



The Controversial Cauldron

Litha - The Summer Solstice 2010

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Best Wishes

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Solstice Sunrise at Stonehenge 2005



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Group Information:

Members: 746

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

Litha - The Summer Solstice

Written and compiled by George Knowles

Welcome to the Litha issue of the Controversial Cauldron as once again we celebrate the Summer Solstice. Litha is one of the lesser Sabbats of the Witches' annual calendar, and in the Northern Hemisphere is celebrated on the 21st of June. The equivalent Sabbat in the southern hemisphere is Yule. Depending on location, Litha is known by a variety of names: Alban Hefin, Alben Heruin, All-couples day, Feill-Sheathain, Feast of Epona, Gathering Day, Johannistag, St. John's Day, Sonnwend, Thing-Tide, Vestalia, Whitsuntide or Whit Sunday.

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

In the mythology of the Sabbats, the God at this time is in his prime and the Sun is at its strongest, the Goddess is pregnant of the God and her fertility is reflected in nature. As the powers of nature reach their highest point, so its bounty will soon be ripe for the next harvest. After the hard work of the planting season and before we reap its rewards, Litha celebrates the life giving energy of the Sun while all the riches of nature are in full bloom.

The Litha celebrations are normally boisterous communal affairs with Morris dancing, singing, storytelling and feasting. It is also a favoured time for pagan handfasting and weddings, when couples having met and danced at Beltane, now join hands and jump the broom to ensure a long and happy future together.

With the Sun at its peak and with nature in full bloom, it is customary at Litha to collect and store magical and medicinal plants and herbs for use throughout the year. Tradition dictates that divining rods and wands cut at midnight on the eve of the Solstice are much more powerful, while plants and herbs are equally efficacious. Many of the herbs collected at this time can later be used to protect the family from disease and ill health, and to ward off negative or other unwanted influences.

As with many festivals in tribute to the Sun, bonfires played an important part in the celebrations of Litha. These served the double purpose of providing light for the evening revellers and warding off evil spirits. In addition to the bonfire, giant effigies of the Wicker Man would be paraded through the village and later burnt on the bonfire in a symbolic sacrifice to the Sun. Another custom was to roll a flaming cart wheel down a hill, which was imitative of the Sun's course through the sky. On its way down the hill, if the fire went out they could expect a bad harvest, but if the fire remained lit, the year would be blessed with abundant crops.

Many believed that the Litha fires possessed great power, and by jumping through its flames it would bring prosperity and protection for the coming year. The charred remains of the fire would later be used to create charms against injury, bad luck and bad weather. After the embers had cooled, farmers would drive their cattle through the ashes to purge them of disease and illness, and what remained would be spread around fields and orchards to protect their crops.

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

Finally in the mythology of the Sabbats, Litha symbolizes the end of the reign of the Oak-King. As the sun nears its peak at the Summer Solstice (represented by the Oak King) and begins its decline back to Winter (represented by the Holly-King), the two do battle. At this time the Oak-King is defeated by the Holly-King who then rules over the second half of the year until they meet again and do battle at the Winter Solstice. This in essence is an enactment of the annual cycle of life, growth and death in nature. The Oak King is the growing youth who reaches his peak at the Summer Solstice, while the Holly King is the mature man whose life declines with the dying Sun.

May 2010 © George Knowles

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Litha Ritual, 2010

By Crone

As at Beltane, the altar should be bright and colorful, as should you. Place flowers on the altar and wear them in your hair. Dress the altar in your usual tools and adornments, and be sure to include a small cauldron, burning charcoal and bits of wood. Have a small bowl of loose seeds of any type close at hand.

Ground and center with these words:

*This longest day is a source of joy.
Its brightness and warmth I shall employ.*

Cast the Circle with a wand, athame, or stalk of flowers:

*The Wheel moves on from dusk to dawn.
Now I know I shall reap what I sew.*

Invoke Directions:

*From the East comes wind, cool and clear.
Be with me here today.
Come spirit with thoughts and words so near.
In this Circle stay.*

*The South brings fire to the summer sky,
Be with me here today
Come spirit with passion riding high
In this Circle stay.*

*From the West come fog and mist and rain
Be with me here today
Emotions shall be felt again
In this Circle stay.*

*Beneath my feet is the soil of Earth,
Be with me here today
North, nurturing, our place of birth
In this Circle stay.*

Invoke Deities:

*Isis, Istarte, Diana,
Hecatate, Demeter, Kali, Inanna
Be with me today.
Isis, Istarte, Diana,
Hecatate, Demeter, Kali, Inanna
I hear what you say.
Isis, Istarte, Diana,
Hecatate, Demeter, Kali, Inanna
Share joy in every way.*

*Pan, Poseidon, Dionisius, Apollo
Be with me today.
Pan, Poseidon, Dionisius, Apollo
I hear what you say.
Pan, Poseidon, Dionisius, Apollo
Share joy in every way.*

Pronouncement:

*In the middle of summer
On this day of great length
I stand in my Circle
With joy and with strength!*

Magickal Working:

Stir your cauldron to create flames. Take the bowl of seeds in hand, and slowly cast three small handfuls of seeds into the flame.

With the first handful say: *Prosperity!*

With the next say: *Protection!*

With the third say: *A bountiful harvest of my dreams!*

Pause as you watch the flames turn to smoldering embers, meditating on your dreams, and the prosperity and protection you seek. See them coming to you. When you are ready, chant joyously:

*God and Goddess, now I see
Your loving blessings come to me!*

Dismiss Directions and Deities:

*Thank you North for your presence here.
Stay if you will, go if you must.
May there be peace between us.*

*Thank you West for your presence here.
Stay if you will, go if you must.
May there be peace between us.*

*Thank you South for your presence here.
Stay if you will, go if you must.
May there be peace between us.*

*Thank you East for your presence here.
Stay if you will, go if you must.
May there be peace between us.*

*Loving Goddess of this hour
You have helped me to empower
Myself for what I need.
I shall grow as from a seed.*

*Strong God of this special day
You have helped me find my way.
I celebrate the balanced sun,
And now my ritual is nearly done.*

*My thanks for your presence here today.
Go if you will. In my heart you will stay.*

*The Circle is open but unbroken.
May the peace of the Goddess
And the strength of the God
Go ever in my heart.*

Blessed be.

January 2010 © Darkhairedcrone

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

Legacy

The Midsummer Moment

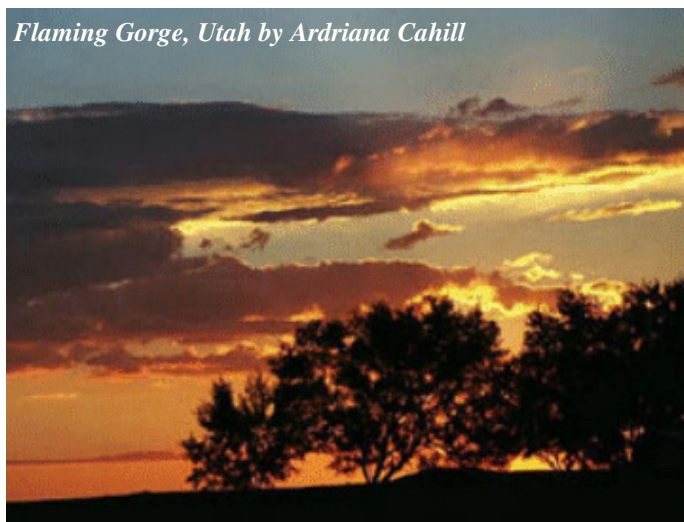
By Ardriana Cahill

*I'll tell you how the sun rose—
A ribbon at a time. ~Emily Dickinson*

In an ethereal closet at the back of my unconscious mind, I have a secret shelf where I put half-imagined dreams and fragmented thoughts. It is where I store the tidbits of wisdom I gather daily that do not seem to fit perfectly in my philosophy. It is where vague questions resided until I can put more substance to them, enough to form into a clear, strong examination of some fascinating subject.

And this place, where I store these seedling thoughts is a magickal place because sometimes, the natural gravity of seemingly dissimilar ideas and questions find their way to each other and connect. In that moment, like small explosions in my mind, time stops as I experience that still-point of epiphany, that moment of clarity or acute awareness. Mother called it a Midsummer moment - when the sun stands still in the sky. When these moments hit you it is as if you are watching from a great height.

Epiphany rarely comes as one truth, full blown, like manna from heaven, on a silver platter, a complete pristine thought. It usually comes when a dozen small elements come together to paint with eloquent precision the perfect conclusion.



Flaming Gorge, Utah by Ardriana Cahill

How I put myself in the way of those moments is by consciously seeking and placing these seedling thoughts and questions on that magickal shelf. I get a vague feeling that something obvious has less obvious meaning behind it. I keep this thought, tell myself to remember it. I know something about it, but don't understand all that I know. Perhaps my present knowledge and skills are not yet at a level to let me see the wisdom. So I do as I was taught, to practice a "wait and see" attitude about everything I learn. Time and maturity in the craft would reveal all. From experience, if I let knowledge sit for a while, like fermenting wine, it will mature and connect in ways my conscious mind might never see.

Basically this means, that I try to live in a state of heightened awareness. I am less conscious of my impact on those around me and more conscious of their impact on me. I listen for proverbs that might have a pagan meaning deeper in its history. I mentally catalog wives tales that seem silly on the surface but may have depths that I am blind to at this moment in my journey. I listen carefully to others who share their journey because I believe that everyone brings something to the table, even those I may disagree with or even dislike. There are lessons to learn and wisdom to discover from all directions.

My dear friend and Brother Witch, Wes (Graybeard) Sanders related a Taoist story on our Email Witches Yahoo group that I'd never heard before. It has been haunting me for days because I am sure that it has layered meanings. One of its meanings illustrates how we can be unaware of our surroundings because it is all we have ever known. The story goes, a mama and baby fish were swimming in the ocean when the baby fish asked, "Mama, what is water?" And the Mama fish answered, "I don't know. Let's go find out."

We deal with the same situations every day, the same people every day and we begin to sleepwalk through our days. It's work to slap yourself in the face every day and say, "Pay attention!" There are dozens of small wisdoms that touch you every day and once in a while, when the really important ones present themselves it feels like m-a-g-i-c-k. If you are not paying attention, you will miss them.

I have mastered that level of heightened awareness where I don't miss many of the offerings that nature, culture, people or experience puts on my path. I have consciously placed those things I don't fully understand on my secret shelf that sometimes takes several years or even decades to ferment, gravitate and combine into stunning epiphanies. I have experienced those Midsummer moments, that still-point of the sun many, many times.

My most powerful Midsummer moment I was told to never speak about, but it was so powerful a teaching experience I've had to, even if I do it in shrouded terms.

The first seed of this epiphany was planted in the mid-80s after one of my study sessions. My mentor, a Gardnerian High Priest brought up the topic of craft names. He said that traditionally a witch had three craft names: the public craft name that he was called outside the circle, the secret craft name he was called in circle and the sacred name that he was given by the gods. Since I never intended to be Gardnerian or in circle the information held little more than anecdotal importance for me but something told me to put that information on my secret shelf.



Key West, Florida by Ardriana Cahill

The second seed was planted in the late 90s at my initiation as a Kell of Brighid. My heritage is Irish on Mother's side and Welsh on Father's side. An early pattern began taking place of feminine wisdom being channeled to me from my Irish heritage and masculine wisdom coming from my Welsh heritage. I had visions and meditations where a warrior-lord had appeared but one whom would not identify himself. That Warrior god was at my initiation too - but the Lord and Lady played no part in the ritual, except as witness. My initiation was usurped by my female ancestors standing as the guardians of the cardinal directions.

The third seed was planted in a conversation twenty years later. On another yahoo list, I was speaking with a wise witch about the nature of the gods and how we related to them. Someone asked whether we thought of them as real. I said that I was unsure of their reality but that I was sure that they didn't need to be real to play an important part in my magickal journey. Then the wise witch said something profound to me. She said that she thought of the gods as family. Well, that made perfect sense to me because as an ancestor worshipper, I thought of my family as gods! I set that idea on my secret shelf and after some time came to the conclusion that by extension to the greater family of humankind, I might be related to all the gods. It meant that all the gods might have been human once, became noble, became heroes, and rose to greatness and spiritual enlightenment. The stories told about them became mythical and thus they became gods.

The fourth seed was planted in the early 2000s when my Warrior god appeared in a meditation. He was a very earthy and charming image. Wise and benevolent but obviously by the scars on his flesh, by the spear, sword and shield, he was not austere or aloof. He was nothing like the ethereal, blindingly white grandfatherly gods of Greek, Roman or Abrahamic imagery. Yet, he is obviously ancient, with a guardian/fatherly manner. Then he called me a name in a language I didn't understand. So I set the name on my secret shelf, hoping I would come across it again.

The fifth seed I sought out on purpose. I studied to find out what the language was and what the name meant. Maybe if I could do that I would get some idea about who my Warrior god was. Well the name was not one word it was two (with another implied) and it was Welsh. That made sense to me. Masculine wisdom came from my Welsh heritage. But when I discovered the meaning of the name I was completely crestfallen. Without telling you the actual name, it was, (how can I put this?) a name that is commonly overused in our modern community. It was something a 12 year old witchling would make up to impress her friends. Let's pretend it was something like, "My Charmed One." My reaction was...really? Charmed One!? You couldn't do better than "Charmed One?????" Sigh. I almost dismissed it completely as having no merit, but something told me to set it on my shelf. I did so, then forgot about it.

More than a year went by and I continued to seek who the Warrior god might be. I looked for Welsh hero myths. But then two years later, he appeared with a horned helmet and really screwed me up. I looked for Viking hero myths. The helmet reminded me of an Irish hero myth where Brian Boru wore one to scare his enemies. I've called him my Viking god, my Warrior god, my "Father" god, my nameless god. But nothing seemed to fit.

Several years more, the sixth and final seed of my greatest epiphany came unbidden. I did not seek it. I did not stumble upon it. I did not will it or conjure it or put myself in the way of it. It came to me under the pretense of a list member finding a website with no more importance than, "Hey this is kinda cool." I casually followed the link to a website where someone had mapped all the ancient tribal names of the Celtic people of Western Europe and translated them into English. What was cool was how Native American all the names sounded. For example, people who lived near a river were the River People or the Salmon People. I sought out the tribal name of the ancestors who lived in Ireland in the county where my Irish family lived. On the map, in that county were written the words, the "Charmed People." Well, not really, but it was the name that my Warrior god had called me. I suddenly knew exactly who he was. He was an Irish ancestor of some note, some myth, some heroism and one whom my family told stories about all my life.

Time stopped. I couldn't breathe for about five minutes. I could see in an instant the entire journey to my meeting and accepting this vision as my patron god. I cried. I shook my head and covered my gaping mouth. Then, I immediately tried to disprove the revelation. I thought the name might repeat in the names of other Celtic tribes like the "Charmed" River People or the "Charmed" Salmon People. But the fact was, it was used only for my people. No other Celts--not Irish, not Scots, not Bretons, Manx, Galls, Cornish, or Welsh even had a variation of this name. Only my people from that county in Ireland were called "Charmed."

My warrior god hid his identity from me until proof could come to me from outside my ability to imagine it or create a self-fulfilling prophesy. My disconnected, cast aside thoughts sat on my secret shelf and merged to inform me of a greater epiphany. The gods give us names, the gods are family, the name given is in a language I don't speak, it's a common witchly name that I don't like, and it's the family name of the people from my Irish home county.

My next meditation was stunning. I said "You could have just told me!!!" Then he laughed at me because had he simply told me who he was, I would have dismissed it as a not very original piece of imagination. My skeptical mind would accept again that the gods were useful psychological archetypes, whose energies we can still magically use through our knowledge of them. I believed that they didn't need to be real. I still believe that the gods need not be real. There was no way in heaven or on earth, mundane or magickal, that I could have guessed, forgotten, zenned or imagined my experience with my Warrior god.

My Midsummer moment of all time is, the gods are real.

Article © Ardriana Cahill - June 2010

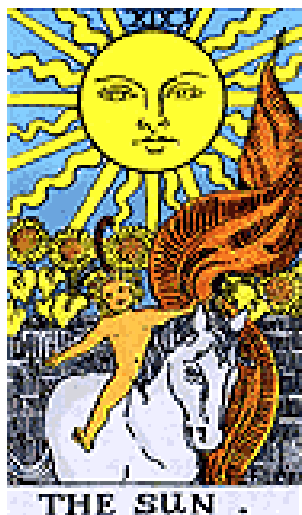
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Divination Depot

Tarot Cards

The cards featured in most Tarot card decks are pictorial, and are symbolic of natural forces intermixed with human virtues and vices. Readings are given by interpreting the meanings of each card as they relate to each other when dealt out in various combinations called spreads. Of the 78 cards in the Rider-Waite Tarot Deck, the Major Arcana (containing 22 cards) represent various characters, forces and virtues, and in readings refer to aspirational matters or other important factors in a person's life. The Minor Arcana consists of 56 cards, and these are divided into four suits of 14 cards each. Most commonly these are depicted as variants of Wands, Cups, Swords and Pentacles. In readings, Wands deal with business and career matters, Cups deal with love, Swords with conflict and Pentacles with money and material comforts.

In readings, the meaning of each card is modified according to its position in the spread and the meaning of adjacent cards. Cards can also indicate Positive and Negative influences. If a card is dealt upright, it has a positive meaning, but if it is dealt upside down, it has a negative meaning. As an example, and appropriate for this Summer Solstice issue of the newsletter, I have drawn "The Sun".



The Sun

Enlightenment, Greatness, Vitality and Assurance.

Description:

In this picture, the Sun shines down on a naked child riding a horse and carrying a bright red flag. Symbolically he looks to be full of confidence, joy and happiness.

When drawn in its positive aspect this card indicates: spiritual enlightenment, good news, confidence, material success and achievements, happy relationships, good health, fulfilment and vitality.

When drawn in its negative aspect it can mean: spiritual darkness, bad news and potential failure, loss of material success, delays, family troubles and misjudgement.

Here's hoping this Summer Solstice will be a positive one for all our members.

George Knowles

How to Make a Basic Didgeridoo

By Graham

"... Didgeridoo magic, got power on its own. When it speaks to you – you gotta listen!"

Bill Neidjie, Indigenous Australian Elder

The didgeridoo is a sacred musical wind instrument of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, known as Aboriginals. Archaeological analysis of aboriginal rock and cave paintings indicates that didgeridoos have been used for what may be as long as 2,000 years - though there are some who believe that their use extends far back beyond that time frame. Traditionally, didgeridoos are made from the termite-hollowed trunks of various hardwoods of the eucalypt variety, which thrive in the northern regions of, and indeed throughout, Australia. Didgeridoos can be made from other materials, such as reeds and bamboo; however, in my opinion, the tone produced by a high quality natural timber didgeridoo is second to none in terms of its richness and spiritual significance. Not surprisingly, traditional timber didgeridoos can be hard to obtain and expensive, which may make them unsuitable for a beginner interested only in initially developing some basic playing skills. To help with this, in this article an outline will be given of how to make and play a simple, inexpensive didgeridoo from plastic piping, such as can be obtained from hardware stores for the construction of household rain drainage systems.

The name "didgeridoo" (alternative "didjeridu") is actually a western term, possibly derived from Australian press reports in the early 1900s, where it was described as *"an infernal didjerry... which produced but one sound – didjerry, didjerry, didjerry and so on ad infinitum."* Fortunately, we now have a better appreciation of the power, complexity and beauty of the mystical tones produced by the didgeridoo, and the special significance of this instrument to the ancient indigenous culture that created it. Local aboriginal tribes have a variety of traditional names for the didgeridoo, including: yidaki, ngaribi, ilpirra, garnbak and ngarriralkpwina. According to the source by Alastair Black, aboriginal dreamtime stories trace the origins of the didgeridoo back to the creation of the world where it... *"saved the Wawilak sisters (important creator beings) and their respective sons after they had been swallowed and regurgitated by Yurlunggur (Rainbow Serpent). As they all lay on the bank of the billabong as if dead, the Yurlunggur Trumpet (Didgeridoo) rose up out of the billabong under its own volition and breathed the breath of life back into the Wawilak sisters and the two boys. This act allowed the process of creation to continue in the world."* The source by R. Lewis provides another perspective on the mythology associated with the didgeridoo... *"Perhaps the central significance of the didgeridoo, as we shall see, is that it not only has a phallic appearance, it is said to be the voice of the long lost Rainbow Snake called Yurlunggur, whose vibrations created the physical world. As with many other cultures, the snake is a symbol of wisdom in Aboriginal Australia... When the top of the stick (i.e. didgeridoo) is tapped like a drum it produces the sound made by the emu, the central symbol for the Earthmother... the stories that are told evidence the existence of a very profound esoteric knowledge that goes back into the dim distant past."*

Understandably, the didgeridoo has been and continues to be an important component of the rituals and ceremonies of Australian indigenous culture, where it is often played, accompanied by the repetitive rhythms of timber "clap-sticks" and the sacred singing, chanting and dancing of participants. There is some controversy regarding the gender appropriateness of playing the didgeridoo. Here is a relevant passage from the source by R. Lewis that provides one perspective... *"It is said that the first ever didgeridoo was made by a wirinum (shaman) who cut off his phallus and used it as a musical instrument. This gave rise to the idea that it should not be played by women lest they become pregnant."* My examination of a variety of sources indicates that it is acceptable for a woman to play a didgeridoo in an informal context; however, the potential for conflict with local cultural sensitivities should always be kept in mind, regardless of whether you are male or female. These sentiments are well expressed in the source by Phillip Jackson... *"It is indisputable that there are several Aboriginal*



My didgeridoos - hardwood and painted basic

nations which traditionally restrict didgeridoo playing outside of formal men's ceremony... In my own use of the instrument, and in my instruction to pupils, I encourage everyone to be aware that didgeridoos are extremely culturally sensitive instruments, and to respect the wishes of those around them. Therefore, if you have been advised by a member of a particular area to refrain from playing in public, it is common courtesy to respect the wishes of those whose country you are visiting; regardless of your personal beliefs. To use an analogy: if the owners of a household prefer to keep their residence smoke free, common sense dictates that you respect their wishes whilst under their roof."

Scientifically, the sound of a didgeridoo originates from an acoustic resonance which is driven within its walls by the vibrations of the player's lips at the mouthpiece. Most of the sound escapes at the far end of the instrument, but enough of it remains within the didgeridoo during playing to maintain the resonance. For a didgeridoo having a purely cylindrical shape, there is a mathematical formula that enables one to calculate the length of the didgeridoo needed to produce a desired primary resonance frequency: $\text{didgeridoo length} = 0.25 \times \text{speed of sound} / \text{frequency}$, where the calculated didgeridoo length will be in meters, the speed of sound is assumed to be 350 meters/second, and the frequency is in Hertz (i.e. vibrations per second). The following table shows the didgeridoo lengths (in meters and also converted to inches) calculated by this formula for a range of musical notes.

Musical Note	Frequency [Hz]	Didgeridoo Length [m]	Didgeridoo Length [inches]
G	49.00	1.786	70.31
A	55.00	1.591	62.64
B	61.74	1.417	55.79
C	65.41	1.338	52.68
D	73.42	1.192	46.93
E	82.41	1.062	41.81
F	87.31	1.002	39.45
G	98.00	0.893	35.16

Regarding the construction of your didgeridoo, I can recommend the note C (i.e. a didgeridoo length of 1.338 meters = 52.68 inches) for your first attempt. Obtain a large enough length of 40mm (about 1½") diameter low pressure plastic rainwater pipe from your hardware store and accurately trim it squarely, using a fine saw, to the required length for the musical note you desire. Sand the tube to clean up its outer surface and smooth off any sharpness at the ends. You can now apply the beeswax mouthpiece. Place about ½ cup of solid beeswax in a kitchen plastic freezer bag and heat it in your microwave on High for about 3 minutes, or more if required, checking the consistency of the beeswax every 1 minute. Once the beeswax is soft and easy to manipulate, take it out of the plastic freezer bag and roll it into a "sausage" about 12mm (½") diameter between your hands. Turn this sausage of softened beeswax onto itself to form a ring about the size of the pipe's cross-section, push it down onto the mouthpiece end and, using your fingers, secure and mold the beeswax onto the pipe-end so that it forms a comfortable smooth seat for your lips that has an inner diameter of about 25mm (1"). Carefully place the didgeridoo to one side for a few hours to enable the beeswax mouthpiece to fully harden. Your didgeridoo is now essentially ready to play. However, here's an extra note at this point: If you feel confident that you have enough experience and a good enough ear to take a fine-tuning approach to establishing the tone of your didgeridoo, you can do this as follows - purposefully make the length of the didgeridoo an inch or two longer than the length specified by the above formula, and then play the didgeridoo, trimming off small sections of about 12mm (½") from the free end of the tube as you go, testing the slightly raised tone produced each time until you are happy with the result. But be careful with this approach as you cannot replace sections that have been cut-off, and you can only raise the tone in this manner as the rule is - the shorter the didgeridoo, the higher the tone. Being satisfied with the sound of your didgeridoo, the last remaining thing to do is to paint and decorate it to your own wishes. This may be as simple as applying a single coat of paint to the outside of the tube, or taking a more complex approach such as applying intricate patterns of symbols and forms that may have a special significance to you.



The beeswax mouthpiece and friend

Along with the books I have listed as sources in this article, there are some excellent websites that provide information on how to play your didgeridoo. I can recommend the following website: <http://>

www.howtoplaydidgeridoo.com/ Here I will provide some basic advice on playing, which is based on my own limited experience:

The first thing that you will need to do is to become comfortable making the basic droning sound. The simplest way I can describe how to do this is to imagine that you are blowing a “raspberry” through the beeswax mouthpiece. Relax your lips and don’t try to blow too hard.

Once you feel comfortable maintaining a droning sound, for as long as your breath allows, it is time to think about the technique of circular breathing, which will give you the ability to play continuously for extended periods. Here is my description of how to do this, firstly without your didgeridoo... Fill your mouth with air and hold it with your cheeks swelled while you breathe normally in and out through your nose. Now, compress your cheeks to slowly release the air in your mouth through pursed lips while you are on an inhalation cycle through your nose. As soon as you start to run out of air in your cheeks, maintain the outward air flow through your still pursed lips by using your lungs to breathe out. This increases the pressure again within your cheeks, so that the air continues to blow slowly out, while setting you up ready for the next cycle. Congratulations - you have just managed to complete one cycle of circular breathing! By continuing in this manner you should be able to indefinitely maintain a steady flow of air out through your lips. Of course, transferring this to the didgeridoo will require much practice, but once you understand the basics, hopefully it shouldn’t take you too long. When doing this, it helps to also use your diaphragm to breathe, and to try holding your mouth steady – like a ventriloquist does.

The final aspects of playing that I’ll discuss deal with variations that one can make to the basic drone, and vocal effects that can be added. Regarding basic variations of the drone – this can be most simply done by either rhythmically pulsing your breath out using your diaphragm, or rapidly squeezing your cheeks together while exhaling. Movements of your mouth and tongue can also vary the drone – for example, while droning with cheeks pulled in, move your tongue as if making the sound “dee dee dee...” or alternatively “daw daw daw...”. Combinations of these mouth and tongue movements can also be made such as “dee daw dee daw...”. Regarding the adding of vocal effects, this basically involves maintaining the drone while also “calling out” animal sounds at the same time – for example, the dingo (Australia’s native dog) is mimicked by projecting a series of howls and barks, and the hopping kangaroo by literally projecting the sound “doing doing doing...” – all while maintaining the drone. It will help if you practice the vocals, and in fact all of the above, without the didgeridoo first. Finally, in general, it is always better to try to over emphasize or over vocalize any sound effects while playing - so try to use your diaphragm, lungs, cheeks, mouth, tongue and vocal chords with as much gusto as possible – the results will be worth it.

I’ll finish this article by wishing you well should you decide to make your own basic didgeridoo. May it inspire you to one day own and play a true hardwood didgeridoo, and commence a journey of discovery and appreciation for the ancient culture of indigenous Australians. Of course, this journey will also be one of self-discovery – which will enable you to unlock your own inner talents and creativity, as expressed through the magic of the mystical Australian didgeridoo.

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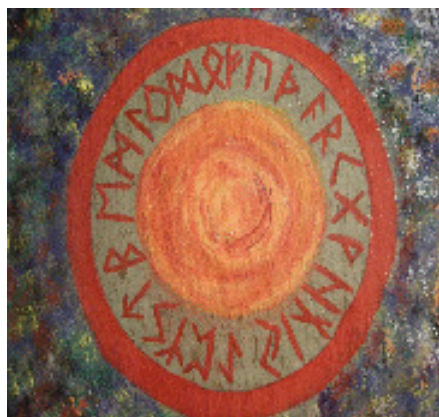
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The Runes



“Reyn til Runa” by Firefalcon

The Runes are an alphabet dating back more than a thousand years. The exact history of the Runes and their initial origins are covered in mystery as there are many contradicting studies and opinions of their beginnings. There are four well-known runic systems: the Elder Futhark containing 24 Runes, the Anglo-Frisian Futhorc containing 33 Runes, the Younger Futhark which contains 16 Runes and the Armenen Futhork containing 14 Runes. The most widely used runic system today is the Elder Futhark.

The following is my experience of making, reading and use of the Runes.

Many ask, “What are they?” The Runes are an ancient alphabet which was initially and primarily used for communication and the Runes traveled throughout the world over the course of time. Besides communication, Runes were also used as personal transformative tools for healing and victory. Over time, the Runes began to be used for magic and divination. Each Rune has an individual energy/force behind it. The Runes were passed to us through the ages, often hidden in modern day words, customs and belief systems still in use today although to most people, those origins are unknown. What our Ancestors may originally have intended the Runes to be has been altered over the course of time due to the influence of religions that wished to destroy the ancient mysteries and practices of our Pagan Ancestors. Today, we see interest in the Runes experiencing a rebirth in modern society and while the original intent behind the Runes may have been lost, the Runes are individual energies that change and grow with the times to remain relevant as tools for self-transformation, magic and divination. Reyn til Runa!

How does a person learn to read the Runes? There are many books on the Runes and their meanings. Although the majority of the books have the same standard meanings for each of the individual Runes, a person has to work with them to develop a relationship with the Runes and internalize their meanings. Meditating with the Runes is a great way to get to know the energy from each one. The way I did it is by holding each one in my left hand and meditating on its meaning; I did this with each Rune until I was comfortable with the meaning and the energy I received from it. Always try to remember what you see and feel while meditating on the Rune you are working on; this can be done by keeping a journal. Learning to say the name of each Rune properly is also an important part of using them. There is a lot of energy in the way they are pronounced. Once a person has learned the ‘standard’ runic definitions, they begin to individualize their use of the Runes in their choice of runic layouts, materials used to create the Runes and the methods used in their creation.

The most popular ways of using the Runes are tossing them from a cup or pulling them from a pouch. Many people prefer to do the Hammer Rite, which is a form of creating sacred space before drawing or tossing any Runes. The Hammer Rite can also be found in almost any book that contains the descriptions of the Runes. There are many different layouts, the more popular being the Three Norns layout; which means past, present and possible future. You can also ask the Runes a single question and use a simple one Rune draw. There are many other layouts that are more complicated, but for the beginning Rune student, the layouts already mentioned are some of the easier methods to become acquainted with. The meaning of each Rune may vary dependent upon the other Runes pulled with it and its associations with those Runes. When a person has worked with and studied the Runes over time, they will be able to find the energy of every Rune in a single object, whether that object is animate or inanimate.

The creation of the Runes will vary depending on the individual, their understanding of the Runes at that point in their lives and their preference of materials, but the following method is the one I used to create mine. I used Hickory to make mine as it has a lot of ancestral history behind it for me. Some people use stones, clay, or even bone to make them. After cutting and shaping 24 pieces, I burned the symbol for each Rune in them. While doing this I thought

about the Rune, its meaning and energy, even chanting their name while doing so. After this was done I placed a drop of my own blood on each one, making them mine. I then consecrated them by air, fire, water, and earth. When this was complete, I wrapped them in a black cloth and buried them in the ground so they could absorb the earth's energy for 24 hours. Once this was complete I smudged them with dragon's blood and offered them to the Gods. I did not paint mine or stain them in any way, as I feel this traps the energy of the Rune and does not let it flow freely. Each individual may make their Runes in a different way, but this is what felt right to me.

When combining more than one Rune to make one, it is called a Bind Rune. Bind Runes can be used for many different reasons including protection, healing, love, travel, and luck. Combining more than one Rune should be done with caution, as the wrong combination may not be a good thing.

There are many books available on the Runes, the following is a list that I recommend:

Taking Up the Runes - by Diana L. Paxson

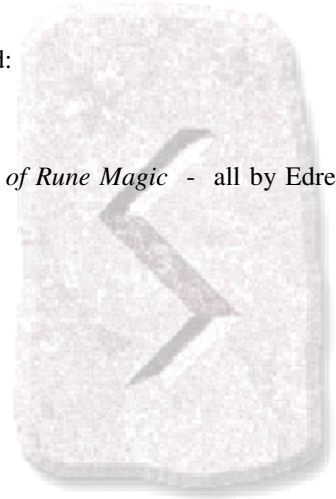
Runes for Transformation - by Kaedrich Olsen

Runecaster's Handbook: The Well of Wyrd, Runelore, and Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic - all by Edred Thorsson.

I also recommend reading *The Havamal* and *The Poetic Edda*.

*I know I hung on that windy tree nine whole days
And nights, stabbed with a spear, offered to Odin,
Myself to mine own self given, high on that tree
Of which none hath heard from what roots it rises
To heaven.*

Havamal #138



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Firefalcon has been a member of Email Witches since Sept 2009.

Nature's Glory (Pic's from our members)

Wild Canary by SilkyRose



Blue Tanager by Lil



On the Rocks

Herkimer Diamond



by Patricia J. Martin

As clear as a bright summer day - as lofty as the Sun sits above us - and as energized as a bonfire burning strong - for Litha, I introduce you to a Quartz crystal at the peak of its strength... Herkimer Diamond!

Herkimer Diamond is the name given to the beautiful, rare and widely sought after, naturally double-terminated Quartz crystals that were named after the place they were first formally discovered in the late 1700s - a small town called Little Falls in Herkimer County, New York. For this, they are sometimes also called Little Falls Diamonds or Middleville Diamonds after the towns from which they are now copiously mined. Though rare throughout the world, Herkimer Diamonds can be found abundantly all across the Mohawk River Valley in upstate New York. Some fine places to go where you can find and/or mine your own Herkimer "Diamonds" are at places called, what other than, "Ace of Diamonds Mine" and Herkimer Diamond Mine", both in Middleville, town of Newport,



Herkimer Diamond Mine, Herkimer, NY

Herkimer County, NY, or "Diamond Acres" (Hastings Farm), Fonda, Mohawk Township, Montgomery County, NY. Although predominantly found in the northeast U.S., this unique form of Quartz has also been found in Arizona in the U.S., Afghanistan, Tibet, China, Norway and a few other places throughout the world.



A typical vug (or pocket) filled with Herkimers

Commonly called simply Herkimers for short, these hexagonal (6-sided, 18 facets) brilliantly clear Quartz crystals formed in cavities within the dull gray sedimentary form of Dolomite, called Dolostone - a relative of Limestone - approximately 500 million years ago during the Cambrian Age. At that time, a shallow sea whose waters lapped against the shores of the ancestral Adirondack Mountains, deposited the sediments which under years of weight and pressure became Dolostone. While still under the sea, water seeped into the forming rock, dissolving part of it and creating cavities within - cavities, called "vugs", that ranged anywhere from pea size to several feet across. Like most geode style crystals, Herkimer Diamonds began their journey of growth when a tiny amount of that mineral rich water stayed trapped within the cavity. The double termination of the Herkimer occurs because they were allowed to grow with virtually little or

no contact with the host stone while nestled inside the vug. On the hardness scale, and as with all Quartz crystals, they register a 7. They can be found clear, cloudy or with impurities - the clearest specimens coming out of the NY locations - and can also be found in Quartz's various forms and styles, such as clusters, scepters, twins, phantoms, enhydros, etc. I prefer the single crystals and am amazed at their clarity. In fact, it was their crystal clear appearance that led the founders to liken them to, and almost mistake them for, real Diamonds. But Quartz crystals they are. And like the water from which they are birthed, these sparkling natural wonders do carry the attributes of the Element, Water - the feminine qualities of intuition, psychic ability, the knowledge and wisdom of the mystical and the magickal, etc., but as a Quartz, they contain the attributes and metaphysical properties of all four Elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Most of the Herkimers that I own and work with lean strongly toward Fire and Air, lending them the ability to create the spark of action to my thoughts and inspirations. (In other words, they light a fire under my... um, intentions.. hehehe.)



Herkimer in matrix

On top of the many fine attributes of Quartz, Herkimer Diamonds come with an added punch. Their clarity and dual-points give them what I call "the laser effect" - the ability to pinpoint and hone in on what's relevant. They are also known to create balance. And, being a Quartz, they will amplify everything.

Called the "Stone of Attunement", I find it to also be the "Stone of Total Awareness". Herkimer Diamonds can be used to attune oneself to another person, place or thing. They are excellent in aiding us in getting to know something or someone more intimately and fully. They can be used by two people who are not physically together, to keep in 'touch' and to help bind themselves further to one another, as the crystal enhances their knowledge and awareness of each other. This works well for groups too, helping them work together harmoniously so that what they are working to accomplish will manifest in the most cohesive manner and with the best results. In another aspect, Herkimers may be used to garner information as well as give it, as they possess an uncanny 'give & take' ability, meaning they are exceptionally adept and handy at simultaneously sending and receiving. They are a very nice bridging stone. There is no problem in programming a Herkimer; they quickly deliver messages or work to manifest whatever they are programmed for.

When working with the Herkimer Diamond you can expect stimulated clairvoyance and clairaudience. You will better see and hear things that are beyond the normal perceptions, as your ability to read between the lines is amplified. Herkimers help you hear the truth, whether verbalized out loud or not. They create a clear channel and you will better hear what is truly being said when words or actions are muddled or not freely given. But whatever information is garnered will always hold the essence of spirituality filtered through from our Higher Self, making the knowledge received the purest it can be, and the mind focused on the best intent. Herkimers help keep things on the up and up. This is because the Herkimer Diamond's vibration is closer to (and thus works well with) the Brow (Third Eye) and Crown Chakras - the intuitive, higher vibration and spiritually attuned Chakras. Herkimers promote divine grace.

In their crystal-clear visions, Herkimers are powerful for tapping into hidden knowledge. There are no secrets kept from these scrutinizing crystals. They are both sleuth and messenger, as they laser in on the hidden and unearth what you need to know. I call them one of the great spies of the mineral world...your own personal private detective...but always helping to keep your intent pure. In this viewing and being viewed capacity, these little gems are most helpful for Astral Travel, psychic insight and, of course, for such telling revelations.



Various sizes of Herkimer Diamonds

Like the Sun, Herkimer Diamonds contain a sparkling brilliance. This brilliance not only is used for clarification of things, but also is useful for elevating the spirits. Depression, melancholy and the general blues are dispelled and replaced with a sunnier outlook. Stress and tensions are alleviated. For aid in physical health, Herkimers can be used to disseminate and help remove toxins from the body and for correcting and realigning imbalances in any capacity. They bring about a greater clarity - a helpful clearing of dis-ease, along with a crisp and clear flow of thoughts and ideas on how best to help oneself. As the Protector that Quartz is, Herkimer Diamonds can aid in dispersing and diluting radioactivity from our surroundings or during medical procedures. They are also well-known for helping with the Immune System.

For aid with the mystical, the magickal uses of Herkimer Diamonds are many. Astrologically, this stone resonates with Libra, Aries and Sagittarius. Its planet is the Sun. Its Element is all four, but with a propensity toward Fire and Air - thus, masculine and projective. In ceremonial ritual, along with in Feng Shui, Herkimers are used to clear and purify space, and will remove any stagnant energies that happen to reside there. Herkimers are good to hold during past-life regressions, as they help open the telepathic channel and maintain the bridge between what we perceive as then and now. And they are excellent in crystal grids or for energizing and amplifying and keeping the connectivity of any spell, chant, ritual or magickal endeavor. They are a good magickal substitute for actual Diamonds.



Herkimer Diamond & Amethyst Pendant

And last but not least, another fine quality of the Herkimer Diamond is its strong ability to promote and enhance dreams, lucid dreams and to aid us in dream recall. Place a Herkimer inside your pillowcase and then record what dreams you have. I guarantee you, your dreams will be prolific, although possibly just a bit strange at first as the crystal aligns itself with how best to transfer the information to your psyche. (I can readily attest to this..lol) In meditation, and for enhanced visualization, hold two Herkimers, one in each hand, and with one of its points facing inward toward your body while the other faces outward. Place your receptive hand on your brow (Third Eye) and your dominant projective hand on your Solar Plexus area. This will help arc your gathered insights from the Brow to your area of personal power at the Solar Plexus. What you envision or what spark of wisdom comes to you will immediately be bridged to your reaction and actions. Herkimers work with an unrestrained enthusiasm and possess the power to bring those sudden flashes of inspiration, knowledge or wisdom. When working with these crystals, be prepared for many an "ah ha!" moment... not much unlike the feeling you get when you actually take your hammer and chisel to a piece of Dolostone, crack it open and have it suddenly reveal a pristine Herkimer Diamond surprise inside! Breathtaking.

Here's to your Litha celebrations (or Yule in the Southern Hemisphere) being equally as breathtaking!

* * *

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Herkimer Diamond, itself.

Photos by: Patricia J. Martin

<http://www.thecrystalhealer.co.uk>

Pagan Kitchen

By OwlOak

Greetings Folks.

Here we are; another turn of the wheel and Litha is again upon us. The Sun has reached its highest point in the sky making it our longest day and shortest night... midsummer in all its glory. This also marks a special occasion for us here at "The Controversial Cauldron" as it marks the beginning of our third year of publication. My how time flies when you're having fun, and enjoying good eats while doing it.

Speaking of good eats, in this issue there are several recipes submitted by a couple of our members. Please check them out; I have and they are delicious.

For breakfast we have:

Orange Juice Smoothie

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 small can frozen orange juice concentrate
1 cup milk
1 cup water
1/4 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
12 ice cubes

Directions:

Place everything into a blender and blend until smooth.

Pour into glasses and serve.

Gram Little's Pineapple Drop Doughnuts

By: OwlOak

Ingredients:

3 tbsp butter, softened
3/4-cup white sugar
3 eggs
1 cup crushed pineapple, drained
1 tsp. vanilla extract
4 1/2-cups all-purpose flour
3 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt

1/4-cup whole milk

Coating:

1/2-cup granulated white sugar
2 tbsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground nutmeg

(At one time or another Gram Little used a variety of coatings, including plain granulated sugar, powdered sugar, a sugar glaze, and for a special treat she would dip them in melted chocolate. However, this was her 'go to' one.)

Enough vegetable oil for deep fat frying.



Directions:

Heat the oil in a deep-fat fryer to 375°F/190°C. *

Coating:

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and reserve.

Donuts:

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar together.

Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition; then beat in the pineapple and vanilla.

Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt, and slowly add this and the milk to the creamed mixture - alternating each of them (the batter will be thick).

Drop teaspoonfuls of batter, a few at a time, into the hot oil - too many at once will cool the oil and result in greasy donuts. Also, it will crowd the fryer as they do plump up while frying.

Since they will float to the surface you will need to turn them with a slotted spoon and fry about 1 minute on each side, or until they are golden brown.

Remove the donuts from the oil and drain on paper towels. Then, while they're still warm, roll them in the coating.

They can be served warm, at room temperature, or frozen and stored for up to 3 months.

*If you don't have a deep-fat fryer, then a deep skillet or Dutch Oven will do fine as long as you have enough heated oil to cover the donuts and they are not crowded.

Kristine's Best Ever Blueberry Muffins

By: Mystickal SeaDancer, a.k.a. Kristine Griffin



Ingredients:

1 1/2-cups all-purpose flour
 1 tbsp. baking powder
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/2 tsp. vanilla
 1/4 cup sugar
 4 tbsp. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
 1 large egg, beaten
 3/4 cup plus 2 tbsp. Milk
 2 cups blueberries

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C)

Line a muffin pan with 10 paper muffin cups or spray with nonstick cooking spray.

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt into a large bowl. Stir in the sugar.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the melted butter, vanilla, egg and milk.

Pour the wet ingredients over the dry ingredients and whisk until just blended (mixture should be slightly lumpy).

Add the blueberries to bowl and stir them in just enough to combine.

Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups. Fill any unused pan-cups halfway with water.

Bake the muffins 18-24 minutes, or until golden.

Remove the muffins from the pan and transfer to a wire rack to cool.

The muffins are best served warm.

For lunch we get out the grill:

Cheese Stuffed Porky Beef Burgers

By: OwlOak

Ingredients:

1 lb. (454 gm.) ground beef
 1 lb. (454 gm.) ground pork*
 2 tsp. chili powder
 1/2 tsp. cumin
 1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. black pepper
 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
 8 oz. (227 gm.) blue cheese, or your favorite cheese like Jack or Cheddar
 8 buns, toasted
 Sliced red onion, lettuce, and tomato, for garnish.
 Other toppings such as mustard, relish, ketchup, salsa, etc., to taste.



Directions:

In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, pork, chili powder, cumin, salt, black pepper, cayenne pepper, and shape into 16 patties.

Top 8 patties with the blue cheese and cover each with one of the remaining patties, pressing the edges together to seal them.

Place on a heated, and oiled, grill for 5 to 7 minutes on each side or until the patty is no longer pink and the cheese has melted. **

Serve on the buns with onion, lettuce, tomato and any other desired toppings.

Note: To make in a skillet, place patties in a large skillet over medium-high heat and cook, uncovered, for 8 to 10 minutes on each side or until cooked through. ***

*To 'kick-it-up' a notch, you could use a bulk Italian sausage of your choice in place of the pork.

**I do not recommend, or advocate, eating ground meat products that are not fully cooked. I know. That sucks. Everybody loves a nice juicy burger. But, I would rather have an 'overcooked' burger than a case of salmonella – which is a rod-shaped gram-negative bacteria which can cause typhoid fever and food poisoning, or E. Coli which can cause a whole host of nasty physical problems. Neither of which is pretty to deal with, and can kill you. Ever remember, with any ground or chopped meat, pink is not good and red is real dangerous. Why? Because even though the bacteria that are on the outside of the meat, like those found on a steaks, roasts, or chops are normally killed in the cooking process, once the meat is ground or chopped they are now safely inside and are waiting to get you. Makes you want to re-evaluate Tartar (raw ground meat, usually beefsteak), doesn't it? Basically, you're playing Russian Roulette every time you have uncooked or undercooked ground or chopped meat...it may have been 'ok' the last time, but you never know about the next time. The same goes for fish and seafood. They can carry bacteria, worms, and protozoa such as flukes, that can

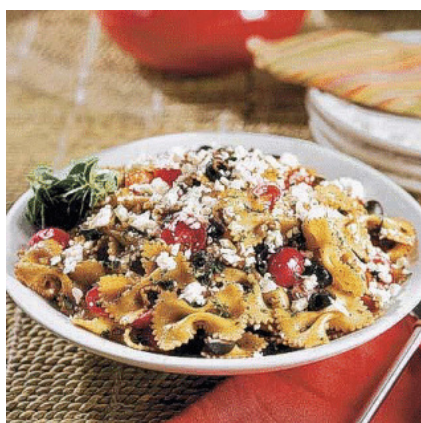
mess you up real good...makes you want to re-evaluate sashimi too, even if it is classified "Sushi Grade". If sushi and sashimi float your boat, then you might wish to visit: <http://www.sushifaq.com/sushi-grade-fish.htm> for an eye-opening explanation of the term "Sushi Grade".

***Covering the skillet keeps the steam in which adds the water back into the pan. The result is soggy burgers without the caramelized, and delicious, crust on them.

And what goes better with a burger than:

Kristine's Bow Tie Pasta with Carrots, Artichokes and Pistachios

By: Mystickal SeaDancer, a.k.a. Kristine Griffin



Ingredients:

1 lb. bow tie pasta
 3 large carrots
 2 - 7 1/2 oz. jars water packed artichoke hearts
 3/4-cup shelled whole pistachios
 4 tbsp. olive oil
 1 large red onion
 6 medium cloves garlic, minced
 1/2 tsp. dried red chili flakes
 1/4-cup (firmly packed) parsley, minced
 3 tbsp. lemon juice
 1/4-cup water
 6 oz. feta cheese, crumbled
 Lemon wedges, for garnish

Directions:

Slice the carrot on the diagonal into 1/8 inch discs. Cut each artichoke heart into eight wedges. Cut the red onion into small wedges that are the same size as the artichoke hearts.

Remove as much of the papery pistachio skin as you can. Place a single layer of nuts in a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat and toast, stirring frequently, until aromatic. Remove from heat immediately, finely chop and set aside.

Boil several quarts of water to cook the pasta.

Heat two-tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet. Add the carrots, onion, garlic, and chili flakes and sauté over a medium heat about 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the artichoke hearts and parsley and sauté, stirring

occasionally, about five minutes longer. Stir in the lemon juice and water and immediately turn off the heat.

Cook the pasta until al dente and drain briefly.

In a bowl, toss the hot pasta with the remaining two-tbsp. olive oil, four oz. of the feta cheese, and pistachios.

Serve pasta on plates and topped with the sautéed vegetables.

Garnish with lemon wedges and crumble remaining feta on top.

and:

Vegetable Skewers

by: OwlOak



Ingredients:

2 zucchini, or summer squash, cut into chunks
 2 onions, cut into 6 wedges each
 1 green bell pepper, cut into 2" (5 cm.) pieces
 1 red bell pepper, cut into 2" (5 cm.) pieces
 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into 2" (5 cm.) pieces
 12 mushrooms
 12 cherry tomatoes
 1/3 cup butter
 1/4 cup grated fresh Parmesan cheese
 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

Directions:

Prepare and preheat grill.

Melt the butter in small saucepan and stir in the cheese, salt, and thyme leaves.

Alternately thread the vegetables onto 12 metal skewers* and grill 4-6" from medium heat for 8-10 minutes.

Brush them frequently with the butter sauce and turn frequently.

Grill until the vegetables are tender.

*If using wooden skewers be sure to soak them in water for 15-20 minutes before using so they won't catch fire and burn. Another tip is to place some aluminum foil along the edge of the grill and lay the ends of the skewers on it to keep them from burning.

Now, if you should get the munchies between lunch and dinner, you're sure to want to get into:

Kristine's Hot Cheesy Spinach Dip
by: Mystickal SeaDancer, a.k.a. Kristine Griffin



Ingredients:

2 tbsp. butter
1/4- cup chopped onion (about 1/4 medium)
3 cloves garlic, minced (1 tsp.)
1 tbsp. all purpose flour
1 3/4-cups half-and-half
2 - 9 oz. (255g) pkgs. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well drained
1 - 8 oz. (227g) can sliced water chestnuts, drained (optional)
1 1/2-cup shredded Cheddar cheese
1 - 1 oz. (28g) pkg. dry vegetable soup mix
1/2-cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 425°F (218°C)

Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook and stir until onion is crisp-tender and garlic is fragrant, 2-3 minutes.

Stir in flour; cook and stir an additional minute. Add half -and-half and cook, stirring constantly, until mixture boils and thickens, about 2 minutes.

Remove saucepan from heat. Stir in chopped spinach, water chestnuts, Cheddar and vegetable soup mix. Spoon dip into a 1-quart casserole or gratin dish. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese.

Bake the dip until it is bubbly and the cheese is melted, 10 -15 minutes.

Serve warm with toasted sourdough slices or hearty crackers.

For dinner we have:

Kristine's Lemon-Grilled Chicken
by: Mystickal SeaDancer, a.k.a. Kristine Griffin



Ingredients:

6 skinless boneless chicken breasts
1 lemon
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 tbsp. fresh chopped parsley, plus extra sprigs for garnish
1/2-tsp. fresh minced thyme
1/2-tsp. fresh minced marjoram
Salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste

Directions:

Preheat the grill to medium heat.

Use a peeler to remove strips of zest from half of the lemon, then trim into fine strips with a small knife. Reserve and set aside. Grate the other side of the lemon to make 1 tbsp. zest. Finally, squeeze the juice from the lemon into a bowl.

In a large plastic bag, combine the lemon zest and juice, oil, garlic, parsley, thyme, marjoram, salt and pepper. Add the chicken breasts to the bag and massage until the chicken well coated. Chill for 30 minutes, or overnight if you have time.

Remove the chicken pieces from the marinade with a set of tongs and place on the grill, reserving the marinade for basting.

Due to the health hazard involved with used meat, fish, and poultry marinade, place the reserved marinade in a saucepan and boil for 2-3 minutes before using for basting.

Grill the chicken until cooked through, about 10 minutes on each side, brushing with the reserved marinade 2-3 times during cooking. After the first turn, either thoroughly wash the tongs or replace them with clean ones.

Remove the chicken from the grill, sprinkle with the reserved lemon strips, garnish with parsley sprigs, and serve immediately.

Include with that a side of:

Kristine's Roasted Potato Medley

By: Mystickal SeaDancer, a.k.a. Kristine Griffin



Ingredients:

3 sweet potatoes
4 russet potatoes
8 new potatoes
1/2-cup olive oil
2 tsp. fresh or 1 tsp. dried tarragon
1/8 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. black pepper

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 425°F (218°C)

Peel and cube the sweet and russet potatoes. Scrub the new potatoes and cut into cubes.

Place the potatoes in a large saucepan. Add enough lightly salted water to cover the potatoes. Bring to a boil and cook the potatoes for 3 minutes. Drain thoroughly.

Spread the potatoes in a single layer on a large nonstick baking sheet.

Drizzle the potatoes with olive oil and sprinkle with the tarragon, salt and pepper.

Roast the potatoes for about 25 minutes, or until crisp and browned.

Serve immediately.

Accompanied by a great salad:

Laura's Antioxidant Packed Salad

By: AuroraRose



Ingredients:

1 lb (454 g.) fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
1 cup fresh blueberries
1 1/2 tbsp. minced green onions
20 oz. (567 g.) hearts of romaine lettuce (2-10-oz. pkgs.)
1-8 oz. (227 g.) can pineapple chunks - drained, and juice reserved
1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/4-cup olive oil
1/4-cup red wine vinegar
1/4-cup sliced almonds

Directions:

Place strawberries, blueberries, onion, lettuce and pineapple in a large bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together the Worcestershire sauce, oil, vinegar and pineapple juice.

Pour the dressing over lettuce and toss to coat.

Sprinkle with the almonds and serve.

To top-off our delicious meal we have:

Strawberry Cheesecake Mousse

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin
1/2-cup cold water
2 qts./liters fresh strawberries, hulled and halved
4 tbsp. strawberry preserves
2 pkgs. cream cheese
1 cup sugar, divided
1/2-cup sour cream, divided
1 cup heavy whipping cream
Grated chocolate, for garnish

Directions:

Sprinkle the gelatin over the cold water and let stand for 1 minute. Microwave on high for 20 seconds then stir and let stand for 1 minute or until the gelatin is completely dissolved.

Meanwhile, combine the fresh strawberries and preserves and set aside.

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, 1/2-cup sugar and 1/4-cup sour cream until blended and set aside.

In another bowl, beat the whipping cream and remaining 1/4-cup sour cream until it begins to thicken. Add the gelatin mixture and the remaining 1/2-cup sugar and beat until stiff peaks form. Gently fold (not stir) this into the cream cheese mixture.

In each of 12 dessert dishes, layer 1/2-cup of the strawberry mixture and 1/3-cup of the cream cheese mixture.

Refrigerate until chilled.

To serve, top with grated chocolate.

Note: This recipe can be doubled or tripled as the number of guests dictates.

To wash this all down we have the following libation available throughout the day:

Quick Mead

By: OwlOak



Ingredients:

1 qt./liter unsweetened apple cider - NOT processed apple juice
3/4-cup honey
1 lemon, or other citrus fruit, sliced into rounds

3 sticks cinnamon, broken into pieces

Directions:

Combine all the ingredients in a container just large enough to hold everything. Seal and refrigerate, shaking or stirring daily for five days.

Remove from the refrigerator and strain into a suitable container before drinking.

Note: This recipe may be multiplied as many times as necessary to get the desired amount of mead.... 5 gallons sounds like a good start for the folks I hang with. <VBG>

*Either hard or regular cider can be used, depending on whether or not you want it to be alcoholic. I usually make up some of both so everyone can get in the spirit, with or without the 'spirits'.

Well, there you have it folks, a great day of delicious food and another memorable Sabbath for the ol' memory bank.

From my Circle to yours, here's wishing you all a very happy, joyous, and safe Litha.

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 dearly departed family members. Any duplication of recipes created by others is accidental and unintentional.

Responsibility for the source and content of any 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>. Also, please mention "Pagan Kitchen" in the subject line so it doesn't go into my "Spam" file.

June 2010 © James Rancourt, aka OwlOak
OwlOak lives in New England, USA and is a Wiccan High Priest.
He has been an EW member since 2003.

Nature's Glory



Litha Rose by Patricia J Martin



Scotch Broom by Lil

Creating an Herb Garden

By Wes (Graybeard) Sanders

The first picture No 1. This is the area of the Community Garden that I picked out to use as an herb garden. It was weedy and out of the way, actually in a corner of the main garden. I chopped the weeds out of an area approximately 18ft by 20ft. In size, then raked all the weeds out and tried to level the area. The second picture No 2. shows the cleaned off area.



The third picture No 3. Here it got interesting. I had never laid out an herb garden before, so I really didn't know quite what to do. I'd had a few suggestions, one of which was a spiral. I tried drawing one out in the space I had, but it just didn't look right to me. With the Summer Solstice coming up, I decided to put a Circle right in the middle, which would depict the Sun. So, I got some string and stakes and played with a little geometry. This third picture shows what I came up with.



In picture No 4. I made a soil berm by following the string lines. I wanted to make a path so that folks could get access to the herbs for watering, etc.



In picture No 5. is a view of the path filled with wood chips which we get from a local tree trimmer. He brings his chips to the garden and we use them for mulch. I thought they would work well on the paths, and I was a happy camper to see how it came out.



*When your garden is finished I hope it will
be more beautiful
that you anticipated, require less care than
you expected,
and have cost only a little more than you
had planned.*

*Thomas D. Church - Gardens are for
People 1955*

The following three pictures are of the Center Piece - a nice yellow Rose to depict the Sun as it shines out on the little herb garden. I had already decided to put in the Rose. I know it isn't an herb, but I don't care. I like it. In two of the three red buckets is a product called Bumper Crop. It is an organic fertilizer. I mixed it 50/50 with the soil from the hole I dug. The third red bucket is full of water. The last picture No 8. is the finished look. I know it looks like a Celtic Cross, and there is nothing wrong with Celtic Crosses, but that is not what it is. What you are seeing is camera angle distortion. The picture is giving you an optical illusion. Actually, the little plot is a rectangle. I think it turned out well... so far.



The plan is now to get the Principal of the Elementary School next door to get the parents of some of the students to purchase at our local nursery, 1 or 2 herb plants for the children themselves to plant and to care for. That would be very cool. I should know next week if that is going to happen. The kids that come out to the Garden have been watching me do all this and are very excited. I will try to get permission to take pictures of them planting, if it all works out. But you all know how plans go... if plan "A" don't work out, I have a plan "B" going on in me wee little brain. And if that don't work... there is always plan "X". Stay tuned. I will be updating in the next Newsletter.



Many Blessings, Wes (Graybeard) Sanders

In his garden every man may be his own artist without apology or explanation. Each within his green enclosure is a creator, and no two shall reach the same conclusion; nor shall we, any more than other creative workers, be ever wholly satisfied with our accomplishment. Ever a season ahead of us floats the vision of perfection and herein lies its perennial charm.

Louise Beebe Wilder

© 2010 Wes "Graybeard" Sanders
Wes has been a member of Email Witches since May 2005

Balance:

The Struggle Between the Brain and the Heart

By Tamra L. Consbruck

“And of course, the brain is not responsible for any of the sensations at all. The correct view is that the seat and source of sensation is the region of the heart.”

~Aristotle~

“If my heart could do my thinking, would my brain begin to feel?”

~Van Morrison~

When you analyze your thoughts and feelings, do you see each function coming from one particular part of the body, or two? Concentrate on the word, “Think.” For most of us the word will compel us to focus on the brain. Words like concentrate, assume, comprehend, understand, and rationalize are all synonyms of the word, “Think.” So is the word, “Feel.” Yet the word, “Feel” has its own synonyms. i.e.: affected, aware of, enjoy, savor, sense, suffer, and take to heart. “Think” and “Feel” do share quite a few of the same qualities; similar but not necessarily identical.

The heart is known to be a muscle which functions as a powerful electromagnetic generator. But did you know that the heart also has its own brain? A couple of decades back neurologists discovered that approximately sixty percent of the heart’s cells are not muscle cells, but the same neural cells and neural-transmitters we find in that other muscle we have encased within our skulls. I don’t know about you but that just blows my mind. You might be wondering where this little biology lesson is going. I just wanted to point out the fact that as of about twenty years or so ago science has known that we have *two brains* in the human body; one that thinks in our heads, and one that feels in our hearts. (We’ll save the gut for another time.) And in my opinion, both almost always try to convince you they are right.

Sometimes when we are in the thick of a situation, with a difficult decision to make, neither the brain nor the heart can make the winning point. The battle between the two are so adamant in their arguments, we can often find ourselves stuck in the muck and mire of thick, suffocating indecision. When we do make a choice, it is one we find we have to live with, and sometimes we regret putting more credence in one or the other of these particular body parts.

When I was very young I made a decision that almost took my life; I entered into a very destructive marriage that became more and more dangerous as time went on. Towards the end of this marriage, I had developed a habit of escaping down the road to a pizza place where I would ask for a cup of water, sit in a corner of the outdoor patio and cry quietly, hoping no one would notice.

The marriage itself lasted two years and I was twenty-two when the police collected my then husband for the last time. But I was already a mess by then; young, ignorant, and afraid of my own shadow. I couldn’t even make eye contact with most of the people I happened to cross paths with.

Six months into my newly single life I was still in the habit of escaping to the outdoor patio of the pizza joint down the road. During one of these visits I was befriended by a very sweet man with a comical voice and a big toothy grin. He was funny, shorter than me, had bright red hair with a mustache to match, and he was the most beautiful soul I had ever laid eyes on. Unbeknownst to me at the time, he was the very man who had been serving me my cups of water, and would watch me outside the pizza place window, those last few months towards the end of my abusive marriage.

We spent the next year learning, enjoying and falling in love with everything about each other. He would do the cutest things like send an employee to deliver pizzas with my initials written in pepperonis. He made up silly little nick names, but always started with the word, “My”. i.e.; my little baby doll. He didn’t seem to have an angry, bitter or violent bone in his entire body. When we were together he had eyes for me alone, and I felt completely and irrevocably in love with him.

My little pizza boy and I had a perfectly happy and exciting year together, despite my continued battle with the ex. In fact I never knew I could experience so much joy even in the midst of an ugly divorce. He took me to places I’d never been, showed me things I’d never known. I never once thought of a future without him standing by my side. When it ended I felt more alone than I had ever felt up to that point in my life, because it came out of nowhere.

He and his family had owned a chain of pizza joints in another state during the time, and he had been called back to the east coast to take over one of their stores. He came to me with a choice; put the whole thing in my lap. He said, “My family needs me. Say the word and I won’t go.” Knowing his family meant the world to him, I wasn’t about to keep him from what I knew in his heart he felt he needed to do. If I told him to stay, in time he would resent me. I couldn’t have that. I couldn’t bear the thought of him hating me. If I could go with him I would have, but I had

unavoidable obligations myself and leaving town just wasn't an option, and he knew that. So I placed the choice back into his lap and told him he was the one who would have to make it.

That was twenty-two years ago. We saw each other twice after that with me flying out to visit him; twice in the span of two years, and always coming back alone. We tried to make the long distance thing work, but our separate obligations kept us apart. So after awhile we just couldn't hold on to each other and we let go.

I learned many lessons over the years after losing my pizza boy. I've learned to love again, compromise, sacrifice and settle and finally to *not* feel any of this. In fact I am at the tail end of an eleven year long platonic live-in relationship that never really worked for me personally, but I just never acquired the energy or belief in myself or in my future to step away from it until now. In fact I busted my ass trying to convince myself that I was exactly where I needed to be in order to be there for others. To a certain degree it is true. You're still wondering where I am going with all of this aren't you?

Well two months ago I was on my computer chatting on Facebook, when I received a friend request out of the blue. It was my pizza boy. Of course I befriended him right away and sent him my phone number. Oh my God, the excitement was almost overwhelming. Just hearing his voice catapulted me back through time and all those unprocessed emotions rushed to the surface. And I got lost in them. Everything I wanted to hear, he said. Everything I never forgot replayed itself in my mind. There was only one major obstacle; well, two actually; his wife and ten year old child.

I knew this was a problem (you think?) and we discussed it on several occasions over the next two months. He loved me, never stopped loving me, he married his wife on the rebound, she's a monster. They planned to get a divorce, but only after their child turned eighteen in eight years. But he loved and missed and needed me more than I could know, and once we got together it would all fall into place. Anything could happen; if nothing else we could meet again the same time each year until his kid turned eighteen.

A tremendous battle was sparked within and without. What if we weren't the same people? What if we've both changed? No, we haven't changed. He knew I was the same wonderful woman I always was; he could tell by my poetry and essays. I was still his baby doll, and how could we feel such intense excitement and need for each other if we weren't still madly in love? We had exchanged photos. We were both the same people, only twenty years older. He needed me; couldn't bear to live one more moment longer without me. His desperation was palpable.

I wanted it too. I wanted to have back what we had all those years ago. I was the happiest I had ever been when I was with him. I have never been that blissfully happy, not before or since. So I put all that other stuff out of my mind. We would see each other the next month. And every time a question or fear popped into my head I pushed it away. No, not going to think about it. "That's my girl," he said. Concentrate only on the upcoming four days we will be spending together in each other's arms. Nothing else matters.

Oh and I tried so hard. I used to be so good at this. No negative thought. No poison what-ifs and then-somes. I could have it all back; those feelings of pure joy and happiness when true love was new and real. Only I wasn't a timid little rabbit anymore with tunnel vision taking leaps of faith. My belief of knights in red mustaches no longer existed. I wasn't that twenty-two year old girl that needed so badly to be saved, no matter how much I may still wish to be. I have grown and evolved and learned oh so many lessons through intense trial and error. I'm forty-five years old, and I have finally reached a point within where I am learning to save and love myself, and it is about damn time.

So here I am; smack dab in the middle of a tug of war between my brain and my heart.

Brain: "Dude," (It's a California brain) "The man has a wife and a kid. He lives on the other side of the freakin' country. You are done with saving and taking care of others at your own expense. You might want to consider a safe little casual affair with someone a little closer to home...with money...and maybe taller."

Heart: "I've missed him and thought of him so often over the years. I've always regretted not making him stay. I need someone. I need him. I want so badly to be loved. He wants and loves me. He has always made me feel special and worthwhile. He says, come to him and he will take care of all that. He will take care of me. I just want to be held tightly in his arms."

If we take a few moments and search back through our more intense memories we will find we've all been in this very situation; maybe not under these exact circumstances, but we have all gotten caught up in the middle of these battles between our hearts and our brains. It is often painful and confusing. Each time I find myself here, I wonder if dying might be easier than having to make a choice. There is no way out of this torture. There is no easy compromise or deal to be made that would truly benefit me. Why do I keep stumbling into this same damn hole time and time again?

The mind is believed by many cultures around the world to be that of the human soul. The heart is the opening in

which our energies and the universal source connect. The brain is a computer. Without the heart to feel, the logic of the brain is flawed. Mind is the conduit, or the conductor between the brain and the heart. The mind; the soul; is the balance. All the work and research and lessons I have learned up to this point in my self-discovery have all led me to this newest identification. Mind is the balance between brain and heart. I need to reach a little higher for the right choices for me. My soul already knows the answer; all I need to do is listen.

This isn't about what is right or moral in the eyes of Society, or what is or isn't fair in the realm of love and righteousness. It is about hearing and choosing what is right for my soul. It is about learning from past mistakes and misconceptions. Why am I lonely? Why do I feel this need to be saved so strongly? Why does this feeling come back every time I get my hopes up; every time a man makes promises? It is because I consistently place myself in situations strongly lacking in pure love, affection and dignity. I must first become aware of my tendency to repeat these life lessons. Once I am aware of my energies and actions in this respect, I can learn to change them. But I have to listen beyond what both the brain and the heart are telling me. I have to focus on a higher frequency. This is my soul, my mind delivering to me my truth.

My soul's truth is that by choosing to fly across country to my pizza boy, I am again allowing myself to be pulled into another relationship waiting game. I do all the work. I do the traveling, the sacrificing, the giving up; the sneaking around. And as I do this I wait for something in return that never comes. I wait for the reward. There is no reward but that which I give myself; pure love. I will never truly know what that feels like until I can feel it for myself; from myself. I must let go of these lonely make-believe relationships and depend on myself for what I need and allow my soul to guide me. I don't have all the answers yet, and perhaps I never will. But as I go on, I will recognize more and more of these holes I tend to stumble into, and begin to walk around them, or jump over them. Who knows if or when I will ever come into this pure love, but I will continue to reach for the highest frequency. And sometimes the short term despair is preferable to the long term agony.

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.

Spellcraft

To banish something unwanted in your life you still carry with you.

By Lil

For TJ it might be her long lost love. For me, it's my ex-husband.... Oh, I'm way over him, and the relationship. But it was an abusive one and sometimes I flash back on some of the ugly things and think, "How could he have done this to me?", and more importantly, "How could I have allowed this?" These things have been difficult. If I forgive him, does that mean I condone what he did, because I certainly do not. And if I don't forgive, how do I heal and move on? For those reading this, it could be something completely different.

What I am tied to now is not the relationship, not the person, but the *feelings* left behind in the wake of a disastrous marriage. The only one suffering is *me*. It's time to cut the ties.

This spell can be done in a lot of ways, some I may not even mention but the Muse may speak to you and you will alter it to suit your needs. It can be done as a one-time thing, a daily affirmation or a seven-night spell. I'm doing the seven-nighter. I'll present the candle spell. Be sure to have some cake and ale on your altar because you will need to ground afterward.

Choose a black candle to represent your foe and a white candle to represent yourself. Inscribe the white candle with what you want to retain, or gain. Inscribe the black candle with what you'd like to lose. Anoint each candle with an oil; a banishing oil for the black and a healing oil for the white.

Bind your candles together with a ribbon or cord. I prefer a neutral cord. Natural cotton, linen or silk are my preferences. Make sure you have some slack between them because as the spell progresses you will be moving them farther and farther apart.

Start with the candles close together. Ground yourself and center upon your goal. Take some deep breaths. Light your candles and say the spell below. As you do, move the candles farther apart. Chant the charm for as long as you can while visualizing your freedom and healing.



The next night, light the candles again repeating the above ritual. As each night that passes, continue to move the candles farther apart from each other. On the last night when you have the binding cord as tight as it can be and the candles are the farthest apart, chant the charm bringing up all the emotion you can muster, all the force of your will, all your energies.

Visualize these energies and your goal circling around you, within you and rising up to the sky. When you can no longer keep the pace and the chant, release the energies up through the vortex you've visualized as you cut the cord that joins the two candles. You are free. You are at peace. Ground yourself by eating and drinking a bit. You have done magick. It is complete.



The Charm

*I sever now these ties that bind
And banish them from heart and mind*

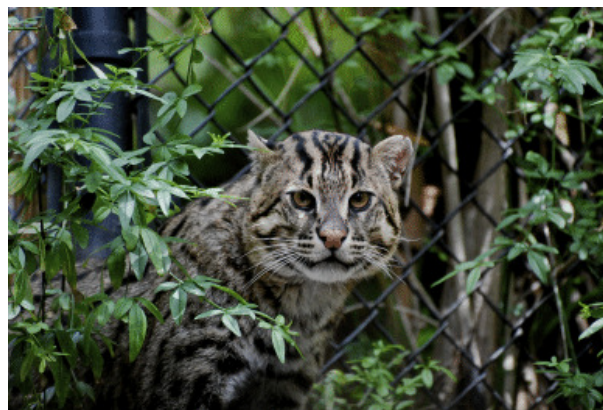
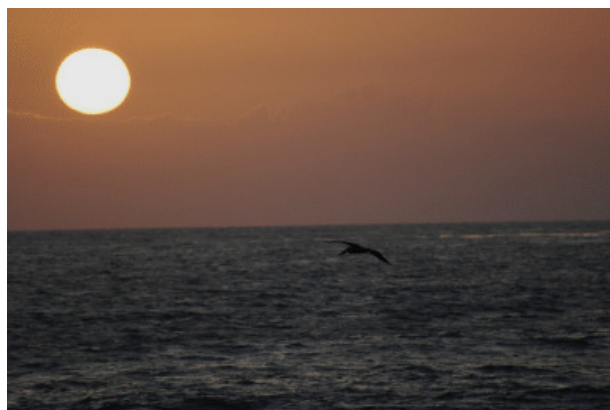
*With peace and happiness to gain,
I free myself from grief and pain.*



June 2010 © Lillian Norman
Lillian lives in northeast Ohio and is a solitary pagan witch. She has been a member of EW since 2005.

Nature's Glory *(Pic's from our members)*

These four © Lillian Norman



Mysteries of the Great Pyramid

(Part 2)

by Graham D. Furnell

O my friends!

There is no structure under heaven which equals the perfection of the pyramids of Egypt; They are buildings that time fears, while all else that lies on the surface of the earth fears time. The eye is delighted by the beauty of their design, and the mind cannot grasp the purpose of their construction.

(Umara al-Yamani, cited by the 15th century Arabic scholar al-Maqrizi.)

Not much is known about Khufu, the pharaoh responsible for the construction of the Great Pyramid, and only one likeness of him has been found – a small 7.5cm tall ivory statuette found in a temple in Abydos. However, the features of this statuette are quite detailed, and have been described as follows (see source by Geddes & Grosset): *“The features only occupy a quarter of an inch, and yet are animate with life and expression... The face is that of a thinker and man of action – an idealist and an iron-willed ruler of men...”* There is also an inscription stamped on the statuette... *“King of Kings; Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.”* Fitting words to be associated with such a monumental feat as the construction of the Great Pyramid!



The only known surviving likeness of Khufu - a 7.5cm tall ivory statuette.

The other pyramids at the Giza site, though constructed later, are not as large as the Great Pyramid. However, these pyramids each have their own unique and mysterious characteristics. For example, the pyramid of Khafre has the following external dimensions – base length 215.25 m and height 143.5 m. This gives the pyramid a perfect geometrical profile; namely, that of two back to back 3-4-5 right angled triangles – a fundamental representation of the later named Pythagoras’ theorem. The pyramid of Menkaure is the smallest of the three significant pyramids at the Giza site, with base length and height dimensions 103.4 m and 65.5 m respectively. This pyramid is the only one of the Giza pyramids to have red granite casing stones, and it has the most complex system of tunnels and chambers making up the funerary apartment. There are also three smaller satellite pyramids to the south of the pyramid of Menkaure, of which the largest and best preserved is believed to have been constructed for his royal wife, Khamerernebty II. There is an interesting story about Menkaure - apparently he was told by an oracle that he only had another 6 years to live. Upon hearing this, Menkaure started to drink, and enjoy every moment of his remaining years. It was not until some 12 years later that Menkaure died suddenly, thus contemptuously disproving the prophesy. Menkaure was much loved by the Egyptians – he relaxed firm laws, was more liberal than his predecessors, and ruled with justice.

The construction of pyramids was not limited to the ancient Egyptians. Many other cultures constructed pyramid-like structures to show their reverence for and worship of royalty and the divine. The Nubians constructed more pyramids than the Egyptians, but these were smaller and had steeper inclines. The ancient Babylonians constructed stepped ziggurats – the best known being the Tower of Babel, of Biblical fame. About 100 pyramid-like mounds have been discovered in China, with most being located in the vicinity of the modern-day city of Xi’an. These mounds are flat-topped, and are thought to have been used for royal burial purposes. However, the largest and most elaborate pyramids to be found outside of Egypt are in modern-day Mexico and Central-America. These structures usually have stepped sides and temples on top, and were developed by ancient Mesoamerican cultures such as the Olmec, Toltec, Mayan and later Aztec. The largest monument ever constructed anywhere in the world is the Great Pyramid of Cholula, located in the Mexican state of Puebla. Its base measures 450 x 450 m, and it has a height of 66 m. This massive structure is still being excavated. So far, approximately 8 km of interior tunnels have been found, as well as many other impressive features such as the staircase shown in the picture below.



Small portion of a staircase on the side of the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico

Other famous Mesoamerican pyramids are the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon in Teotihuacán, and the Pyramid of Kukulcan in Chichen-Itza, shown below.



Pyramid of Kukulcan in Chichen-Itza

There are some fascinating links between the Great Pyramid, the pyramids mentioned above, and other megalithic sites such as Stonehenge. For example, there is a common association with astronomical observations, to aid the measurement of time – in particular the annual cycle including the seasonal solstices and equinoxes. The observation of these events was of universal importance in ancient times when so much depended on the Earth's bounteous harvests. It is well known that Stonehenge's "Heel Stone" has an alignment to the rising and setting Sun at the summer and winter solstices. There is also evidence to suggest that this ancient megalith may have been used to predict more complex astronomical events such as solar and lunar eclipses. Great sculptures of sacred plumed serpents run down the sides of the northern staircase of the Pyramid of Kukulcan in Chichen-Itza. These sculptures are set off by shadows cast by the corners of the temple on top of the pyramid at the spring and autumn equinoxes – with some describing these shadows as taking on the appearance of serpents slithering down the side of the pyramid as the Sun moves at these special times. The entrance to a cave at the base of the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacán points directly at the setting Sun on the days of the equinox. All are remarkable achievements requiring high levels of organization, cultural development and knowledge of science and engineering - similarly to the ancient Egyptians.

Regarding the Great Pyramid itself, its shape made it an ideal sundial of huge proportions. Its orientation to the cardinal directions meant that in early spring, the Sun rises just high enough above its apex for the whole shadow on the north face to vanish at the stroke of noon. In the winter months the shadow cast by the pyramid onto the ground to the north of the pyramid would be longest at the winter solstice. Similarly, the polished southern face of the pyramid

would reflect an illuminated triangle onto the ground that would be shortest at the summer solstice. There is evidence that precisely sized stones were laid to form a level “floor” around the pyramid to enable the accurate measurement of these shadows and illuminated areas on a daily basis (for more on this see the source by Tomkins). Such concepts are similar to those believed to be behind the use maypoles atop huge mounds such as Silbury Hill in England, which is built of over a million tons of hand-moved material. This mound appears to be purposefully located on the flat ground necessary for accurate solar observations to be made (unlike the location of most naturally formed hills). Fortunately for the constructors of Silbury Hill, due to latitude considerations, a lower maypole height would be needed in England to provide a shadow comparable to that of the Great Pyramid in Egypt (and therefore providing a similar accuracy of solar observation). Lastly, it is worth noting that ancient Egyptian images have been found that feature maypole-like structures – very interesting indeed!

The Great Pyramid is recognized as having a connection with the “Egyptian mysteries”. These mysteries are thought to have contained profound knowledge, including the study of science - particularly geometry and numbers. Quoting from the source by Tomkins: *“Knowledge of the astronomical cycles and their application also formed part of the ancient initiatory teaching. In those days... astronomy was not the mere science of the mechanism of the heavens, but was intimately connected with astrology, ‘a profound esoteric science connected with the great cycles of man’s evolution, understood only by the Adepts’.*” According to some sources, the Great Pyramid served as an initiatory gateway to the mysteries. Again quoting from Tomkins: *“the illuminated of antiquity passed through the mystic passageways and chambers of the Great Pyramid... The candidate... was laid in the great stone coffin, and for three days his spirit – freed from its mortal coil – wandered at the gateways of eternity. His Ka, as a bird, flew the spiritual spheres of space. He discovered that all the universe was life, all the universe was progress, all the universe was eternal growth. Realizing that his body was a house which he could slip out of and return to without death, he achieved actual immortality. At the end of three days he returned to himself again, and thus having personally and actually experienced the great mystery, he was indeed an initiate – one who beheld and one to whom religion had fulfilled her duty bringing him to the light of God. ...Most of the ancient philosophers and great religious teachers, including Moses and St. Paul, acknowledge or are acknowledged to have derived their wisdom from the Egyptian initiates. Individuals who admitted or hinted they were initiates include Sophocles, Solon, Plato, Cicero, Heraclitus, Pindar and Pythagoras.”*

The above initiatory process of spiritual rebirth is reflected symbolically in the mythology of ancient Egypt, most notably through the story of the god Osiris and his consort, the great mother goddess Isis. Osiris represented the pharaoh, who provided order and bestowed the bounties of Nature to the people of ancient Egypt. Osiris was slain by his evil brother Set, but through the magical powers of Isis, in collaboration with Thoth, the god of Wisdom and recorder of the deeds of men, Osiris was able to overcome death and be reborn through his son, the great avenging god Horus. Closely linked to this is “The Book of the Dead”, a collection of Egyptian inscriptions and papyri found in tombs and mummy wrappings, which provide intricate details of spells, incantations and instructions that would enable one to successfully pass from this life to the next. It is believed that aspects of the Egyptian mysteries can still be found in the practices of mystical orders such as the Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Theosophists and Golden Dawn.



The King’s Chamber, showing the granite sarcophagus - which is said to ring like a bell when struck.

Over the centuries, many mysterious experiences have occurred within the Great Pyramid. These range from the everyday accounts of those who have entered the great monument, saying that they felt an unexplainable, eerie

energy; to more profound events involving great historical figures. I myself can remember talking years ago to a British WWII veteran, who, on his tour of duty, was stationed in Egypt and was able to inspect the interior of the pyramid. He recalled how one irreverent member of their party joked around and actually climbed into the granite sarcophagus within the King's Chamber (see picture). On his way out, he slipped and badly injured his leg, an event that all attributed to "The Pharaoh's Curse". Be that as it may, regarding more profound experiences, there is a story about Napoleon Bonaparte, who was in Egypt in the latter part of the 18th century for a military campaign. Upon visiting the Great Pyramid, and being guided to the King's Chamber, he asked to be left alone; reputedly, just as Alexander the Great had done many years before him. When he came out of the chamber, he was said to have been very pale and visibly shaken. A colleague joked to him and asked if he had witnessed anything mysterious. At first, Napoleon abruptly refused to comment, but then added more gently that he never wanted the incident mentioned again. Even after many years had passed, Napoleon continued to refuse to speak openly about his experience in the pyramid, merely hinting that he had received some vision of his destiny. At St. Helena, just before the end of his life, a close friend again asked Napoleon about his mysterious experience. Just as he was about to reply, he paused, shook his head and said "No. What's the use. You'd never believe me." So it was that Napoleon's secret went with him to the grave. Napoleon was responsible for gathering much of the information we currently have about ancient Egypt. During his military campaign there, he employed a large team of artists, archaeologists and scientists to document the ancient culture. One of their most sensational discoveries was the "Rosetta Stone", a critical artifact that enabled the translation of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics into other languages.

It is perhaps no surprise that a number of metaphysical effects have been associated with the pyramid shape. In the 1930s a Frenchman, Antoine Bovis, claimed that food could be preserved for longer when placed within a scale model of the Great Pyramid. Encouraged by the claims of Bovis, a Czech engineer, Karl Drbal, conducted experiments with razor blades - which were placed flat and aligned north-south (i.e. with the blades facing east-west) on a platform 1/3 the way up within a cardinally aligned 1:1,000 cardboard model of the Great Pyramid. His successes led him in 1949 to apply for, and later be granted, a patent for "a device for maintaining the sharpness of razor blades and razors". Other claims that have been made include the enhancement of plant growth and meditational experiences within pyramid-shaped structures. Such phenomena appear to be supported by recent controlled scientific studies of the effect pyramid containers have on the preservation of milk stored within them (see: <http://www.healthandyoga.com/html/dissertations/gopi1/abstract.asp>). These studies led the researchers to conclude "that pyramids are great sources of unseen positive energy and can be utilized for various purposes like preservation, pollution reduction and understanding and elevation of the human consciousness."

For those (like myself!) who would like to build a scale model of the Great Pyramid, here are some simple instructions for two types of model. Firstly, a "tent frame" type model of 8 pieces that could be made of tubing, wire, or even drinking straws for a small one. Make the 4 x base pieces 100 units long (e.g. 1 unit = 1 millimeter), and make the 4 x apex struts 95.1 units long and join them all up. Note that you can scale up or down the lengths to make any sized pyramid you want (e.g. if you make the base pieces 150 mm long then the apex struts will be 142.7 mm long). Secondly, a "cardboard cut-out" type model with 1 square base sheet and 4 triangular side sheets. Make the base sheet with sides 100 units long, and make the 4 x side sheets triangles with base length 100 units and height 80.9 units. Stick them all together with tape or glue to make a solid pyramid model. Hopefully, these instructions make sense.

I hope that you have enjoyed our short journey exploring the mysteries of the Great Pyramid. There are many more fascinating facts and stories about this eternal wonder – enough to fill a substantial book, let alone an article such as this. For those who would like to read more, I can recommend the source by Tomkins as an excellent reference. Also, there are many other similar books worth looking at (e.g. try your local library, bookshops or online book retailers), plus an enormous amount of information available on the internet. I wish you well with your reading, and hope that one day, you may be fortunate enough to experience first-hand, the mysteries of the Great Pyramid.

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Flower Mandalas

By Lyric Moonshadow

Ahhhh, the Summer Solstice... I love this time of year, not because of the barbecues and longer days, but rather the structure, simplicity and solace that comes with the season. We have spent the past months planning our gardens, preparing our soil, nurturing our seedlings and baby perennials and now all we have to do is basic maintenance and wait for the fruits of our labors. Many of our perennials are blooming and our early spring bulbs have already blessed us with their beauty and fragrances. The structure of knowing exactly what we have to do and how to do it is somehow comforting. The simplicity of just waiting for everything to grow and the solace of knowing that the rest is in our Mother's hands.

I was trying to think of something to write about this time of year and was grazing through the web's summer sites - images of beautiful summer flowers, some on the "Nature's Glory" photo files on E-Witches web site, when I became aware of the similarity between flowers and Mandalas, which went on to inspire me to write this piece. So here goes:

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning "circle". Mandala art is usually a geometric based design occurring within a circular frame. This form is considered to be one of the most basic and primordial of all forms. The Circle is the earth, the sun and the moon. The Circle is our community, our family circle, and our circle of friends. It is the center of our being and the window to our souls. Bonnie Bell, at her website www.GaiaStarWorld.com says it far better than I can:

"Mandalas support consciousness-expansion because their symbolic geometrics and patterning information resonate within us at so many levels. Their visual messages work like key-codes – they give us access to levels of awareness that are always potentially within reach, but not readily contacted. A mandala holds open a gateway into these wider dimensions of self and world. This helps us go beyond the limited pressures of daily awareness into a space we can dive deep and soar high."

The psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875-1961), well known for his concept of "collective unconscious", spiritual vision and his research with Native American beliefs as well Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism, began painting as therapy during a mid-life crisis. This evolved into painting circular abstract designs, which he discovered were very similar to Mandalas used for contemplation in Tantric Yoga and meditation. He went on to write extensively on Mandalas and later described the Mandala as a symbol of the self, which encompassed the conscious and unconscious psyche.

Using the flower as a Mandala, as it turns out, is not an original idea. Once I began researching this topic I discovered that others had this brilliant idea before me. This is as it should be, because what could be a more natural Mandala than a flower? The flower has all the characteristics of a pure Mandala. It is balanced, and concentric. The center is well defined, the outer borders form a circle, and there are usually four distinct directional headings. It is interesting to note that Mandalas exist in some form in many different religions. The Buddhists (most popularly the Tibetan Monks) create sand Mandalas as a symbol of the impermanence of life. The Navaho Indians also created sand paintings similar to Mandalas during rituals. These rituals lasted 5 to 15 days and in the end the sand was swept away as a symbol of our fleeting time on earth. Mandalas appear in Cathedrals and architecture around the world. In Notre Dame the Rose Windows are Mandalas. Most places of worship including mosques, stupas, cathedrals and our Circles are built around a focal center – in essence a large architectural Mandala. Last but not least, the Mandala exists in nature as the flower and the snowflake.

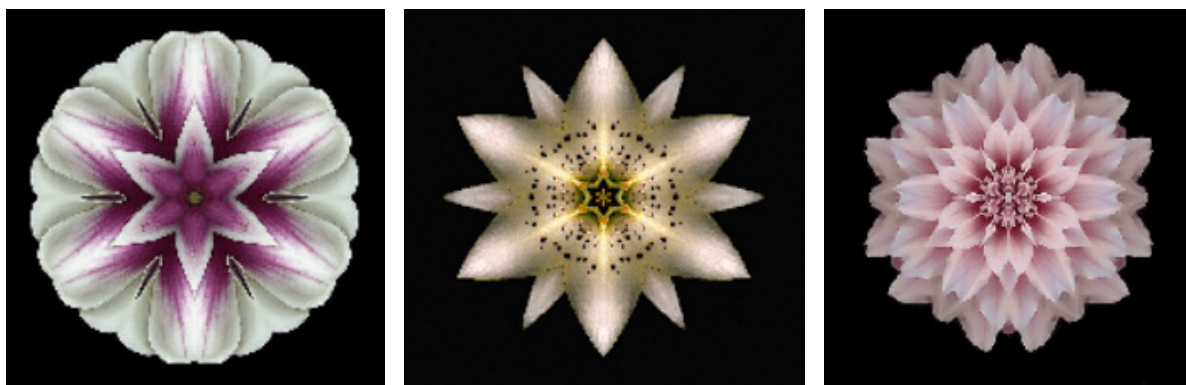
I was fortunate to have learned Transcendental Meditation from students of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the early 1970's ... Yes, I was a Hippie. Although I no longer meditate for 20 minutes twice a day, I do revert to meditation and my mantra during times of physical and/or emotional stress. TM continues to be part of my life and I'm sure has had something to do with my choice of, and comfort with, the Wiccan Path. I know my ability and ease with journeying has been greatly enhanced due to my meditation. If you have never meditated or if you have never meditated with a Mandala, here are some basic steps to follow:

Find a quiet comfortable spot. Turn off your cell phone, unplug your landline and let the people you live with know you cannot be disturbed for the next half an hour. Either sit on a chair with a firm straight back, or sit with your legs crossed on a pillow or blanket on the floor with your back against the wall. Put your Mandala in front of you, about 2 feet away, or hold it in your lap. Close your eyes and begin to consciously breathe through your nose, filling your lungs and releasing through your mouth. Try to take deep, slow, even breaths (don't hyperventilate) and be aware of the rhythm of your breathing. When thoughts enter your mind, acknowledge them but then let them go. Do not dwell on them. Feel your body relax. In your mind's eye see your Mandala and concentrate on the center of the Mandala. Focus your energy on your heart until you feel energy flowing between your heart and the center of your Mandala.

When you are ready half-open your eyes and see your Mandala with your eyes half-closed and unfocused. See the whole Mandala, but don't focus on the details. Continue to be aware of your breathing. Become aware of the patterns, colors and images in your Mandala. Again, if unrelated thoughts enter your mind, acknowledge them, let them go and return to your Mandala. Finally, open your eyes, focus and visually delve into your Mandala. See every aspect and detail and then focus on the detail. Your Mandala holds the power of healing, unity and balance and the center is the heart of the power. Remember to continue to be aware of the flow of energy between your heart and the heart of the Mandala. Once you have finished, it is very important to give yourself time to "come down" by working backwards. Half-close your eyes and explore your Mandala again with unfocused eyes, then in your mind's eye with your eyes closed.

It can be beneficial and insightful to keep a journal of the thoughts you have while meditating. Learning to meditate takes time, so don't get frustrated if things don't go exactly as you imagine they will. Like anything else, practice makes perfect. Usually 20 minutes twice a day.

So, pick a flower, or use one of these beautifully enhanced examples by David Bookbinder, from his blog Ursi's Eso Garden – take a deep breathe, feel the unity and harmony between you and the universe. Enjoy!



http://www.eso-garden.com/index.php?/weblog/flower_mandalas/

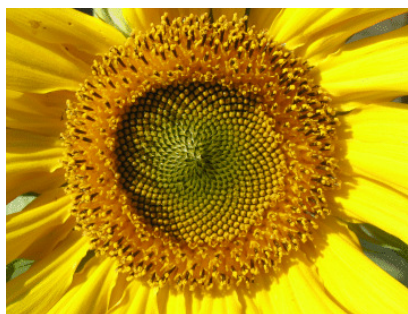
"I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point -- namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation. ... I knew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

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Zinnia Mandala by Pari



Sunflower Mandala by Graham

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Bards Corner

Summer Sun

*Great is the sun, and wide he goes
Through empty heaven without repose;
And in the blue and glowing days
More thick than rain he showers his rays.*

*Though closer still the blinds we pull
To keep the shady parlor cool,
Yet he will find a chink or two
To slip his golden fingers through.*

*The dusty attic, spider-clad,
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;
And through the broken edge of tiles,
Into the laddered hayloft smiles.*

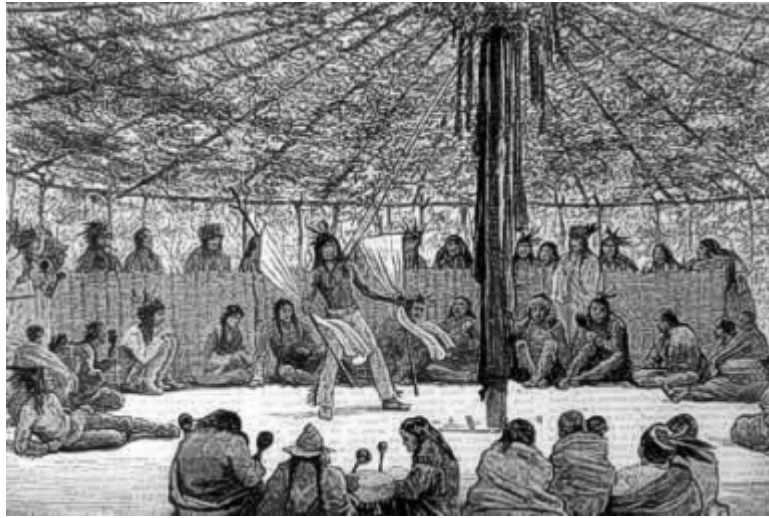
*Meantime his golden face around
He bares to all the garden ground,
And sheds a warm and glittering look
Among the ivy's inmost nook.*

*Above the hills, along the blue,
Round the bright air with footing true,
To please the child, to paint the rose,
The gardener of the World, he goes.*

By Robert Louis Stevenson - A Child's Garden of Verses.



The Native American Sun Dance



1886 engraving showing Cree Indians performing a Sun Dance

Written and compiled by George Knowles

During the 19th-century the Sun Dance was one of the most important ritual ceremonies practiced by the Native Plains Indians of North America. It was normally performed after the last of the season's great buffalo hunts, which usually occurred about the same time as the Summer Solstice. For many of the tribes, the Sun Dance is a ritual calling on the Sun's powers of regeneration, and for those taking part, is a time of personal renewal, dedication and spiritual rebirth. This however could only be achieved through a "vision quest" which included: three or four days of seclusion, fasting, purification and other trials involving pain and suffering.

Some of the tribes who performed the Sun Dance included: the Arapaho, Arikara, Asbinboine, Bannock, Blood, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Hidutsa, Mandan, Sioux, Cree, Plains Ojibway, Sarasi, Omaha, Ponca, Ute, Shoshone, Kiowa, and Blackfoot tribes. Each tribe held its own annual celebration, and while some of their practices may differ, in common with each was that the main Sun Dance ritual was performed by the tribe's younger men.

In 1895 however, the Canadian government followed by the United States in 1904, banned the more torturous aspects of the ritual on humanitarian grounds. As a result, and under the threat of prosecution from the Department of Indian Affairs, for many years the full ritual was only practised in secret. Today with a better understanding of Native Indian beliefs and traditions, both governments ended their restrictions. In the United States, legislation in the form of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. This granted Native American Indians the right to freely practice their own traditional religious ceremonies.

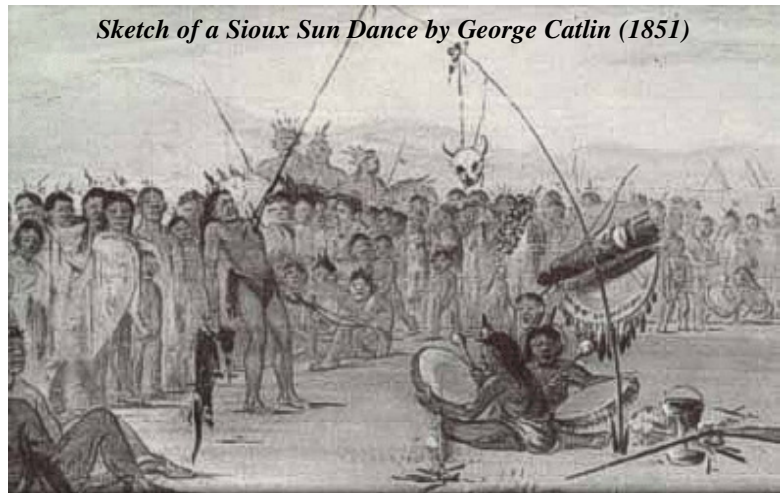
Today the annual Sun Dance is a great social occasion lasting from four to eight days, during which, the whole community takes part in its preparation. Once the tribe has gathered, a Sun Dance leader (usually one of the Elders) is selected to organise the event. A large circular area is cleared on which the ritual itself will later take place, and around this a large temporary lodge is constructed. This consists of a double row of wooden posts that are covered to create a shaded area from where spectators can watch the proceedings.

The tribe's most senior Chief or Medicine Man is then sent out to locate a suitable forked sapling tree to be used as a central pole within the circle. Younger men from the tribe, particularly those who had distinguished themselves in some way, are then given the honour of cutting the tree down. After being trimmed, the tree is taken back to the dance site where sacred and symbolic objects are secured between its forks. Under the direction of the Sun Dance leader the tree is then ritually erected in the middle of the dance area. Once erected, the tree symbolically connects heaven and earth where the tribe's Guardian Spirits reside, and to where all further prayers and devotions during the event will be directed.

The next day at sunrise the tribe's Chiefs and Elders, dressed in all their finery, take their places around the dance site and the ceremonies begin. Before the main



ritual, anyone wishing to dance can do so. Many do so wearing costumes representing important leaders or animal spirits; others wear body paint indicating honours and achievements symbolic of their family lineage and position in the tribe. Throughout the day dancing, drumming and traditional songs are sung, while in between, old legends are retold by Elders, thus maintaining the tribe's history as passed down by oral tradition. This social part of the celebration can go on for as many as four days, during which gifts are exchanged, tribal disputes are discussed and traditional pipes are smoked.



In the meantime those who have pledged to dance in the main ritual would have been undergoing supervised preparation by a mentor, usually someone who had already been through the ordeal. Each would have been fasting for several days prior to the event, and before the dance will undergo a spiritual purification ritual in a specially constructed sweat lodge. For many of the participants the Sun Dance is an opportunity to give thanks to the tribal Gods for blessings received, to fulfil a vow or pledge, or to petition help for specific purposes, be it protecting loved ones or for aid in healing a sick family member or friend. It is hoped that during the ritual and through enduring its sacrificial pain and torture, they would be rewarded with a vision from the Gods containing answers.

Before the start of the main ritual, the Sun Dance leader prepares the centre Sacred Tree with long strips of rawhide rope tied just below its crown. When all is ready, the participants are then led into the circle to reconfirm their pledges and their willingness to undertake the ordeal. A Medicine Man is then called to ritually cut and pierce the skin on each side of the dancers chest; into this a bone or wooden skewer is inserted and the rawhide strips attached to the Sacred Tree are tied to each end. Alternatively, flesh on the back is similarly cut and pierced and skewers inserted, but this time weighted buffalo heads are attached in a similar way. When all the participants had been prepared, the tribe's drummers start a slow rhythmic drumbeat and the Sun Dance begins. As the participants dance to the drumbeats, they keep their gaze firmly fixed on the Sun while reciting prayers and singing praises; at the same time, they continually pull backwards against their tethers in efforts to tear themselves free. Those who haven't managed to free themselves by sundown are allowed help from their mentors, who by adding their own weight pull and jerk them backwards in a final effort to tear them free.



*Sioux Sun Dance at Spring Creek,
South Dakota, 1969
(Copyright © 2005 David
Zimmerly)*

When the ordeal of the Sun Dance is over, the participant's wounds are tended to by a Medicine Man before being led away by their mentors to rest and recuperate. Later, whatever visions they may have experienced while enduring the pain of the Sun Dance are discussed with their mentors who help in their interpretation.

While not everyone experiences a life changing vision, all those taking part in the dance bring away some kind of reward. And for the tribe as a whole, the end of the Sun Dance brings a sense that the relationship between their people and the Guardian Spirits has once again been reaffirmed.

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*Nature's Glory
(Pic's from our members)*

Squirrel by SilkyRose



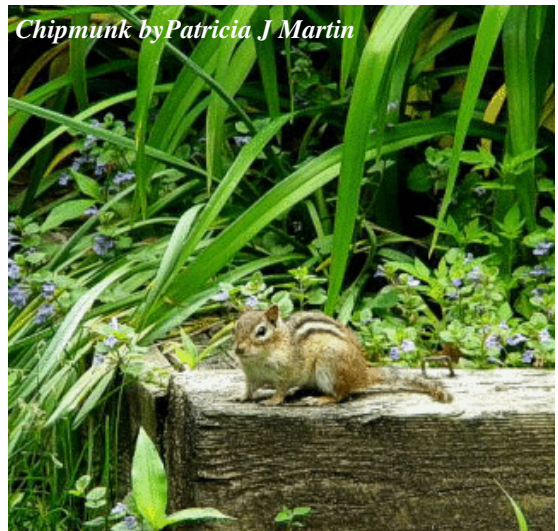
Humming Bird by Lil



Nesting Duck by George Knowles



Chipmunk by Patricia J Martin



Spider by George Knowles



Kangaroo Fire by Graham



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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March (Ostara)

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June (Litha)
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