. Winter clothes are cleaned and put in the back of the closet. Warm weather clothes are washed and place in the front of the closet. A family rule was that if you haven't worn something in three years, it's time to let it go. Old clothes are donated to charity and if sentiment binds us too tightly to something, we use a pendulum to get yes or no advice (or cut playing cards three times. Two red cards to one black is Yes. Two black cards to one red is No). Today, the hardest edits can easily be remembered with digital images. Take pictures of those old t-shirts that you never wear and let someone else fall in love with them by donating them.

At the same time of year we can also clean out our mental closets by asking ourselves, is something in my history dictating my present or future? Memory is a gift when it reminds us of our blessings and constructive life lessons. Holding on to the negative weight of the things that burdened your past will only burden your future. Until you empty your memory closet of those dead memories, you cannot fill it with joyous new ones.



If you're having trouble breaking old habits, mind sets, or reflexes, identify those things that block you or handicap you. Every time you identify the bad habit or the dead memory, contract with a friend to lovingly point out that "you're doing it again." Eventually, you will recognize when you are doing it and not need the reminder. With enough conscious effort you will begin to catch yourself just before you exhibit the bad habit. Then you can reject the behavior altogether and banish the thought, behavior, memory forever.

Think about what needs cleansing in yourself as you sweep the dust out the back door (never out the front door) of your home. When washing the floors we add cedar or orange oils into the wash water. For carpets we make a squirt bottle fragrant spritz of 3% essential oil, 25% water and the remainder alcohol. Spritz it on the rug as you are vacuuming to freshen. Make up several small bottles and add a few drops of essential oils for specific intentions. In the kitchen or dining room use White Ginger for health, in the living room use Hyacinth oil for happiness, in the office add Cinnamon oil for success or Almond oil for wealth. In the bathroom use Jasmine oil for beauty, in the bedroom use Gardenia or Mimosa oils for peace or Clove or Peach for desire. Use Lilac oil for ancestral dream work.

Pack away winter by washing heavy comforters, sweaters and flannels. Pack winter-scented candles, seasonal plates and glasses. Clean out the kitchen cupboards of stale food or dull spices. Use a white vinegar solution on glass and tile because it is acidic to breaks down oils. It also acts as an antibacterial cleaning agent. A squirt bottle of 10% vinegar solution in water can be kept on hand for general cleaning indefinitely.

“Finding the baseboards” meant that we had to move all the furniture for a thorough cleaning. Since the furniture has to be moved anyway, after dusting and vacuuming, we often rearrange the furniture to stir up all the old, stagnant energy in the room. We make clear pathways from room to room so that we don’t have to walk around something to get somewhere.

We take down all the pictures from the walls for cleaning but we do not re-hang them in their former places. A lesson I learned from fine art museums is that even the most beautiful work of art becomes invisible to the mind that has memorized it hanging in the same spot day after day. That same memory fault can blind us to missing a person’s new haircut or glasses. Change your environment to wake up your mind, force it to see the images on your walls by moving them around. Identify the treasures in you life and display them or move them around. Don’t fill every space, leave room for new treasures. Leave room for growth. Leave room for possibilities.

Don’t forget your sacred space whether it is a bookshelf or an entire room. Dust your altar and change the altar cloth to something spring colored. Rededicate your tools or retake your initiation vows. Bless seeds you intend to plant in your garden. Make a list to start a new course of study, learn a new language, start a journal, feed your mind. Remember special cleansings for all your thresholds, hearths, windowsills and doorframes. These “tween” places mark the outside from the inside and are magickal places. Incense them or sprinkle salt lightly for protection. Decorate your home with spring flowers and sprouting greens. Wear green clothing. Finally, go to the four corners of your property or home and loose the wards that have been standing watch. Thank them and then reward the property.

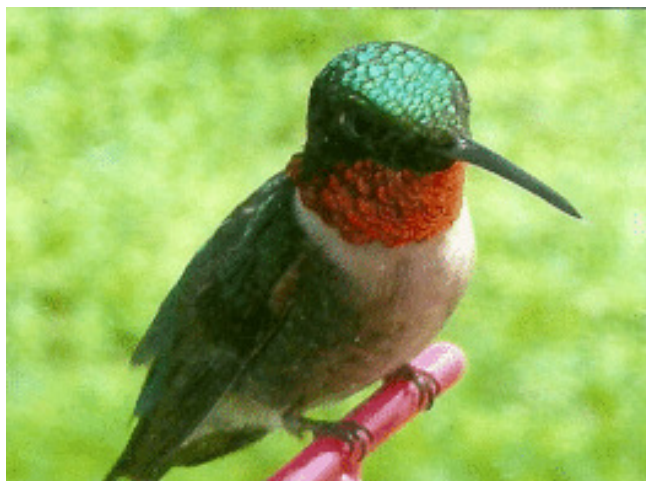
When the house is thoroughly clean, the next day as a pleasure promise, take a drive to visit the sacred places near your home. Visit the cemetery and clean the headstones and bring flowers to your beloved ancestors or visit a nature preserve, or go have lunch at your favorite restaurant where you’ve made the best memories. Then return to the welcome you will get entering your sparkling home.



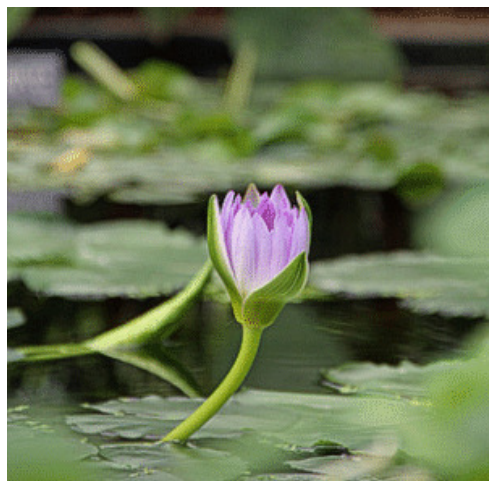
March 2010 © Ardriana Cahill

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.

Nature's Glory Pics from our Members



Hummer by FireFalcon



Water Lily by Martin Cox

Ostara - A New Life and New Beginning

(My Personal Journey)

By Wes "Graybeard" Sanders

I've been trying to figure out what I could contribute to the Newsletter that would follow the theme of Ostara - A New Beginning, and the only thing that comes to mind is a little story from my own life; so here goes.

Back in 1973, I was in big trouble. I had a problem that I could not fix, no matter what I did, or tried. You see, I was an alcoholic. I knew I was in big trouble, but just knowing it did not solve the problem. I had given up all hope and I knew that I would soon die as a hopeless drunk, and that was ok, I really didn't care. I just wanted it to stop.

Years before, I had given up on the God thing. I had seen so much death and total human destruction, that I knew there was no God. I lived with a huge black hole in my gut. There was nothing there. Life had no meaning except to get that next drink because then there would be a simplest of peace, the demons would leave, some times. One time, I was sitting on the Bank of the Suwannee River, In Northern Florida. I was very, very drunk and I passed out. The bank of the river at that place was covered with a vine; it covered the entire bank and was very thick, like a carpet. I had laid down in it and just went to sleep. I still, after all these years have a hard time trying to explain what happened when I woke up.

As I woke up, one of the Vine's leaf's had moved over and was looking down at me. That was scary enough, but then it started talking to me. Not talking out loud, but in my head, in my mind. It was telling me to get my life straightened out, like, just get it together Dude. AND, it let me know that they had a worldwide network and that they would know what I was doing, no matter where I was. Well, let me tell ya, I freaked. I scrambled up that River bank and ran and ran and ran and was screaming so hard my throat hurt. A friend of mine finally tackled me and I quieted down and told him the story....he said that it was only an alcohol induced hallucination. And I believed him, this was my first real indication that I had a problem.

A number of years passed. I kept drinken. The Vine's didn't scare me anymore. The woman I was married to at the time ran off with my best friend's brother and I wanted to shoot them. Two kids walked into the Bar I was drinking at. They came straight up to me and told me that they were from California and that they had heard what was happening with me. They explained to me, in no uncertain terms, that they thought it was very uncool for a Californian to be thinking this way and that they were going to leave in the morning for California, and if I wanted, I could go with them. So, I did. We left Florida, hitchhiking, arriving here 5 days later. I stayed with my Parents, until they kicked me out because they could no longer stand to see their son killing himself.

Now I was lost. Really lost. I had absolutely no hope any longer. All I wanted to do was to die. Walking home one night from a Bar I had found here in dear ol California, I was all drunked up and sick and angry. I started to scream at this God I didn't believe in and told him to just strike me down with Lighting, kill me, right then, or help me. Magick happened two weeks later.

One of the Bar Maids at the Bar I was drinking at told me one day that she didn't drink. I had been trying to get a date with her and I pushed her to hard one night and she told me that she didn't drink, that she had been Sober for 4 years and that she didn't go out with drunks, thank you very much. Well, that caught my attention. I asked her how she had stopped drinking, so she told me. She had gone to AA. I got very drunk that night and got put in jail, again, for Drunk in Public. The next day, I went back to that Bar, to get well and she was there. I asked her if she would please take me to AA, as I had heard in jail that folks with drinking problems went there to get well. She asked me if I thought I had a drinking problem and I told her that yes, I had a problem. So she agreed. She took me to my first meeting that night; that was March 14, 1973. This is just a small part of what happened, and a very small part of what I was like. Now I would like to tell you a little bit of what happened after that first meeting. This is where the Magick happened.

At that Meeting I was totally blown away. The room was full of people who were dressed nice, where clean, who smelled good, but most important, to me, where their eyes. Their eyes where all clear, bright and shiny and HAPPY. These people all came up to me and shook my hand and introduced themselves to me, first name only, and told me how nice it was to see me and for me to please keep coming back. Magick. I was flabbergasted. Before, guys came up to me to fight. I wanted what these people had, and I told them that. But I also told them

that I didn't know how or what to do. So they told me to read the Big Book, go to meetings, every day, get a Sponsor, and above all else, do not, not even if your ass falls off, take that first drink, because it is that first drink that will kill you.

Well, I felt renewed. I felt I had a chance after all. I met both Men and Woman who felt just like me, who had been where I had been and they where Sober and had lives, they had JOBS.....wow. I still had a problem with the God thing though. So did a lot of them. They told me that all I had to do was to believe in a Higher Power...a Spirit of the Universe. I had a pretty hard time with that until I met a bunch of Pagans and Witches and it all came together. Magick.

I had met a Lady and we where kinda/sorta dating and as in most relationships the topic of conversation came around to Religion. I told her that I had no Religion. She told me that she was a Witch. That she belonged to a Religion called Wicca. And she explained some of it to me. I thought it was interesting, but that was about it. She gave me the URL to Contraversial.com on a piece of paper, which I put in my pocket and promptly forgot about.

A few weeks later, I had a dream. Now I don't dream. At least I don't remember dreaming. Anyway, this dream I remember, like it happened yesterday. This most Beautiful Blonde Blue eyed woman, dressed in a beautiful flowing white dress was floating just above me as I lay in bed. She said nothing; she just looked at me with a kind of Mona Lisa smile on her lips and then just went away. Magick. I woke up and just thought, wow, what was THAT. Time went on, but I could not get that picture out of my mind. My Daughter asked me one day if I knew anything about witchcraft....I told her that I did not but that I had a web site URL for some kind of information, would she like for me to check it out for her. She said that she would like that.....so I went in to Contraversial.com to check you all out. I joined E-W and my life changed, again.

In very short order, I learned that I was Pagan. That was enough for me. I had found what I was looking for. I had realized that I had been a Pagan all my life and just didn't know it. I told that story about my dream to some people and they told me that I had been visited by the Goddess.....but my biggest day came when I was called a Brother Witch. I never believed I was a Witch, or a Wizard, or whatever, but when I heard those words, I knew, I knew I was finally home and with those people I was supposed to be with. Magick.

Over the past 5 or 6 years, I have not been studying much. I have been following my intuition and going where, it seems, it wants me to go. And so far it has not let me down. It was my intuition, in fact, that had me write this.

Has my life gotten better since I have had this awareness about myself? Well, yes and no. I still have questions, but I am not so crazy any more to find the answers. I am much mellower today than I was 6 years ago and I am very careful about what I wish for. I don't drive myself crazy wondering about God, and all that Stuff anymore.....I just think of the Picture of the Goddess smiling down at me and everything gets ok.

So, this is the story of my rebirth, reinvention, and the springtime of my new Life. I have been sober many years now, some years not so good, and some years wonderful, as life is. Life is good.

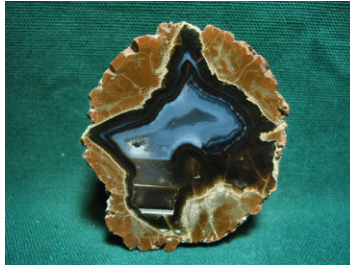


On the Rocks

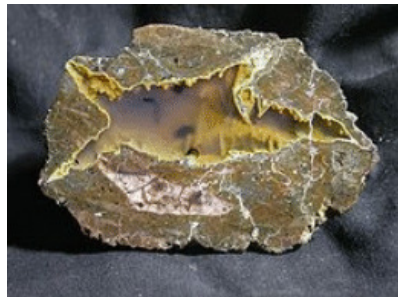
Thunderegg

By Pari

In the true tradition of Ostara where the fertility of rabbits and eggs prevail and where the Goddess Eostre bursts forth from her hidden abode to begin renewing the earth and fulfilling the promise of Spring, I found some very interesting connections within the physicality and essence of a most interesting stone called ~ the Thunderegg!



An often drab and uninteresting egg-shaped or spherical stone with a matrix shell comprised of silica birthed within volcanic ash, it's what is encapsulated inside of these natural wonders that has captured the minds and hearts of collectors over the years and throughout the world. When cracked open, the inside of the Thunderegg (called the lens or window) is most often comprised of a beautifully banded, moss or plume Agate, but can alternately contain Jasper or occasionally Common Opal. When the two inner surfaces are polished, the glorious configurations spring forth and truly come to life, usually in the shape of a star or flower-like pattern - the most famous of the "flowers" being the Priday Plume variety which were mined many years ago on the Priday ranch in Madras, Oregon.



Star Thunderegg



Priday Plume

Different from a Geode which is simply a hollow rock containing crystal druse, the Thunderegg is a specific geological departure from the norm and is filled solid with its inner mineral beauty. They can range in size from less than an inch to four feet in diameter, with weight ranging from less than an ounce to over a ton. Most of those collected, though, are approximately the size of a baseball and weigh between one to two pounds.



Oregon Thundereggs

In myth, the Thunderegg was believed by the Pacific Northwest Native Americans to be thunderous rock eggs thrown across the valley between two mountains (specifically Mount Hood and Mount Jefferson in Oregon) by the warring Thunder Gods whenever they became angry with or jealous of each other. Hence, the English version of the Indian name "thunder eggs". Or, as another story goes, they were thrown from the mountains by the angry gods who were displeased with the humans there. Thundereggs are also associated with the Norse god, Thor (known as Donner in German), the god of thunder.



Donner (Thor) calling upon the storm clouds, by Arthur Rackham to Wagner's Das Rheingold

Found extensively in northeastern Australia, but also very prolific in Oregon in the U.S. where they adopted it as their state rock in 1965, Thundereggs are also found in Germany, Mexico, Canada, France and various regions in Africa. These uniquely constructed nodules were formed millions of years ago following volcanic eruptions. As lava poured forth and began to cool, certain pools of it became "frothy" and developed gas pockets. As this bubbling brew was hardening, minute amounts of mineral-rich water seeped inside each cavity where, later, as it slowly evaporated, it left behind traces of silica or other minerals. These trace minerals then began growing within the shell and, over time, filled the "egg" solid with the Agate, Jasper or Common Opal we find there now. It is commonly thought that through the growth process, the expansion and contraction of the gases (that, or the drying out process) is what created ruptures or cracks in the matrix which eventually became the reason for the unique "star" patterns of internal mineral growth.

Because the Thunderegg's beauty is held hidden within until we crack them open, this aspect of the stone resonates with the astrological Sign of Scorpio. Its stellar Agate insides work well with Virgo and Gemini, both of which share Agate as one of their birthstones. And because the Thunderegg is most often highly-collected in its duo form - the two pieces of the split stone having its inside faces polished and where those two facial designs appear identically mirrored to each other - it becomes an excellent representation of the Equinox, the time of equal day and night...a time of balance...and thus finds its connection with Libra and its ruler Venus, the goddess of love. These two mirrored pieces of one stone may be used in love spells or as a bonding talisman between two lovers or friends. And therein lies yet another connection with Ostara - a time of budding love, fertility and joyous renewal.

Thundereggs, by their very own surprise insides, teach us how better to look within ourselves and appreciate our own inner light and beauty, which it then prompts us to unleash and share with the world. They push us to recognize that all creatures possess this same inner beauty and light and that, though we may need to search for it, it is always there. This makes the Thunderegg a perfect catalyst stone for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, pushing us to jump into Spring and to activate our Winter musings, insisting we now bring out and release our very best! For those in the Southern Hemisphere at this time, it will pull you inside yourself to bask in the beauty there as you enter the Mabon harvest and prepare for Winter. These marvelous "eggs" can also help ease stressful situations and will aid us in finding joy and peace no matter where we are in the world.

Metaphysically, the Thunderegg is known to quell anger and hostility in those who work with it. It also acts as a glue, enhancing community cooperation and bringing people together to work for a common cause. It brings stable progress and helps us put the right thought together with the right action in order to manifest our intentions properly and in the best manner.

Thundereggs are excellent for helping us reach and work with the Other Realms and for providing a link to them, along with facilitating a greater awareness for what we will gather there.

With the main lore connected to Thundereggs revolving around the mythos of being a weapon of the gods or being attached to the thunder of Thor, we can connect this hearty stone to clairaudience - its own "thunder" creating an attention-grabbing way for us to hear and discern what messages we are receiving from practically anything around us. If you have trouble hearing or noticing opportunistic mystical guidance, a Thunderegg can be a very helpful aid. If you feel your mind is very active already and that you have no problem in receiving subtle messages, then I would suggest saving Thunderegg medicine for another time. I personally haven't used Thunderegg medicine very often, but I do own one that has helped me in receiving Totemic messages, as I find the designs within the egg often mimic the shape of whatever is trying to get our attention. For example, I noticed years ago that my smallest Thunderegg contains the image of not only the initial Squirrel I saw there, but also one of a Dolphin and a Dove...each viewable as you turn the stone deosil. It is my "Work + Play = Rejuvenation" stone.



The three sides of my egg ~"Squirrel" "Dolphin" "Dove"

Thundereggs collected from Mt. Hay in Queensland, Australia, have earned the nickname "Amulet Stones" and when polished on the outer surface and placed under a UV light, often exhibit a shimmering Spring green glow. They are carried for good luck and protection. For other myth and lore connected to Thundereggs we can look to the essence of its center, be it Agate, Jasper, Opal or other mineral. Finding out what your "egg" contains will give you strong hint of its additional powers. Since the majority of Thundereggs contain Agate in some form, we can expect those to help us in the following ways: For eloquence of truths, enhancement of perceptions, analytical prowess, and strength of protection. For creative dreams, increased concentration, enhancement of memory, and communication with all others. And for good health in skin, bones, liver, spleen and stomach areas, along with balance to the Nervous and Endocrine Systems.

But for however you use the versatile powers of your Thunder"egg"...may the fertility and abundance of Spring and the hand of Eostre knock loudly on your door!

Sources:

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Thunderegg, itself.



March 2010 © Patricia J. Martin

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<http://www.peacefulpaths.com>

Metaphysics

Reinvention: “Encouraging your Courage to Change”

by Tamra L. Consbruck

“Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.”

Raymond Lindquist

The month of March in my home state of California is one of rebirth and regeneration. Nature is expeditiously blooming forth with life and the scents of rose, jasmine, and strawberries; signs that the sun is strong and the earth is rejoicing under its rays. The look, feel and smell of life shortly after a light rain gives the impression of cleansing fresh newness. The darkness has retreated in the face of a new season. Spring is in the air. There is renewed activity and growth as seeds sprout and saturate the earth with bright colors. And like the earth, many of us choose this time to regenerate our own energies and perhaps establish ourselves into a new life purpose.

But what does it entail to revive one's personal energies and to create the lives we wish to live? How can those of us feeling drained so early in the year shake off the self-disappointment of our individual New Year resolutions which have already fallen by the wayside? What was it we were going to start or stop doing, eating, watching, allowing and/or participating in? We can be, and often are hard as hell on ourselves. My own inner voices tend to take on the characteristics of emotional perpetrators, “How long did your resolutions last this time, one, maybe two weeks? What a loser. You might as well just face it; you're never going to be healthy, fit, successful, loved or recapture that passion you tasted in younger years...” Sound familiar? These brutal thoughts serve only to hinder our spiritual progress and evolution. It's the kind of negative thinking that really weighs us down. Who gives these inner voices the right to judge and belittle us anyway? We do. Only we do. We've got to lighten up on ourselves.

I am sure most of us are familiar with the saying: *“Sometimes we are so busy dwelling on how far we have to go that we forget to look back and acknowledge how far we have already come.”* It's a common occurrence for we “*evolutionaries*.” We as spiritual beings never stop growing, learning and evolving unless we ourselves hinder our progress with self-limiting thoughts that easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. That is, those inner emotional perpetrating voices that tell us we are not good enough. These thoughts and ingrained beliefs can be so deeply

rooted, we may not even be aware we are having them. The truth is our thoughts create our realities, and if we haven't been blessed with the proper nurturing and encouragement growing up, we might not know where to begin to reprogram our negative inner perpetrators into more encouraging collaborators.

One of the toughest and most crucial lessons I have ever had to learn is that *I am the master of my life*. My own thoughts dictate the direction of my path. If I don't take control of who, what, where, when and how I want to be, well, I have no one to blame but myself for holding me back. Having said that, blaming ourselves is yet just another negative inner judgment we can all do without.

I used to look at my birth into this life as an introduction into madness, and I'll admit that there are times when I still do. Some of my earliest memories encompass being locked in a closet over night at age four, with the explanation that God didn't love me, and at age six being forced down on my hands and knees to lick a man's infected leg laceration because, “A dog's saliva helps wounds heal faster.” I spent one half of my childhood in and out of foster homes and the other half on the streets taking shelter in places children shouldn't even be aware of. At age 18 I moved in with and later married an abusive, blackout alcoholic just like dear old step-dad number four.

This was the energy I was created with, born into and understandably manifested the first twenty or so years of my life. It was all I knew. The first hundred times I was told in therapy that I was responsible for who I was, and the quality of my life, I couldn't believe my ears. Were these “Professionals” actually telling me that the hardships of my existence and the pain that came with it were all my fault? How freaking rude! I thought maybe *they* should be abused, neglected, displaced and locked in closets for 20 years and see how *they* liked it! Then let them come back and tell me I brought this on *myself*!

Needless to say I spent a good number of years trying to grasp this concept; how my pain, sorrow, anger, bitterness and fear was only *attracting* more pain, sorrow, anger, bitterness and fear. Everything is energy, and like energy attracts to it only like energy. I am forty-five years old. I didn't begin to understand the true meaning of this metaphysical theory till I was in my thirties, and then I still needed to learn how to change my behavior and reactions to the vast variety of experiences and negative energies in my environment.

So when I say we can reinvent ourselves, I do not say this lightly. I am not a Pollyanna standing on a hilltop singing, “Let's all love ourselves and each other right here, right now!” It takes time, work and dedication to reprogram a negative belief system. It takes practice, and more practice, and yet even more practice.

In 2003 my father, who I hardly knew, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Always wanting to appropriate a connection with my dad, I chose to take on the role of caretaker the last three years of his life. Getting to know this old man was like pulling teeth; excruciating. He was a quiet, private man who offered little information regarding his feelings and thoughts about anything at all. But in a strange way my father was the catalyst for my imperative compulsion to reinvent myself. He unwittingly opened my eyes to what a sad life I was living. He was a silently suffering, heartbreakingly lonely, miserably unhappy man the whole length and breadth of his life; and on March 14, 2005 he died at the age of sixty-seven. My father was my mirror. I didn't want to go out like that, and yet, at the time, I was already well on the way. I was my father's daughter.

So what do we do? How do we change? How can we "re-invent" ourselves? We start by re-shifting our thoughts and beliefs in a more positive direction. Affirmations are always a good place to start. One of the most reliable tools of basic metaphysics, self-recovery and self-discovery are affirmations - positive statements about who and what you are.

I made a list of everything - anything, no matter how small - I liked about myself, and named it appropriately, "Things I like about myself." I like to believe I have beautiful eyes; this is no time to be humble. No matter how much I happen to weigh, I always have skinny wrists. I am sensitive to the needs of others. I'm a good writer, sister, daughter, friend; I have a pretty good sense of humor; I love animals and they tend to love me back...; whether it is physical or behavioral I wrote it down. This took awhile, but the more time I spent thinking of my good qualities, the longer my list got. Sit down and make a list of your own and you may be surprised at how long it grows. When you are finished, make a few extra copies and keep one in your car, on your bedside table, even in the bathroom, and read this list as often as possible throughout your day. Feel the list. Imagine the fondness, love, appreciation you have of these parts of you. And as you slowly discover new things you like, add them to the list as well.

I like to call this next list, "What I want to be when I grow up." What do you want to become and/or accomplish? I want to be a renowned writer and/or novelist and poet and I want to be able to make a living with it. I want to be physically and emotionally healthy and fit. I want to have people in my life that I respect and love and can learn from, and I want to be that for others. I want to be attractive and sexy and desired... again, this is no time to be humble. If it is what and who you want to be and it doesn't warrant hurting others in the process, it goes on the list. What do you want to accomplish? Who do you want to be? Now rewrite this list by changing it from what you

want to be and accomplish, to what you are and have already accomplished; i.e., I am a well respected and successful writer/poet/novelist. I am physically and emotionally healthy and fit. I am a wonderful person and attract wonderful people to me...men happen to think I am hot..." okay, maybe that's too much. Don't forget to make copies of this list as well and spread them around your environment so you can see and read them often.

Treat yourself the way you would treat someone else who had all these likable characteristics. Be your friend. Just as you would be grateful to have a friend with these qualities, be grateful for yourself. And when those inner perpetrators start chiming in with insults and putdowns, tell them to shut the hell up, because YOU like this about yourself. Remember, those evil little voices inside your head are not you. They are old tapes of negative programming and judgments from the past. Refuse to feed into them. They are loveless. They are obsolete. They cannot hurt you unless you give them permission to.

Now for my favorite tool which I have borrowed consistently over the years from any number of 12-step programs, "Fake it till you make it." That's right people, a good percentage of my life I am a big faker. I use this one a lot. I've mentioned it in earlier essays. It's the rope I can always depend on being there for me to grab hold of when I feel myself starting to slip, which, to be honest, can be often. I am still learning how to love myself and to act according to my wishes in life, even when I don't "Feel it." In fact I don't feel it a good third of the time. And I have found that when I fake it, at some point, I can actually make it so.

I have been using these tools of reinvention for several years now. At the time of my father's death I was a technically obese chain smoker on medication to treat high blood pressure and high cholesterol and I was a borderline diabetic. My doctor had categorized me as a walking heart attack waiting to happen. I was busting my ass and sacrificing my own needs for the health and happiness of everyone except myself and I had been doing this my entire life. I was not so secretly unhappy. But I yearned for a way out; I craved the knowledge I needed to reclaim my life and learn how to be an enlightened being and still have the ability to say no.

I started on my metaphysical journey doing research for my sister, and in doing so I came across, became enamored with and began to read and absorb everything I could find about metaphysics. That was over seven years ago. I am not an expert. I will always be a student of metaphysics who quite often has to relearn a lesson several times before I get the hang of it. And that doesn't always mean I won't lose my grip and find myself momentarily dangling from the fake it rope.

But when I see or find myself dreading a still long road of reinvention and/or regeneration ahead of me, I make a point of taking a good look at just how incredibly far I have come. I am ninety pounds lighter than I was three years ago. I no longer have high blood pressure or high cholesterol and am in no danger of becoming diabetic. I am learning how to be there for family members and friends without sacrificing too much of myself in the process. I am a work in progress as are all of us "evolutionaries." But let's keep in mind, the journey to perfection is what's important; not the destination.

The road behind me is a hell of a lot longer than the path before me and I am ever so closer to having the life and in becoming the person I can love, admire and believe in. I am the master of a slippery little sucker of a brain that may not always retain the information I cram into it. I am the master of a body which is most definitely healthier than it has ever been before, regardless of the work I still want to put into it. I am a spiritual being in a life that never ceases to take me on one wild ride after another. But make no mistake; *I am the master.*

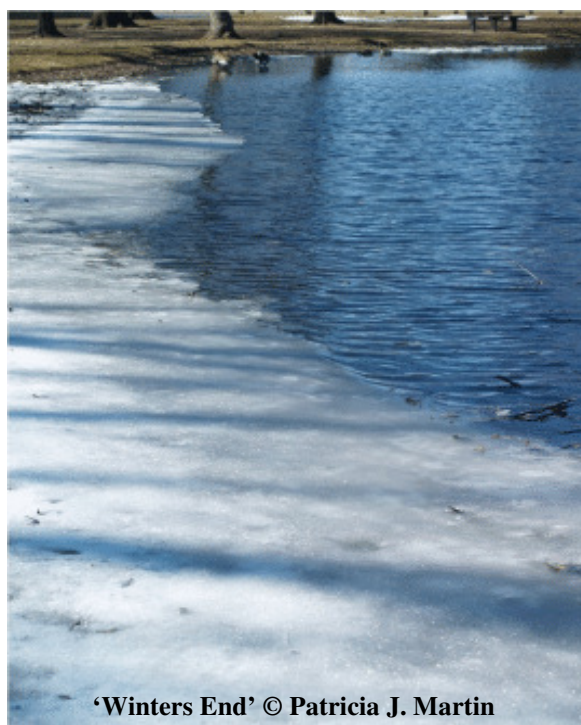
March 14th 2010 © by Tamra L. Consbruck

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

Nature's Glory Pics from our Members



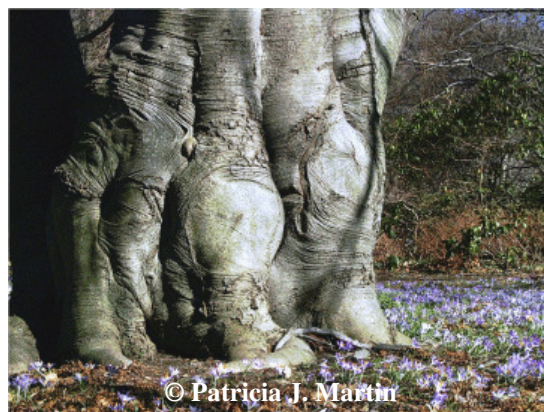
'Winters End' © Patricia J. Martin



'Winters End' © Patricia J. Martin



'Artemis Spring Hunt'
© Patricia J. Martin



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The Pagan Kitchen

By OwlOak

Greetings Folks ~ It's no secret that Ostara is one of my favorite Sabbats. Not only does it mean an end to the long, cold days of Winter but also provides us with a very good excuse for lots of good food and a family gathering to enjoy it.

Traditionally, foods that were/are associated with Ostara are those which symbolize fertility and new growth, but those still in the larder, or readily available, were also utilized. This shows up in foods like eggs - in all their variations, chicken, fish, biscuits, breads, cheeses, cakes, the newly emerging wild and cultivated shoots of vegetables, like onions, chives, garlic, and leeks; as well as fresh leafy greens such as mustard, kale, and spinach. Fresh and preserved meats and wild game like lamb, beef, rabbit, or grouse, along with the remaining stored root crops such as beets, turnips, rutabagas, potatoes, etc. were present. Various nuts and seeds from the past Fall harvest as well as fresh and dried herbs filled out the menu.

Unlike our ancestors, we have a wide variety of fresh, frozen, and preserved foods from around the world to choose from on a daily basis. Our ancestors used what they had available and, in my mind, we should do the same. To me, the importance of any Sabbat feast is to keep one in tune with The Wheel of the Year, so symbolism in foods is more important than the actual foods eaten. Be they the ones our ancestors would have eaten or not, or be they prepared in the same or a different way than they did. As an example... eggs are symbolic of Ostara...however, they do not have to be hard-boiled, scrambled, or fried. Eggs Benedict fills the symbolism bill and tastes a lot better. The same applies to fresh or dried cod vs. a grilled mahi-mahi fillet. The importance is using fish, not the type or its preparation.

I'm sure that if they had the same selection of foods as we do our ancestors would have gladly incorporated them into their feasts. So, please keep in mind when you read this column that the recipes presented are based upon the symbolism of the Sabbat but incorporate the 21st century selections of available foods and their preparation, and may include anything from egg-drop soup to Colcannon.

In this issue I'm setting out a brunch buffet with recipes for some main dishes, appetizers, sides, and desserts. Of course, all the trimmings and extras can be set out, like jams, jellies, sweet breads, rolls, breads, butter, relishes, chutneys, etc., along with any family favorites you may have.

With this in mind, let's get on to the feast...

Eggs Benedict

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

4 eggs, poached (see the Ostara 2009 issue for directions)
4 pieces Canadian bacon
2 English muffins split
Hollandaise Sauce (recipe below) *
Butter - as needed

Garnish - finely chopped chives or parsley

Directions:

Preheat oven on broiler setting.

Poach the eggs.

While the eggs are poaching, brown the bacon in a medium skillet over medium-high heat and toast the English muffins on a baking sheet under the broiler.

Spread toasted muffins with softened butter, and top each one with a slice of Canadian bacon, followed by one poached egg.

Drizzle with the hollandaise sauce.

Sprinkle with garnish and serve immediately.

Makes 4 Eggs Benedict

*Option - buy a package of Hollandaise Sauce from the market and prepare per package directions, but it won't be nearly as good.

Hollandaise Sauce

By: OwlOak

Ingredients:

4 egg yolks
3 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 pinch ground white pepper
1/8 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon water
1 cup (4 sticks) butter, melted
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions:

Fill the bottom of a double boiler (or two stacked, non-aluminum pans) partway with water. Make sure that water does not touch the top pan.

Bring the water to a gentle simmer over LOW heat. *
In the top of the double boiler, whisk together the egg

yolks, lemon juice, white pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and 1-tablespoon of water.

Add the melted butter to the egg yolk mixture 1 or 2 tablespoons at a time while whisking the yolks constantly - if the sauce begins to get too thick, add a teaspoon or two of hot water. Continue whisking until all the butter is incorporated, then whisk in the salt and remove from the heat.

Place a lid on the pan to keep sauce warm until ready to serve. **

*The secret is to keep the heat LOW so that the egg yolks don't curdle (cook), and to whisk constantly.

**It's best to serve hollandaise sauce right away. You can hold it for about an hour or so, provided you keep it warm. After two hours, though, you should toss it... both for quality and safety reasons.

Swiss Eggs and Sausage

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound bulk pork breakfast sausage or cubed cooked ham *
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup cream, or half-n-half
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 6 eggs

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325° F (163° C).

Grease an 11x7" glass-baking dish, and set aside.

Cook the sausage in small saucepan, breaking up the meat with a fork, until browned and cooked. Drain thoroughly.

Place the cooked sausage in the prepared dish.

Top with the cheese and dot with the butter.

In a small bowl, combine the cream, mustard powder and salt.

Pour half of the mixture into the baking dish on top of the cheese and butter.

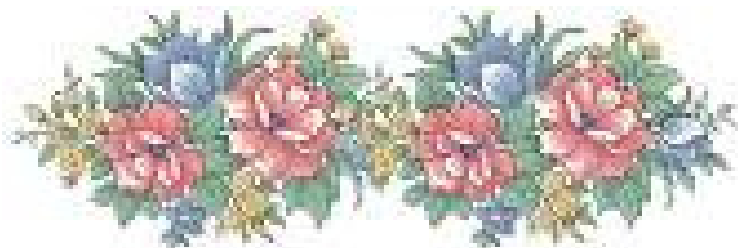
In a medium bowl, beat the eggs until frothy (it is the incorporated air in the frothy eggs that makes them light and fluffy) and pour into the baking dish. Drizzle the remaining cream mixture over the eggs.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until puffed and just beginning to brown.

To serve: Remove from the oven and allow to cool for a bit, then cut into squares. Finely chopped parsley, or chives, may be used as a garnish.

Makes 4 servings.

*If you would prefer not to use the meat, just layer the rest of the ingredients, starting with the eggs, and bake as directed.



Oysters Rockefeller

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

2 slices bacon
12 (plus a couple extra) unopened, fresh, live medium oysters, scrubbed clean – discard any open ones... they're dead.
1 1/2 cups cooked spinach - well drained and chopped
1 pinch cayenne pepper
1/3-cup bread crumbs
1/4 cup chopped green onions
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1/4 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup Pernod ® - an anise flavored liqueur (optional)
Lemon wedges
Paprika – as needed
Kosher salt

Hot sauce (optional)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450° F (220° C).

Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium high heat until evenly brown. Drain, crumble and set aside.

Clean the oysters and place in a large stockpot. Pour in 2 inches (5 cm) of water, cover and bring to a boil until the oysters have opened. Remove them from the heat, drain and allow to cool – discard any closed ones...they're cooked but were dead before you started; hence the couple of extra ones. When cooled break the top shell off of each oyster.

Using a food processor, combine the bacon, spinach, Parmesan cheese, Pernod, breadcrumbs, green onions, and parsley. Add the salt, olive oil and cayenne pepper and process until finely chopped but not pureed, about 10 seconds.

Arrange the oysters in their half-shells on a cookie sheet that has been covered with the Kosher salt (this helps keep the oyster shells upright). Spoon some of the spinach mixture over each one and lightly dust with paprika. Bake 10 minutes until cooked through, then change the oven's setting to broil and broil until browned on top.

Serve hot with lemon wedges; and hot sauce, if desired.

Makes approximately 12 Oysters Rockefeller

Smoked Salmon and Egg Salad

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 dozen eggs
2 stalks celery - finely chopped
2 scallions - finely chopped
1/4 green (or sweet red) bell pepper - finely chopped
4 ounces smoked salmon - crumbled
1 cup mayonnaise; or to taste
3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill leaves - about 3 sprigs stripped.

Salt and pepper to taste
Paprika

Directions:

Hard-boil the eggs.

When cool, peel and coarsely mash to combine the yolks and whites then place in a medium bowl with the celery, onion, sweet pepper, crumbled salmon and mayonnaise. Add the chopped dill, salt and pepper.

Thoroughly mix then refrigerate at least a couple of hours, preferably overnight, to allow the flavors to combine.

Remove from the refrigerator, stir, and serve lightly sprinkled with paprika

Note: This may be served as a filling for tea sandwiches * (as shown), a spread for crackers or toast, as is on a bed of fresh lettuce; or placed in hollowed out tomato or bell pepper halves.

* To make an acceptable tea sandwich, make a regular sandwich on white bread, then trim the crust off and cut it diagonally into 4 pieces.

Poppy Seed Chicken (a.k.a. Wallpaper Paste Chicken)

By: Laura



Laura tells me this is a family recipe that got its name from the fact that it was sooo good her brother and a family friend couldn't stop eating it even though their taste buds had become so jaded it had begun to taste like wallpaper paste. ~ OwlOak

Laura ~ This is the way I make "Wallpaper Paste Chicken". It depends on how large a casserole, or how many people you want to feed, as to how much chicken, crackers, etc. you use, but this is the basic recipe.

Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts - boneless and skinless
1 can condensed cream of chicken, or mushroom, soup
1-16 oz. container sour cream
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1 stick butter, or margarine
1 tablespoon poppy seeds
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 sleeves Ritz® crackers - crushed

Directions:

Pre-heat the oven to 350° F (177° C).

Add the olive oil to a large frying pan, add the chicken and sauté over medium heat until the juices run clear. Remove and cut into pieces.

Mix the soup, garlic and onion powders with the sour cream.

Melt the butter or margarine in a saucepan and add the crushed Ritz crackers and poppy seeds. Mix well.

In a casserole dish, place a layer of the chicken pieces, soup mixture, and then the cracker mixture. Do this 2-3 times ending up with the crackers on top.

Bake in a 350° F (177° C) oven until bubbling and lightly browned.

Italian Fish Fillets

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 shallots, diced
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 medium can diced tomatoes
1/4 cup black olives, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup green olives, coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 pound cod (or other white fish) fillets - cut to portion size *

Italian seasoning - as needed

Directions:

Add the olive oil to a large frying pan and heat over medium heat.

Add the onions and garlic and sauté until the onions are translucent (not browned).

Stir in tomatoes, olives, parsley, and wine. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Place the fillets in the sauce and simmer until the fish turns white.

Remove from the heat.

Serve topped with a cooking spoon of the pan sauce and garnished with the Italian Seasoning.

*When purchasing fish, always smell it first. If it smells like fish it's not fresh; buy something else.

Note: This dish goes well served over polenta, rice, or pasta.

Asparagus with Cheese

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 pound fresh asparagus spears
Salt and pepper
8 ounces sliced white mushrooms
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/4 cup milk
2 teaspoons lemon juice
Fresh grated Parmesan cheese, as needed

Directions:

Preheat oven to 225° F (107° C).

Wash the asparagus and cook them upright in lightly

salted boiling water sufficient to reach up to where the stalks shift from white to green, so the bases will be boiled while the tips are steamed. Reserve 1/4 cup of the cooking liquid.

When they are cooked (5-8 minutes, or until the tips begin to droop), cut away and discard the white parts, and arrange the spears in an ovenproof dish. Cover and keep warm in the oven.

Simmer the mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of the reserved asparagus liquid for about 2 minutes, or until tender. Drain and arrange over the bottom half of asparagus, leaving the asparagus tips uncovered. Re-cover and continue to keep warm while making the sauce.

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and stir in the flour until smooth. Continue to cook and stir for 1 to 2 minutes, until the flour is golden in color. Remove the pan from the heat and gradually stir in the milk, the remaining reserved cooking liquid, and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Return the pan to the heat and simmer for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, until thickened. Pour over the mushrooms and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese leaving the asparagus tips exposed. Cover the exposed asparagus tips with foil and slip the pan into a medium 375° F (190° C) oven to brown, or run it under a broiler for a few minutes until the cheese is browned.

Roasted Garlic Whipped Potatoes

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 medium head garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 lbs. potatoes, peeled and quartered
1/2 stick butter, softened
1/2 cup milk

Salt and pepper to taste

Fresh chopped parsley or chives for garnish (optional)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C).

Drizzle the garlic with the olive oil, then wrap it in aluminum foil and bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the potatoes and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain, cool and mash. Stir in the butter, milk, salt and pepper.

Remove the garlic from the oven, and cut in half.

Squeeze the softened cloves into the potatoes. Whip the potatoes with an electric mixer until the garlic has been incorporated and the desired consistency is achieved.

Transfer to a serving dish and garnish, if so desired.



Pasta with Clams in Saffron Alfredo Sauce

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 pound small fresh clams (or your favorite shellfish) scrubbed clean - discard any that are open.
1 cup white wine
2 teaspoons chopped garlic
Alfredo Sauce (recipe below)
1/2-teaspoon saffron strands
3/4 lb. pasta - linguini, fettuccini, or your favorite pasta
2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley (optional)

Directions:

Steam the clams with the wine and garlic in a covered, medium saucepan over medium-high heat for about 5 minutes or until the clams open - discard any that don't open.

Drain the clams, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. Set clams aside.

Prepare the pasta according to the package directions.

While the pasta is cooking, make the Alfredo Sauce. When the pasta is done, remove from the heat, drain, and return to the pot.

Heat the sauce, reserved cooking liquid and saffron in a small saucepan over low heat for 5 minutes. Stir until blended and the saffron imparts a yellow color to the sauce – the sauce will be thinner than the original Alfredo sauce.

Pour the sauce over the pasta and mix until coated. Transfer to a serving dish and top with the unshelled clams. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve immediately.

Alfredo Sauce

By: OwlOak

Ingredients:

1 pint (.5 liters) heavy cream
1/2 cup (1 stick) real butter
1 pinch fresh ground nutmeg
1 1/2 cups fresh grated Parmesan cheese*

Directions:

In a medium saucepan combine the cream, butter, nutmeg, and grated Parmesan cheese.

Cook over medium low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat - the sauce will thicken upon standing.

The sauce can be used as is, or in the above recipe.

*Do NOT use the canned Parmesan cheese you buy in the store...it won't work. It will form gooey clumps because of the powdered cellulose which is added to prevent caking.

Maple Glazed Ham

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 (4-5 lb.) ham
10 whole cloves
2 cups water
1 cup pure maple syrup
1/4 cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons butter

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C).

Slice the ham fat about 1/2 inch (1 cm.) deep at diagonals to create a diamond pattern. Press the cloves into the ham and place the ham, fat side up, on a rack set in a baking pan. Add the water.

In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter, and mix in the maple syrup, brown sugar, and honey stirring constantly until heated through. Pour 1/2 of the mixture over the ham.

Bake the ham 1 hour and 30 minutes in the preheated oven - about 20 min./lb, or until the internal temperature is 160° F (71° C). Baste frequently with the remaining butter and syrup mixture. Remove the ham from the pan and set aside. *

Drain the pan drippings into a saucepan, allow to cool a bit, then skim off the fat and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Serve with the ham.

*Let the ham sit for 15-20 minutes, to allow the juices to redistribute, before carving.

Rib-eye Roast Au Jus

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

Roast:

5 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon kosher salt
1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 (4 to 5 pound) boneless rib-eye roast

Au Jus:

1/2 cup red wine (optional)
2 cups beef stock

Directions:

Roast:

Remove the roast from the refrigerator and allow to sit at room temperature for 2 hours - this will allow it to cook more evenly.

Rub the roast with the olive oil, and then rub in the garlic, salt, and pepper.

Place on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.

Bake, uncovered, at 450° F (230° C) for 30 minutes.

Reduce temperature to 350° F (175° C) and bake for another 2 hours, or until a meat thermometer inserted into the center registers 140° F (60° C) - rare, 160° F (71° C) - medium, 170° F (77° C) - well done.

Remove the roast from the pan and set aside for 15-20 minutes before carving to allow the juices to redistribute.

Note: Please keep in mind that a roast will continue to cook a bit more after it has been removed from the oven, so if it doesn't seem 'quite' done when you take it out it usually will be by the time you're ready to carve it. Typically the internal temperature will increase by 5 degrees while it sits.

Au Jus:

Remove the rack and place the roasting pan on the stove over medium-high heat. Stir in the wine, and bring to a simmer while scraping to dissolve the pan drippings. * Pour in the beef stock and return to a simmer. Cook 10 minutes, then strain and serve with the roast. Either over the slices, or on the side as a dip.

*If you are not using the wine, then add 1/2 cup of the beef stock to the pan and continue with the rest of the recipe.

Note: I have been asked what you should do once you have started to carve any type roast (meat or fowl) and find it really isn't cooked enough for your liking. Short answer; put it back in the oven, at temperature, and check it at 20-minute intervals until it is. Now, if it's overcooked then all I can suggest is you either eat it that way or get out your recipes. This very thing is the reason good meat and oven thermometers are your most important kitchen tools. Oven dials lie, thermometers don't.

Tiramisu Parfaits

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

4 teaspoons instant coffee granules
1/3 cup boiling water
2 packages instant vanilla pudding mix
4 ounce package of cream cheese - softened
1 package ladyfinger cookies - broken into large pieces
Whipped cream
Chocolate syrup
Cocoa powder

Directions:

Dissolve the coffee in boiling water and allow to cool to room temperature.

In a large bowl, prepare the vanilla pudding according to the package directions. Let stand until soft-set.

In another large bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth then gradually fold into the pudding.

Place ladyfinger pieces in a bowl, add the coffee and toss to coat. Let stand for 5 minutes to allow the coffee to be absorbed.

Divide half of the ladyfinger pieces among six parfait glasses or serving dishes. Top with the pudding mixture, and whipped cream. Repeat with another layer of cookie pieces and pudding.

Cover and refrigerate until ready to be served. Just before serving, remove the covering, drizzle with chocolate syrup, top with whipped cream, and dust with some cocoa powder.

Maple Candy

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

2 cups pure maple syrup* - yes, it is expensive but worth it.

Directions:

In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, bring the maple syrup to a boil over medium-high heat stirring occasionally. Boil until syrup reaches 235° F (110° C) on a candy thermometer.

Remove from the heat and cool to 175° F (80° C) without stirring, about 10 minutes.

Stir the mixture rapidly with a wooden spoon for about 5 minutes until the color turns lighter and

mixture becomes thick and creamy.

Pour into candy molds, or drop by teaspoonful on waxed paper swirling each candy to a peak.

Set aside to cool. Once cool; store in an airtight container for up to 1 month...if they last that long.

*Not maple flavored pancake/waffle syrup.

Irish Coffee

By: OwlOak

Ingredients:

1 jigger Irish cream liqueur -
such as Bailey
1 jigger Irish whiskey - such as
Jameson
1-cup hot fresh brewed coffee
Whipped cream



Directions:

In a coffee mug, combine the Irish cream and Irish whiskeys. Fill the mug with coffee. Top with some of the whipped cream.

Well folks, there you have it. A brunch to hold you through the day and leftovers for picking at later.

From my circle to yours, here's wishing you all a very Happy Ostara filled with love, happiness, family, and friends.

Huggs & B*B ~ OwlOak

This article contains recipes of my own, and/or other credited individuals. Mine are either original or adapted from those I've acquired over the years, along with family recipes that have been handed down to me by family members and friends. Any duplication of recipes created by others is accidental and unintentional. Responsibility for the source and content of any submitted and published recipe is strictly the responsibility of the originator. If any one wishes to comment or make suggestions on the Pagan Kitchen please feel free to write me <jrr147@yahoo.com>. Please mention "Pagan Kitchen" in the subject line so it doesn't go into the "Spam" file.



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The Herb Garden

How to Grow a Magickal Garden

by Lyric Moonshadow.



As we approach Ostara, thoughts of eggs, bunnies, new sprouts and spring cleaning start to bounce around in our heads. If you're like me, these thoughts bounce in and out rather quickly, especially the spring cleaning thought!! Realistically, it is time to start planning your magickal garden, because before you know it Spring will really be here. Whether you are an old pro or a beginner, gardening in a window or plot in your back yard, I hope to give you some ideas that will help you plan and grow a magickal garden.

Why grow a magickal garden? I believe the time and energy you put into your garden when you are consciously aware of our Mother, the Earth, the influence of the Moon as a planting and harvesting guide, the power of water that has been appropriately charged, and awareness of the Sun as it moves across the sky and nurtures not only our plants but our body and soul; will result in a garden that will grace you with herbs and plants that are strong, beautiful and ready to do your will. I think you will be amazed at the results. So let's get started.

1. Paper and pencil. Decide where you are going to plant your garden. Even if all you have is a window box, or a patio planter, it's a good idea to plan out what you are going to plant and where each plant will live. Put your taller plants in the back and your shorter plants in the front. Whether you start your plants from seed or buy them from a garden center the tags or packets will tell you how much sun the plant requires and how tall your plants will grow. So be sure to plan your garden and your plants according to how much sun you get. It's a good idea to scope out your garden before planting. Watch the position of the sun during the day and be sure to allow for shade from a tree or a fence. One year I was complaining to

a friend about a plant that wasn't doing well. He asked what direction it was facing I said south because I was facing south when I planted it. I neglected to mention that the plant was up against a fence which left it in shade for most of the day. My friend immediately corrected me and said the plant was actually facing north. I realize now that this was the problem. However being a Taurean, I still find it difficult to admit that the plant was not facing south! I moved it and it is now doing fine. Speaking of pencils and paper, now is a good time to address the gardener's journal. It's a good idea to put all these plans in a book so you can look back next year and see what you planted where and how well it did. Then you can easily make adjustments next year. Don't do what I did for many years ... I say to myself, oh I'll remember that and I never do, so write it down.

2. Preparing the soil and preparing to plant. Once the snow has melted and the grass has started to turn green it is time to start thinking about preparing the soil. Check to see what zone you live in before planting: <http://www.garden.org/zipzone/> If you are outside the US, there are international planting zone website available. If you are planting a garden in a "virgin" area you will want to dig up the sod and remove any roots and stones. Prepare a mixture of 1/3 manure, 1/3 peat and 1/3 top soil. If you compost you can substitute the compost for the manure. If your soil is very rich (dark) and loamy you can cut back on the manure. According to my husband, most herbs don't require rich loamy soil. Depending on your soil and how your plants do you can make adjustments for next year be sure to write this in your journal as well.

Once you have your top soil mixture prepared, begin to turn it into your garden with a shovel or trowel. This is a good time to bless your soil. Here is a very nice soil blessing that I like to use:

*The earth is cool and dark,
and far below, new life begins.
May the soil be blessed with fertility and abundance,
with rains of life-giving water,
with the heat of the sun,
with the energy of the raw earth.
May the soil be blessed
as the womb of the land becomes full and fruitful
to bring forth the garden anew.*

From Patti Wigington, About.com

Once your soil is prepared it is time to concentrate on your garden proper. Make it special, make it yours. Surround your garden with stones or bricks or sticks. You may want to put in a small altar or a rain barrel if you have enough room and a down spout close by, or maybe try a homemade scarecrow. Owl is one of my totem animals so I have two owls guarding my garden. After all these years the chipmunks and other critters

know they are no threat, and ignore their presence but I like having them around. Charge crystals and moss agate and put them in or about your garden. If you are using pots or planters, draw runes or other power/fertility symbols on them. Some ideas are the runes Berkana or Inguz or the Celtic triple spiral.

3. Plants and planting. So many plants, so little time Here is a list of some of my favorite easy to grow herbs and plants for magickal purposes. Comfrey: really easy to grow, great little purple bell flowers, a perennial, used in healing rituals and makes a great poultice for burns, cuts and scrapes. Comfrey grows really tall so put her in your back row. She also takes over and runs amuck if not watched closely, so you may want to plant her in the ground in a pot. Mugwort, like comfrey, grows tall and has a tendency to run wild too. Mugwort is used for protection and healing, burned to purify and cleanse. Sage is a culinary herb but also used for purification and a natural antibacterial agent. He will become a medium tall plant and grows into a shrub in about two years, so be sure to give him enough space. There are many different varieties of sage; the most common is white sage. Basil likes sun and lots of water. He also likes to live near tomatoes, but be sure to leave enough room for both plants. Basil has a tendency to get leggy if not pruned frequently; also be sure to cut back flowers when they appear or the plant will go to seed. I love to grow Rue. He is very easy to grow, very pretty and forms a nice medium sized shrub. He is not edible but is used for consecration (a great asperging tool), healing and hex breaking. Rue is an appropriate herb for Ostara as he is used in inertia spells and will make things awaken and start moving. Ah, last but not least, the mints. There are so many of them in all shapes, colors and sizes, great for flavorings and teas. They also prefer a rich soil and lots of water, and do well in shadier spots. The one thing they all have in common is they love to spread, so best to keep them in a pot. This is just a sampling of some of my favorite herbs that I grow every year. Once you find your favorites, don't forget to try a few new "friends" each year too. I've always loved sunflowers, and after years of buying sunflower plants and failing with them, I decided to start them from seed. The results were amazing, and something I was very proud of all



summer long and the finches loved them too. There are so many resources for herbs on the web and be sure to check my bibliography.

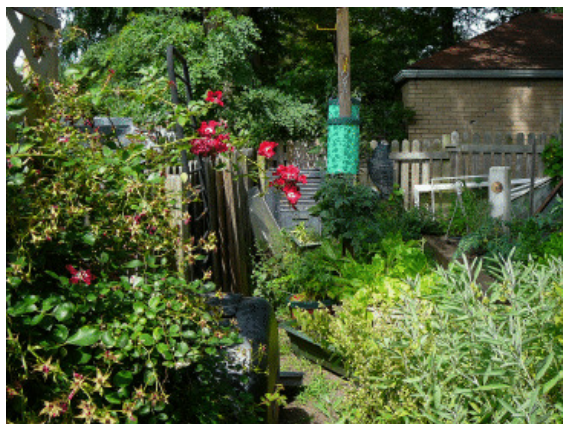


If you are starting your plants from "scratch" it's time to start right about Ostara depending on your zone. Always plant your young plants and start your seeds during the full or new Moon. Seeds germinate fastest during the full Moon because just as the Moon determines the gravitational pull of the seas, it also influences the amount of moisture in the earth. A system of planting known as Biodynamic planting incorporates the characteristics of the elements and astrological signs with types of plants. Earth signs stimulate the growth of the root – plant your carrots and potatoes when the Moon is influenced by an Earth sign; plants grown for their seeds, such as dill, do best when planted when the Moon is in a Fire sign; plants grown for their leaves, such as lettuce and spinach, do best when planted when the Moon is in a Water sign; and flowers do best when planted during an Air sign. Before planting your baby plants or starting your seeds be sure to do a seed blessing. Here is a very nice Ostara seed/plant blessing I came across and adjusted to my needs:

*Now is the dark half of the year passing
Now do the days grow light, and the Earth grows warm
I summon the spirit of these seeds (plants)
Which have slept in darkness
Awaken, stir, and swell!
As you are planted in the Earth with love
So shall you grow and bring forth new fruit.
So mote it be.*

4. Water, water everywhere..... you could just go to your kitchen faucet or use your hose ... but I recommend watering with Moon water. I know this may be unrealistic in the dead of summer when you water every single day, but do so at least once a month and not only will you feel good, but your plants will love it. Charge a big container of water, or if using a rain barrel just take the top off, and let the light and energy of a big, round, fertile Full Moon charge your

water. If you use a watering can, draw one of the runes we talked about or your favorite fertility symbol on your watering can, for an extra little punch of energy.



5. Of Bats and Broomsticks No matter how much you baby and care for your plants, inevitably you will be introduced to something you wish you'd never met. Prevention is the best route by far If you have the room and someone who can help you, erect a bat house. There is lots of information on the web about bat houses, or visit your local building supply store. Every night a single bat eats more than 600 insects. Something a little less obvious and more fun is a hummingbird feeder. I usually have 3 or 4 up all summer and everyone loves watching them – especially my “window” kitties. Hummingbirds also chow down on insects. You can also plant hot peppers, radishes and marigolds in your garden as they are known to keep insects away. Remember, good bugs eat bad bugs, so grow black-eyed susan, yarrow, sunflowers, and lavender to invite the good bugs into your garden. It's not just the bugs that can cause a plant not to perform, sometimes they just need a little “stimulation” to remind it what Mother had in mind for them. A great example is the lilac tree or bush. Many lilacs perform beautifully their whole entire lives with no coxing at all. Others however, are just plain lazy and need a good talking to. The best thing to do is to get your favorite broom stick (and I would suggest doing this during dark of moon, so the neighbors don't see) and beat the tree. You'll be surprised by the beautiful blooms you'll have next season. A friend once ran over his lilac tree (by accident) and the next year he had wonderful blooms. I wouldn't suggest this, by the way. Baby plants or the more delicate plants that seem not to be performing the way you'd like may do well with a little aerating. Just use your spade or garden fork to gently stir up the soil around these plants. This is a good thing to do while weeding as well. Lastly, don't forget to fertilize. Although the wonderful combination of

topsoil, manure and peat will make your soil rich and fertile, you will still need to fertilize. Probably the best organic fertilizer is fish emulsion, readily available at most garden centers.

6. Harvesting ... the fruits of our labor. Yes, I have a Boline (aka boleens, bolleens, bollines), the traditional curved bladed knife used to harvest magickal herbs. However, I rarely use it. I find it awkward to handle and much prefer a sharp single edged knife. Some say your knife should have a white handle, so that you don't get it confused with your Athame. I believe it is more important that the knife feel right to you. Of course it should be consecrated and charged with your energy, as you would any magickal tool. Once you have need of a plant and it is ready to harvest, there are certain procedures to harvesting herbs for magickal purposes. You should always thank the plant for its sacrifice before harvesting. If you are planning on using the herb for magick, you should also thank it in advance for its help in doing your will. You should never harvest more than 1/3 of the plant; for new plants I think it best to stick to 1/4 or less. Lastly, you should always make an offering to the God and Goddess. This can be done each time you harvest, or at the end of the growing season. I like to bring some of my favorite herbs and flowers to the altar at Mabon as an offering to the God and Goddess.

One of the many joys of growing magickal herbs is that they last forever. I've been tending my sage for at least the past 20 years and he is still going strong. I hope this article has inspired you to plant a magickal garden, window box or planter. If not, just try going to the park, sit by yourself and feel the energy of the plants around you. I know you will soon be inspired. Remember the more you grow, the more you'll know – but that's another article! Brightest Blessings.

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Magic Squares

By Graham

When visiting my local library recently, I borrowed the book “*Amulets and Talismans for Beginners – How to Choose, Make & Use Magical Objects*” by Richard Webster. Upon reading this book, I was impressed because I found it to be much more comprehensive than the “beginner’s text” suggested by its title, and yet it presented its material in a way that was relatively easy to understand. Contained within its covers was a chapter on *Magic Squares* - which I had heard of before, mainly from their reputation as being interesting mathematical curiosities. But as I read Richard Webster’s book, I came to realize that magic squares have long been revered for much more than just this, through their relevance to a number of significant occult practices. With my interest aroused, I thought I’d do some more reading and researching on these fascinating numerological marvels, and this article is a summary of what I have discovered.

Magic squares have a long history. Perhaps their earliest origins stem from Chinese culture as far back as 5,000 years ago. Legend has it that the ancient sage-king *Fu Hsi* - China’s venerated First Emperor - discovered a 3x3 magic square in the markings on the back of a tortoise emerging from the river Lo during a major flood. Here is that famous *Lo Shu* magic square:

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

The Lo Shu magic square has the amazing property that each number in the range 1-9 appears only once in the square, and yet the numbers in every row, column and diagonal add up to the same number, 15. Magic squares can be larger, but all have the property that the numbers in each row, column and diagonal will add up to the same special “magic number” for that square. Sometimes, additional patterns of numbers can be found in a magic square that will add to a single value. For example, in the Lo Shu magic square, the outer odd (yang) numbers 1, 3, 9, 7 and outer even (yin) numbers 8, 4, 2, 6 both add up to 20. The Lo Shu magic square has played a fundamental role in the development of the I Ching (otherwise known as the Book of Changes), Feng Shui, Astrology and Numerology in Chinese culture. This is demonstrated by the various correspondences that exist between the eight outer numbers of the square and the eight trigrams (or Bagua) of the I Ching; the eight cardinal and inter-cardinal points of the compass used in Feng Shui; the annual seasons; the phases of day and night; and the endless cycles of birth, growth, decay, and death that have been studiously observed in Nature for millennia. The square’s central number 5 is considered to be particularly important in that it signifies balance, and is the number of elements (metal, water, wood, fire, earth) from which all things are comprised according to Chinese occult lore. The number 15 has links to the Chinese calendar, and is particularly auspicious with regard to the Chinese New Year, where it is the number of days over which these important festivities are celebrated. Before leaving the subject of Chinese culture, here are some more words on the enigmatic First Emperor, Fu Hsi – taken from the introduction to the translation of the *I Ching* by Rudolf Ritsema and Stephen Karcher: “Fu Hsi was the legendary First Emperor, a shaman, diviner, and magician. His rule represents the first Golden Age, when humans and spirits communicated freely. Fu Hsi contemplated the shapes of heaven, the patterns of the earth, bird and animal markings and the movements of his body and soul. Then he spontaneously brought forth the trigram figures of the I Ching. They were a way to organize the world and communicate with its spirits. Through this magical communication a constant influx of spirit kept the human world in order.” What a wonderful description of the origins of magical tradition in one of the world’s most ancient surviving cultures!

Many other cultures and individuals have been associated with magic squares over the years. These include the ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, Indian, Japanese, Arabian and Greek cultures; and famous individuals such as Albrecht Durer, Dr. John Dee, Benjamin Franklin and Aleister Crowley. An important occult tradition that features the use of magic squares is Hebrew Qabbalism (alternatively called Kabbalism), which we will now consider.

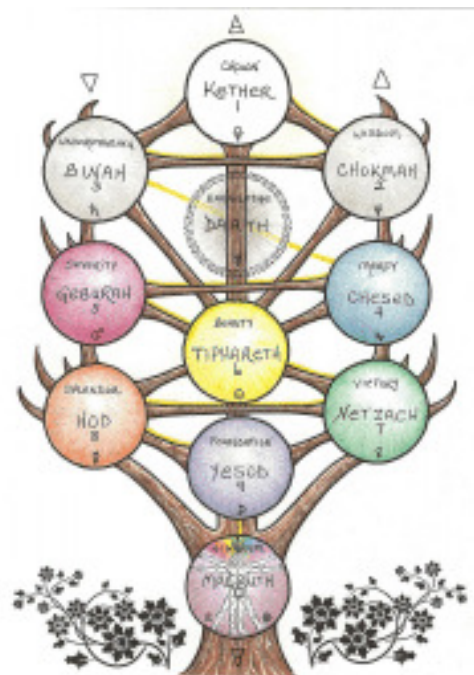


The magic square from Albrecht Durer's famous engraving Melancholia. The year of its creation, 1514, appears in the centre cells of the bottom row of the square.

According to the source by Manly P. Hall "Hebrew theology was divided into three parts. The first was *the law*, the second was *the soul of the law*, and the third was *the soul of the soul of the law*. The law was taught to all the children of Israel; the *Mishna*, or soul of the law, was revealed to Rabbins and teachers; but the *Qabbalah*, the soul of the soul of the law, was cunningly concealed, and only the highest initiates among the Jews were instructed in its secret principles." Hall continues to say that the Qabbalah was thought to have been delivered to man, through Moses from God, so that "through the aid of its abstruse principles, he might learn to understand the mystery of both the universe about him and the universe within him." Hall also states "... without the key which the Qabbalah supplies, the spiritual mysteries of both the Old and the New Testament must remain unsolved by Jew and Gentile alike." Hence, there is much that can be gained from the study of this ancient mystical tradition, which, not surprisingly, underlies much of Western Magical practice.

A cornerstone of Qabbalism is the *Tree of Life* - a sacred geometrical arrangement of *sephiroth* (or spheres - each representing an "aspect of the divine") and the paths between, which, when combined, represent all aspects of life and spirituality. An in-depth discussion of the fascinating and powerful teachings associated with this iconic symbol of Hebrew mysticism would be very interesting, but unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this article. My aim here is to merely introduce some fundamental definitions, so that light may be shed on the basis for an association that exists between certain magic squares and the astrological planets.

Referring to the Thelemapedia (<http://www.thelemapedia.org/>), each *sephira* (or sphere) in the Tree of Life has an astrological planetary association: Kether (Crown) – Pluto, Chokmah (Wisdom) – Neptune, Binah (Understanding) – Saturn, Chesed (Mercy) – Jupiter, Geburah (Strength) – Mars, Tiphareth (Beauty) – Sun, Netzach (Victory) – Venus, Hod (Splendor) – Mercury, Yesod (Foundation) – Moon, Malkuth (Kingdom) – Earth, Daath (Knowledge) – Uranus. According to tradition, certain magic squares correspond to each of the sephiroth from Binah to Yesod. Hence, these same magic squares will also share a correspondence with the seven planets associated with these sephiroth. For example, it turns out that the same 3x3 magic square discovered on the back of a tortoise by Fu Hsi, corresponds to the third sephira Binah, and therefore the planet Saturn. A 4x4 magic square corresponds to the fourth sephira Chesed, and the planet Jupiter; and so on up to a 9x9 magic square that corresponds to the ninth sephira Yesod, and the Moon. These magic squares are shown at the end of this article, and also appear in the source *Llewellyn's 2007 Magical Almanac* - where they are discussed in the section titled *Sigils & Signs* by Sorita D'Este.



The Tree of Life © Patricia J. Martin

In Western or Hermetic Magic (e.g. see the source by Melville), it is believed that a magic square (referred to as a *kamea* by Qabbalists) can be used as the basis for constructing a talisman, which will enhance an aspect of

one's life by influencing energies associated with the kamea's corresponding planet. The simplest approach you can take to doing this is to draw the kamea on paper or inscribe it on metal, consecrate it, and then wear or otherwise use it in an appropriate manner (e.g. placing it somewhere where it will have good influence). For best results, the talisman should be constructed so that it has features that are consistent with the relevant correspondences. For example, if using the 3x3 Saturn kamea, the talisman could be made of lead, be of triangular shape, be 3 units in size, and be colored black or purple. The inscribing and later consecration of the talisman should be done on the correct day and at the correct time with regard to planetary hours - which are determined by the time of sunrise and sunset on the relevant day. For more information on this, please see the following website: <http://www.ladybridget.com/w/scplanet.html> Regarding the consecration of the talisman to empower it for its purpose, methods for doing this vary widely, but a simple approach that could be used is to visualize the talisman's intended use while holding it in the incense smoke of a herb or herbs that have the proper planetary correspondence – something that can be checked by using tables such as those found from page 225 onwards in the source by Scott Cunningham.

Later in this article we will consider more subtle and personalized approaches to designing kamea-based talismans by harnessing the power of seals and sigils. But before moving on to this and other topics, I would first like to briefly say something about the Qabbalistic perspective on astrology that I find quite interesting. To conduct a natal analysis which is based on a person's birth details, rather than using a horoscope chart to consider the purely geometrical/angular relationships between astrological entities for interpretations, The Tree of Life is instead used as follows: For the time and location of birth, the zodiac sign of the Ascendant is placed at Malkuth; and the zodiac signs of the planets are placed according to the correspondences listed above – i.e. the Moon-sign at Yesod, Mercury-sign at Hod, Venus-sign at Netzach, Sun-sign at Tiphareth,... all the way up the tree to the Pluto-sign at Kether. Each sephira and interconnecting path is then examined to assess the astrological influences on the individual. I personally find this alternative approach enlightening, because it conducts the analysis from within a broad spiritual framework, rather than from what appears to be a purely geometrical chart-based perspective.

Not surprisingly, making magic squares (especially large ones) is a difficult task, and the fact that many large magic squares were discovered long before the advent of computers makes this feat seem even more remarkable and magical! In modern times, computer methods have been developed to automatically generate magic squares (e.g. see: <http://www.grogono.com/magic/>). However, a simple way to make your own personal 4x4 magic square with little more than a pencil and paper is described in Richard Webster's book. To show how to do this, let's take the example of a magic square based on a birth date, assumed to be the 15 October 1956. Then the first row of the magic square would be the four numbers 15 10 19 56. Once this is done, there is a formula that enables you to construct the rest of the magic square:

A	B	C	D
C-2	D+2	A-2	B+2
D+1	C+1	B-1	A-1
B+1	A-3	D+3	C-1

To use this formula for the example given, as A=15, B=10, C=19, D=56, then the second row will be C-2=17, D+2=58, A-2=13, B+2=12, and so on. So the personal magic square will be:

All the rows, columns and diagonals of this magic square add up to 100, the magic number for the square. Note that when using the above formula, it is possible to get zeros and negative numbers in your magic square, but this will not affect the fact that all rows, columns and diagonals will add up equally. However, if you don't like this, you can eliminate the zeros and negative numbers by just adding 3 (or in fact any other number larger than 3 that you like) to all numbers in the magic square; and the rows, columns and diagonals will still add up equally. Also remember that you are free to choose any numbers A to D that you like, not necessarily numbers relating to your birthday. For example, they might be another special date, or your favorite numbers, or numbers selected so that the rows and columns add up to a particular magic number of your choosing.

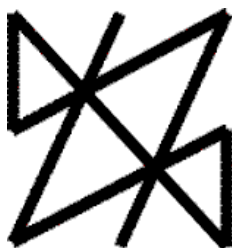
15	10	19	56
17	58	13	12
57	20	9	14
11	12	59	18

Magical seals and sigils are two ways to conceal and further personalize your magic square when making a talisman. A magical seal is created when every number in the magic square is joined by a line in the order smallest to largest – kind of like “connecting the dots”. The seal will contain the essence of the magic square and can be used instead of it, for example if secrecy is desired. Shown is the seal for the Lo Shu (Saturn) magic square. A personalized expression can be obtained by using the magic square to create a sigil. This is done by connecting the numbers that correspond to the letters of a word or short sentence of your choosing (e.g. your name). Often the Pythagorean system of numerology is used to generate numbers that correspond to the letters in words:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

Pythagorean table for matching letters and numbers

As an example, consider the name *GRAHAM*. From the Pythagorean table, the corresponding number sequence is 791814. Connecting these numbers in order from 7 onwards, as they appear in the 3x3 Lo Shu (Saturn) magic square, results in the sigil shown.



Seal for the Lo Shu (Saturn) magic square



Sigil for GRAHAM using the Lo Shu (Saturn) magic square

Other options may be taken to produce a sigil to apply to your talisman. For example, suppose that you would like to construct a talisman that will encourage love to enter your life. Then you could use the 7x7 Venus magic square to generate a sigil from the short sentence “Bring me love”, which will have the number sequence 29957453645. In the same manner as described earlier, the power of this talisman will be enhanced by making its features consistent with the relevant correspondences e.g. making it of copper, seven-sided, 7 units in size, and colored rose or emerald. There are endless options that may be taken for using this fascinating and powerful process to create your own personalized talismans.

Magic squares can also be made of letters, with one of the most famous examples being the so-called Sator Arepo magic square, which has been found at a number of Roman sites, including Cirencester in England, and Pompeii. Quoting from Richard Webster’s book “The exact meaning of the words ‘sator arepo’ has been disputed, but it is generally considered to read ‘Sator, the sower, holds the wheels by his work’. It is still frequently used as a protective talisman (and also as an amulet to protect the wearer from the evil eye).” Here is the Sator Arepo square:

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

In this article, I hope that I have managed to shed some light on magic squares – their origins, varieties and uses - and in doing so further kindled your interest (as mine has been in preparing this article) in the wonders of magic. Regarding the interpretation and application of the material presented here, please apply your own

flavor to this – to which I say, if you have faith in your own methods, then they will be the right ones for you, and they will work accordingly.

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The 7 magic planetary squares associated with the Tree of Life.

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Saturn kamea

4	14	15	1
9	7	6	12
5	11	10	8
16	2	3	13

Jupiter kamea

11	24	7	20	3
4	12	25	8	16
17	5	13	21	9
10	18	1	14	22
23	6	19	2	15

Mars kamea

6	32	3	34	35	1
7	11	27	28	8	30
19	14	16	15	23	24
18	20	22	21	17	13
25	29	10	9	26	12
36	5	33	4	2	31

Sun kamea

22	47	16	41	10	35	4
5	23	48	17	42	11	29
30	6	24	49	18	36	12
13	31	7	25	43	19	37
38	14	32	1	26	44	20
21	39	8	33	2	27	45
46	15	40	9	34	3	28

Venus kamea

8	58	59	5	4	62	63	1
49	15	14	52	53	11	10	56
41	23	22	44	45	19	18	48
32	34	35	29	28	38	39	25
40	26	27	37	36	30	31	33
17	47	46	20	21	43	42	24
9	55	54	12	13	51	50	16
64	2	3	61	60	6	7	57

Mercury kamea

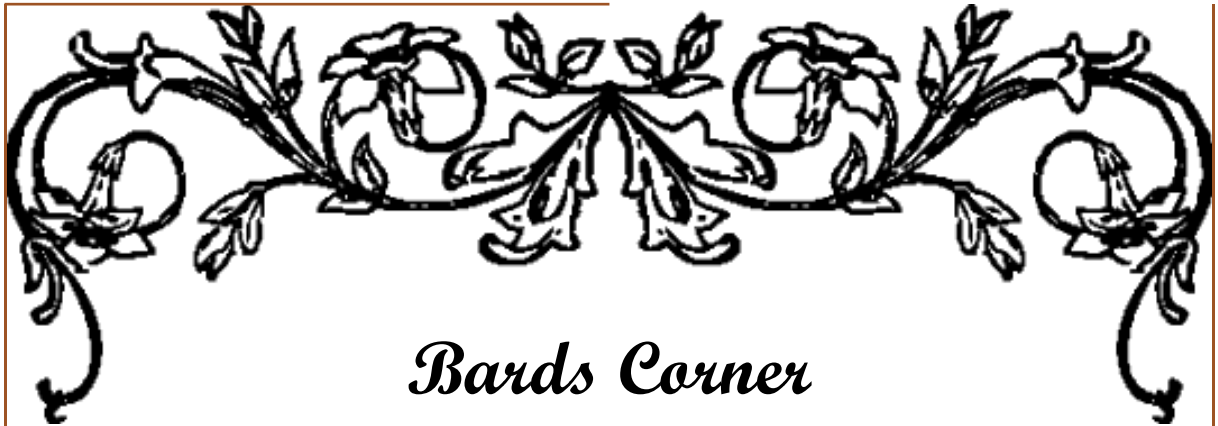
37	78	29	70	21	62	13	54	5
6	38	79	30	71	22	63	14	46
47	7	39	80	31	72	23	55	15
16	48	8	40	81	32	64	24	56
57	17	49	9	41	73	33	65	25
26	58	18	50	1	42	74	34	66
67	27	59	10	51	2	43	75	35
36	68	19	60	11	52	3	44	76
77	28	69	20	61	12	53	4	45

Moon kamea

"[it] is the most magically magical of any magic square ever made by any magician."
Benjamin Franklin - regarding his amazing 16x16 Magic Square

© Graham D. Furnell – 1 March 2010.

Graham lives in South Australia and is a student of Wicca. He has been a member of EW since 2006.



Bards Corner



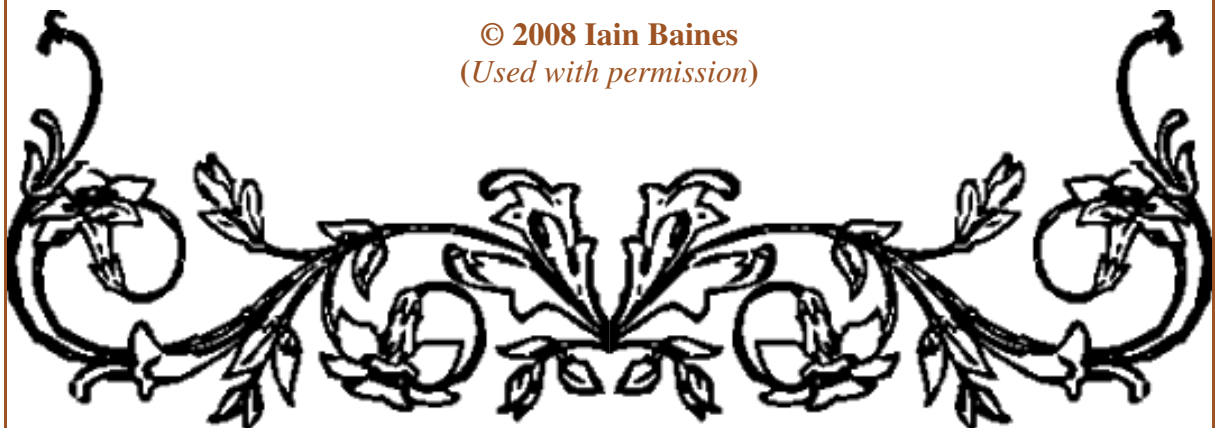
The Robin

*On the fence post,
I shall sit,
Watching as the humans flit,
Around the town,
On this busy morn,
A sight so familiar,
Of each new dawn,
Some in vehicles,
Some on foot,
Others on bicycles,
Breathing in that soot....*

*Slow yourselves down,
Allow more haste,
Prevent our kingdom,
From turning to waste,
Be so proud,
As to where you live,
Be the one,
That's willing to give....*



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Iain is a self-published author of a book of poems called: "A White Feather, A Life in Verse"
Iain is a member of Email Witches.

Divination Depot

Mirror Gazing (Scrying)

Written and compiled by George Knowles

Since time began, man has been fascinated by his reflected image as seen in the still waters of woodland lakes, pools and rivers. Among primitive peoples superstition was rife, and seeing their image reflected in water may have been like catching a glimpse of their souls, for it was widely believed that the soul existed separate from the body. Others may have found themselves gazing through a portal into the spirit realm, there communicating with departed loved ones or gaining insights into future events. However, these same woodland lakes and pools were also known haunts of fairy folks and nature spirits, sometimes friendly, but sometimes hostile, and likely to snatch at human reflection to capture the souls of the unwary. Little wonder then that anything reflecting images was regarded as magical.



The Mirror of Venus by Burne-Jones

Ancient prophets, soothsayers and oracles initially used bowls filled with water in which to scry and divine answers to questions about past, present and future events. Later, highly polished stones such as beryl, crystal and quartz were used for similar purposes. The first man-made mirrors used in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome were commonly made of sheeted metal (pewter, copper, tin, bronze or silver etc.) and flattened into rounded disks to which handles were applied. Some had decorative designs inscribed on the back, but the face would have been highly polished and reflective.



Early Egyptian and Etruscan hand-held mirrors

In the Middle Ages when it became possible to make glass, crude hand held glass mirrors were made backed with thin layers of metal such as tin and lead. Later during the 16th century, better quality mirrors were produced in Murano, Venice (Italy), the backs of which were covered with an amalgam of tin and mercury (normally 75% tin to 25% mercury). In 1836 a German chemist called 'Justus von Liebig' developed the process of coating a glass surface with metallic silver, a process that is still used today. By the end of the 17th century plate glass was developed, and the use of large stationary mirrors became commonplace household features.

Legends, Myths and Folklore

Dr. John Dee (1527 – 1608)

Dr. John Dee was a famous Alchemist, Mathematician, Astronomer; he was also an advisor to Queen Elizabeth I on matters pertaining to science and astrology, as such, he was commonly referred to as “the last royal magician”. A serious academic, some thought him to be the most learned man in the whole of Europe. He was fascinated by all things occult, and was an adept in Hermetic and Cabbalistic philosophy. Dee had a particular interest in divination, and spent much of his later life experimenting with different methods in his efforts to communicate with Angels. From 1583 onward, Dee worked with Edward Kelly using both a black obsidian mirror and a crystal ball to see visions of ‘Angels’. Allegedly they communicated by pointing to squares containing letters and symbols that Dee had transcribed.

This is the mirror together with a small smoky quartz crystal ball used by Dee and Kelly for their occult research. These are now on display at the British Museum in London. The mirror is made of highly polished obsidian (volcanic glass) and was one of many objects brought back to Europe after the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish conquistador Hernán (Ferdinand) Cortés. Obsidian was sacred to Tezcatlipoca, the Aztec “Sky God” associated with Kings, Warriors and Sorcerers, and whose name can be translated as “Smoking Mirror”. The Aztec priests used mirrors for divination and conjuring up visions.



John Dee's black obsidian mirror and crystal ball

The case along side it was especially made to fit the mirror, it has a paper label written by the English antiquary Sir Horace Walpole who acquired the mirror in 1771 stating: “*The Black Stone into which Dr Dee used to call his spirits...*” and added later: “*Kelly was Dr Dee's associate and is mentioned with this very stone in “Hudibras” (a satirical poem by Samuel Butler, first published in 1664) Part 2. Canto 3 v. 631. Kelly did all his feats upon The Devil's Looking glass, a Stone*”.

Archimedes

In one of the many legends of Greece, the mathematician Archimedes (287-212 BC) invented giant mirrors that were used to reflect the rays of the Sun onto Roman warships during the battle of Syracuse in 212 B.C.

“At last in an incredible manner he (Archimedes) burned up the whole Roman fleet. For by tilting a kind of mirror toward the sun he concentrated the sun's beam upon it; and owing to the thickness and smoothness of the mirror he ignited the air from this beam and kindled a great flame, the whole of which he directed upon the ships that lay at anchor in the path of the fire, until he consumed them all.”



Wall painting from the Stanzino delle Matematiche in the Galleria degli Uffizi (Florence, Italy). Painted by Giulio Parigi - 1599-1600.

(The above description is from Dio's Roman History - Translated by Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1914)

Narcissus

In Greek mythology Narcissus was a handsome young man whose beautiful good looks claimed the love of all the women who met him, but he continually rejected their advances. One day while hunting in the woods he came upon a clear pool of water and stopped to take a drink from it. Mirrors were almost unknown in those

times, but when he bent down to drink from the water, he saw what he thought was another young man. Amazingly the young man seems to be alive and responding, for when Narcissus smiled, so did he. The young man was so incredibly beautiful that Narcissus immediately fell in love with him, but when he bent forward to kiss him, just when their lips should have touched, the young man's image blurred and rippled and all he got was a mouthful of water.

Eventually Narcissus realised it was his own reflection in the water, but he could not bear to pull himself away. As he continued to gaze longingly at himself, he gradually pined away and died. At the place where his body had lain now grows a beautiful flower, a Narcissus, nodding its head over its own reflection in a pool.



Narcissus by John William Waterhouse

Perseus and Medusa of the Gorgons

In Greek mythology, the Gorgons (daughters of the sea god Phorcys and his wife Ceto) were three monstrous sisters called: Stheno, Euryale and Medusa. They were dragon-like creatures covered with scales, had wings, claws, enormous teeth and snakes replicating hair. They lived on the farthest side of the western ocean, shunned and feared because a single direct glance at one of them could turn a person to stone. Of the three, only Medusa was mortal and could be killed, a feat that was achieved by the hero Perseus (son of Zeus).

Perseus, with the aid of a sword given to him by Hermes and a highly polished shield given to him by Athena, by watching Medusa's reflection in the shield, was able to cut off her head without directly looking at her. The severed head, however, still had the power to turn a person into stone if it was looked upon. Legend has it that Perseus gave the severed head to Athena who used it to turn Atlas into stone. This stone became known as the Atlas Mountains that now hold up the heaven and earth.

Other legends about mirrors and scrying include the Goddess Hathor, who carried a shield that could reflect back all things in their true light. Nostradamus is believed to have used a small bowl of water as a scrying tool into which he gazed and received images of future events. And who can forget the magic mirror featured in the Disney folktale classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, when the wicked Queen immortalized the question "Magic Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?"

Making a Scrying Mirror

All types and sizes of mirrors can be used for scrying, but commonly round or oval mirrors seem to be preferred. Old mirrors seem to work better than new mirrors, and more particularly those encased in a silver frame. Silver is generally associated with the moon, and while scrying can be practised at any time, best results are often gained in the quiet of night during a full or new moon.

Many people find it easier to scry using a black or obsidian mirror, the dark depth of a black mirror being more conducive to inducing visions. Obsidian is a black or dark-coloured volcanic lava rock, chemically similar to granite, but formed by cooling rapidly on the Earth's surface at low pressure. The glassy texture of the rock is the result of its rapid cooling, which inhibits the growth of crystals.



*Medusa painted by Caravaggio
1596-1597*



Black obsidian lava

Obsidian was highly valued by the early civilizations of Mexico, who used it for making sharp-edged tools, ritual and ceremonial sculptures, and polished mirrors similar to the one owned by Dr. John Dee above. Sadly, the ancient method of mining, grinding and smoothing obsidian into reflective mirrors was a long and drawn-out process, and so true obsidian mirrors, particularly old ones, are now quite expensive. However, given modern techniques and the demand created in the contemporary market, new obsidian mirrors can be obtained from most modern occult shops who stock them in a range of sizes at competitive prices.

An alternative to using obsidian is to make your own 'black' mirror. If you have an old silver picture frame lying around the home, simply take out the glass, clean it being careful to remove any marks, finger prints or blemishes, then paint the back of it black. Matt black paint tends to work better than gloss paint, as does black enamel or car spray paint. You may need to give the glass a few coats of paint to cover it properly, but allow each coat to dry thoroughly before adding the next. Also try to leave a smooth finish without streaks or runs.

Another good idea is to use the curved glass face of an old clock and paint the convex side black; you will of course need to make a suitable frame to mount it on. Antique shops are a good source for old clocks, and who knows, you could also find an antique silver frame on which to mount it. Frames can be as plain or as ornate as you like; you may even wish to personalise or decorate it with meaningful stones, gems or sigils. Remember the mirror will also need some method of standing-up on your altar or table, ideally at a shallow or adjustable angle. Some picture frames have a leg on the back for this purpose, or alternatively you could use a display stand similar to those used for collector plates.

Before using your mirror, as with all magickal tools, it needs to be cleansed of all previous associations and negative energies, then dedicated and charged with your own energy. It is up to you how simple or elaborate you wish to make this process, but most people do it inside a properly consecrated circle. Once your circle is formed and quarters called, a simple dedication might go something like this:

"Into this sacred space I bring this mirror, here to be cleansed and dedicated to my service". Face each direction in turn and call on its associated element with these or similar words (start with North - Earth): "By the spirits of the North and the powers of the Earth, I purify and dedicate this mirror" (repeat the same with the other directions: East - Air, South - Fire, and West - Water). Next you may wish to call whatever deities you are working with for their blessing, saying: Goddess/God (or deity names), bless this mirror, let it be a tool I use for positive purposes. Guard and watch over the works that come from it, and ensure no harm can ever be caused by it. In thy name Goddess/God I dedicate this mirror to my service. So Mote It Be!"

Mirror Gazing (Scrying)

The art of mirror gazing (scrying) is called Catoptromancy, a term that refers to the use of reflective surfaces for the purposes of divination. Scrying mirrors can be used to make contact with spirit guides, to access knowledge for healing and self-improvement, or to define the past, predict the present, and perceive the future. As a portal into other realms, it can also be used to aid astral travel, and during ritual to communicate with deity.



Here's an old mirror and stand I found at a car boot sale recently.



A new black obsidian mirror slate, purchased from an occult store in Glastonbury.



Disassembled and collected bits and pieces needed to transform and create a magick mirror

Scrying can be practised at any time, but best results are often gained in the quiet of night after the hustle and bustle of the day's activities. It is not necessary to construct a fully consecrated circle for scrying; it is enough to simply create your sacred space by visualizing a circle of white light surrounding and purifying the appointed working area. In a quiet darkened room, place your mirror on a table or altar with a dark cloth beneath it. Light a candle, one on each side of the mirror, but in such a position they don't reflect on the mirror's surface, and if you wish, burn an appropriate blend of incense to stimulate the psychic senses. Switch off all other light sources except for the two candles, and seat yourself comfortably in front of the mirror. Take a few minutes to relax while you tune into the atmosphere created. When ready to start, first ground and centre yourself then call your guides or guardians to protect the work from unwanted or misleading influences.

To begin, when looking at the mirror try not to just stare at it, but look through its surface as if gazing into a dark and endless tunnel. After awhile, images and colours will begin to take form, they may even appear and take shape outside the mirror surrounding it on all sides. When you first start scrying be patient, keeping your first sessions to about 10 - 30 minutes, and gradually work it up to hour-long sessions as you learn. The art of scrying is interpreting what you see in the images and colours as they take form. This in a way it is a little like dream interpretation, and initially you may wish to consult one of the many books on the subject to help define the images you see. At the end of the day however, the real interpretation will be what those images mean to you personally.

After you have completed your scrying session, re-ground yourself and close your sacred space. You may wish to keep a journal and note down any visions you received during your session and later compare them with a list of dream interpretations. The more you practice, the more familiar the images and their meanings will become, but you may need to meditate on them for awhile to reveal any hidden meanings.

In conclusion, there are many differing ways and methods of scrying in addition to the one above, so it pays to experiment and use what works best for you. Whatever tool or method you use, be it your own personalized mirror, a crystal ball, or simply a bowl of coloured water; it can with time and patience become a font of wisdom and knowledge. As Ostara, the Spring Equinox approaches, a time of fresh beginnings, who knows what future truths can be divined??? Believe in your abilities and may you find what you seek.



Having rubbed down the mirror frame with fine sandpaper and sprayed it with black satin paint, I decided to decorate the boarder with appropriate directional and elemental stones. North is Malachite representing Earth, East is Citrine representing Air, South is Tigers Eye representing Fire, and West is Lapis Lazuli representing Water.



Replacing the silver backed mirror glass into the frame, I then centralised and bonded the black obsidian slate to it leaving a silver rim around the black mirror.



March Ostara Rune

By Runeman



Algiz

Although it is not an ominous rune by nature, it does suggest that this next month we safeguard ourselves and others.

It would be foolish to ignore the forces which affect our lives negatively; whether they are intentional or accidental. As such, ALGIZ points to our need for protection.

This guardianship should extend beyond ourselves and move toward others, we are bound to protect others as seen in last month's rune reading of kinship and family ties.

Such protection may take the form of securing a job recently had, or grade point averages for school. Beyond mundane means, we secure ourselves from personal doubts; and although we are flawed at times, it is best to remove one's self from such thinking which does not serve any higher purpose.

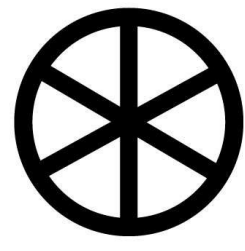
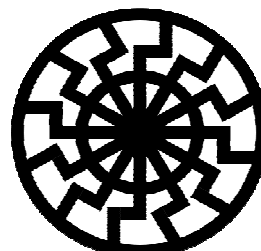
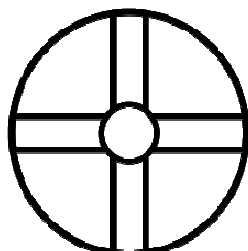
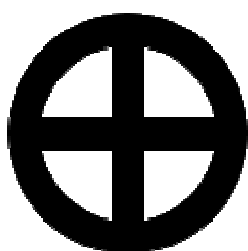
Algiz is considered the ultimate form of protection as it shields us; although does not close us from new experiences and the world around us. Bear with you the confidence and trust of a person well protected, rely on yourself to stride through next month knowing that you have secured your present standing and are better equipped to handle the upcoming future.

Rune Reading by: Diancécht Óndulfr Pálsson - aka Rune Man

Rune Man has been a member of Email Witches since the 17th Aug 2009

The Sun Wheel

Sun Worship was a practice employed by many old world cultures who considered the Sun to be a powerful deity. Even after the rise of Christianity, Sun worship persisted and is still evident by its disguised survival in such traditional Christian practices as the Easter bonfire and the Yule log at Christmas. Many ancient symbols of the Sun can be found around the world, mainly represented by a wheel.



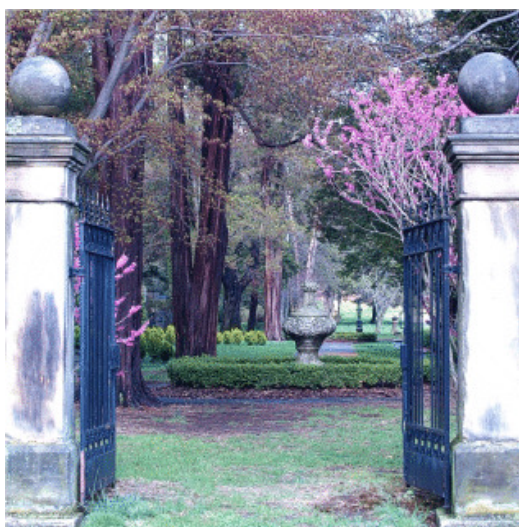
Nature's Glory
Pics from our Members



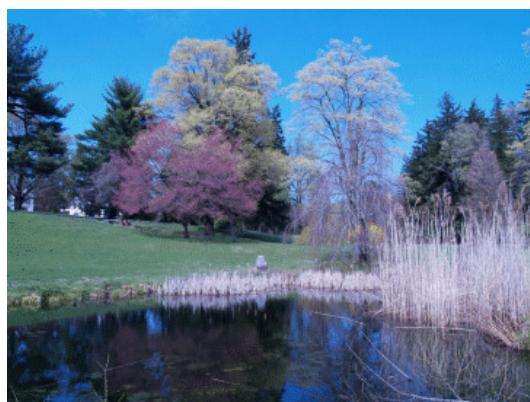
Mistletoe by Martin Cox



Spring Peeper © Patricia J. Martin



Gateway to Spring © Patricia J. Martin



Ringwood Manor © Patricia J. Martin



Snowdrops by Martin Cox



Daffodil Boy by © Patricia J. Martin



Witch Hazel by Martin Cox

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



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*May (Beltane)
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Crescent Moon in Australia by Graham



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