

Revised Edition

Mabon

Pagan Thanksgiving

Kristin Madden

A Feast of Thanksgiving

Autumn brings with it some of the most wonderful foods and drinks. As the time of the second harvest, and in preparation for the coming winter, we honor this time of bounty with gratitude and celebration. As such, it is known as the Pagan Thanksgiving and we indulge just as much at our Mabon feasts as anyone does at the mundane Thanksgiving in November.

Hot Mulled Cider

Apple cider is a drink that whole family can enjoy. I remember visiting apple orchards and watching the apples being pressed to make cider each autumn. There was a strong, tangy aroma to the area as we walked down the line, watching the entire process on the way to the orchard store. Adults may want to try a shot of dark, spiced rum added to their cider.

You will need:

- ½ cup brown sugar
- dash nutmeg
- 1 tsp whole allspice
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp whole cloves
- 2 quarts apple cider
- ¼ tsp salt

1. Combine brown sugar, allspice, 1 tsp cloves, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon and apple cider in large saucepan.
2. Bring to boiling. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
3. Strain to remove spices

— Kristin Madden

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About the Author

Raised in a shamanic home, Kristin Madden is a healer and deathwalker, assuming a role handed down in her family for generations. Deciding to offer these services outside her family, Kristin has been working as a healer since 1980 and deathwalking since 1990. She has been a member of an international shamanic journeying and healing group since 1996.

Kristin has explored Eastern and Western mystic paths since 1972. She is a Druid, tutor, and tutor-mentor for the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids and is on the Board of Silver Moon Health Services, a pagan sponsored non-profit health services organization based in New Mexico.

Her work has appeared on websites and in publications throughout North America and Europe, and she has been a guest on radio shows throughout North America.

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by
Kristin Madden



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By Kristin Madden

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface

Thanksgiving Origins **13**
Canada, United States: Accepted History, Another Story

Equinox Traditions **23**
The ancient Inca, the ancient Greeks, the Far East, the “New World,” Great Britain, Italy, India, Israel, modern Norse, modern Druids, Neopagan

Myths and Deities **47**
Persephone, Demeter, Pomona, Venus, Dionysus and Bacchus, Adonis, Hathor, Osiris, Isis, Archangel Michael, Dumuzi, Inanna, Tammuz, Ishtar, Siduri, Adon, Ashtoreth, Durga, Mithra, Freyja, Freyr, Thor, Mabon, Cernunnos, Green Man, Dagda, Arawn, Ceridwen

Symbols of the Season **69**
Colors, Stones, Animals, Mythical Creatures, Plants, Cornucopia, Burial Cairns, Sun Wheels

Rituals of Mabon **97**
Incense, Altar Decorations, Equinox Rituals: Wiccan, Druidic, Norse, NeoShamanic, Children’s, Pagan Pride

A Feast of Thanksgiving **135**

Meal Blessings

Green Chile Sauce, Salsa, Vegetarian Chili, Rowan's Cheesy Squash, Baked Salmon, Pomegranate Chicken, Green Chile Stew, Mabon Cornbread, Corn Chowder, Pumpkin Puree, Roasted Pumpkin Seeds, Saffron Crescent Cakes for Ashtoreth, Berry Jam, Blue Ribbon Apple Pie, Apple Cobbler, Oatmeal Walnut Cookies, Popcorn Balls

Energizing Liquids

Mabon Party Fruit Punch, Hot Mulled Cider, Blackberry Wine, Quick Meade, Freyja's Libation

Magickal Mabon **161**

Protection, Prosperity, Blessing the Garden, Offering to the Animals, Augury, Working with the Trees, Connecting Earth and Sky, Into The Shadows, Letting Go, Continuing The Cycle

The Fun Stuff **189**

A Festive Home

Paraffin Leaves, Harvest Branch, Sun Wheel, Corn Dolly, Apple Dolls, Mabon Centerpiece, Thanksgiving Placecards, Corn Husk Placemats, Homemade Candles, Autumn Wreaths, Living Herb Wreath, Chile Ristras

Connecting with the Earth: Tending Your Garden, Planting for the New Year, Gourd Rattles, Nature Walks, Find the Colors, Make a Compass, Predict the Weather

Feeding Wildlife: Gourd Birdfeeders, Sun Wheel Squirrel Feeder

Connecting with the Sky: An Equinox Party, Equinox
Masks, Sun Stone
The Spirit of Community: Honoring the Elders and the
Young, Letters of Thanksgiving, Honoring the
Dead, Honoring Family Ancestors, Harvest Soap

| | |
|--|------------|
| Equinox Science | 219 |
| Weather Folklore, Autumn Ecology, Astrology, As- tronomy, Archeoastronomy | |
| Autumn Equinox Season Calendar | 241 |
| Wildlife Resources | 251 |
| Mabon Links | 255 |
| References | 259 |
| Index | 271 |

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Preface

The Autumnal Equinox has been referred to as Mabon, the Second Harvest Festival, Festival of Dionysus, Wine Harvest, Cornucopia, Feast of Avalon, Chinese Moon Festival, Equinozio di Autunno, Alban Elfed, and Winter Finding. The First Thanksgiving was held on or near this date, and it is from these early harvest festivals that the modern Thanksgiving feasts developed. This is a time rich in history, legend, and tradition, honored throughout the world, from the Far East to the Celtic lands, and from the Scandinavian countries to South America.

At this time of equal day and night, we give thanks for the harvest that will sustain us through the dark winter months. This is the season for gratitude and for giving back to the Earth; for continuing the cycle by giving freely to those less fortunate than we are. Many of us focus on striving toward inner and outer balance. We reflect on all that the waning year has brought us, so we may choose wisely those seeds we wish to sow in the new year.

This is the season of the apple and grape harvests and festivals offering wine, hot apple cider, and apple pie. The colors of the land, the light, and the trees are changing. The scent of cinnamon and cloves wafts through on the

cooler autumn breezes. The time of Mabon is filled with luxury and sensual experience as we sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labors before finishing up preparations for winter.

My goal in writing this book was to encourage readers to fully experience the sensual pleasures and luxurious reflection of the season while learning of its origins and the science behind the magic. For many of us, autumn is the best part of the year. We love to see the changing colors and pull out warmer clothes.

When Nancy Mostad at Llewellyn suggested that I submit a proposal for the Mabon book, I jumped at the chance. I immediately began to do research, just before Mabon 2000. The joy of the season and the wonderful information I found only served to increase my excitement at the project. As the scent of roasting green chiles filled the crisp Southwestern air, I immersed myself completely in the spirit of the Mabon season.

As you read this book, permit yourself to fully experience the joy, scents, tastes, and colors of the season. Even if you are not reading it near Mabon, allow the book to call to mind the clarity of autumn breezes, the abundance of apples and grapes, and warm spiced wine and cider. Feel warm, comfortable sweaters wrapped around your shoulders and soft flannel sheets soothing you to sleep in the cool air. This is the beauty of the Mabon season. It is out of this fullness that we give back to the universe and to our fellow beings on this Earth.

Carry this feeling of gratitude and generosity with you throughout the year. As we give, so do we receive. When we enter into a respectful and reciprocal relationship with All of Life, we become more respectable and honorable people. We grow through each encounter, and we pave the way for the abundance of the universe to flow into our lives.



The Origins of Thanksgiving

In addition to being the autumnal equinox, this is the harvest season and we celebrate this time of year with feasts of thanksgiving. While the American Thanksgiving has been set in November, the Canadians celebrate their holiday on the second Monday in October. It is from ancient European festivals, during which farming communities would share meat, bread, and beer for three days after the harvest was brought in, that these modern celebrations developed. It is also interesting to note that on the island of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia, the fourth Thursday in November has been set aside for a Thanksgiving celebration.

Canada

In Canada, Thanksgiving is celebrated on the second Monday of October. A date of November 9 was originally set by Parliament in 1879. Over the years, several dates were used including the third Monday in October, which was shared with Armistice Day after WWI. These holidays were separated and Thanksgiving was changed to the current October date in 1957.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

The Canadian Thanksgiving stems from slightly different origins than does the American holiday. When people were beginning to leave Europe for North America, harvest celebrations were still common throughout Europe and the people brought these traditions with them. Early Canadian farming families filled a goat's horn cornucopia in thanks for the fertility and abundance of the land.

An English explorer named Martin Frobisher held a formal celebration in 1578 in Newfoundland, giving thanks for his survival over the long journey to the "New World." Frobisher Bay was named after this man, who was later knighted in his homeland. Other settlers in the area continued this tradition of thanksgiving celebration.

In the 1600s, the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, is said to have had wonderful relations with his native neighbors. The French settlers, along with Champlain, formed the "Order of Good Cheer" and held huge feasts of thanksgiving, sharing the bounty with the native peoples in their area.

During the American Revolution, the Loyalists, who remained loyal to English rule, moved north to Canada. They brought the American tradition of Thanksgiving with them. As they moved throughout Canada, so did these celebrations.

United States

All Americans study the Pilgrims at Thanksgiving time in school. We trace our hands and color in the fingers to make turkeys. We make fake Pilgrim hats out of construction paper and we learn about the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock. By the time we reach adulthood, few of us remember what that whole thing was really all about anyway.

Thanksgiving Origins

Accepted History

The Pilgrims or Puritans were a sect of Christians known as Separatists or Brownists in England. The term “Pilgrims” was not associated with them until the late 1700s. These were an interesting people, following the teachings of a man named Robert Browne. Their belief was that the only true churches were formed by groups of like-minded people coming together by choice. When this happened, Separatists put together an organizing compact and elected their clergy. They believed they were the chosen people of God.

These Pilgrims wanted to be left alone and were willing to leave other religions alone as well. They were seen as a radical sect in England and were persecuted for it. In search of tolerance and peace, they left England first for Holland. In 1605, many of these Pilgrims left Holland with almost 40 people. They boarded the *Speedwell* ship and met up with the *Mayflower* in England. In all, about 120 adventurous people set sail for the “New World.” Unfortunately, their adventures consisted mainly of leaks in the *Speedwell* and they had to return to England twice.

Finally, they left the *Speedwell* behind and set forth from Plymouth, an English port, in September of 1605 with 102 people. These included men, women, and children. This was far from an easy passage and two people died. However, one child was born at sea and another was born before his parents set foot on land so 102 disembarked in present-day Massachusetts.

The London Company had granted these people lands near the Hudson River, but winds blew them off course and they took it as a sign from God that this was where they were to settle. Before establishing a settlement, the Mayflower Compact was drawn up and signed by forty-one men. This was a plan for government in their

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

new home. The big rush to get this signed was because not all the settlers were Pilgrims, or Separatists. The Separatists feared trouble from the others because they were not on the land granted to them.

A suitable area was found on the site of a former native village. They moved the ship and all their belongings into Plymouth Harbor and established the Plymouth Colony. The Mayflower Compact, signed aboard ship, became the basis for the new government at what they called Plymouth Colony. In the following spring, the *Mayflower* itself returned to England.

The hardships of this new land took its toll. Fifty-two people died that first winter, leaving very few to plant crops in the spring. Two natives, who had been captives on English ships, took pity on these people. Squanto and Samoset taught the Pilgrims how to survive in this land.

They showed the settlers to catch and use fish for fertilizer. They taught them what types of crops to plant with this fertilizer. They showed them how and what to hunt. They also introduced the Pilgrims to the great Wawmegin, chief of the Wampanoag people. This chief was called Massasoit by the settlers and remained friendly to these newcomers in his lands throughout his life.

The first harvest was such a blessing that the governor or the colony invited the Wampanoag people to share in a three-day festival of thanksgiving. This first Thanksgiving took place somewhere between September 21 and November 9, 1621. This is referred to as Harvest Home and is also described in the Equinox Traditions chapter.

After 1621, Thanksgiving was occasionally celebrated, rarely on the same date. In the mid-1700s, Congress determined these dates and they usually took place in December. President George Washington set a November date, beginning in 1789. However, this was not an official,

Thanksgiving Origins

annual holiday until President Abraham Lincoln set it to be celebrated on the last Thursday in November. The date was again changed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and finally placed on its modern date of the fourth Thursday in November by Congress in 1941.

Another Story

From the Native American perspective, the early days of the Pilgrim settlers were not as harmonious and peaceful as we have been taught. The rigid beliefs and intolerance that made the Puritans such outcasts among the English carried over to New England. While there was a fifty-year peace between native peoples and settlers, this was largely due to a great chief and it changed quickly once the chief's son grew old enough to understand politics.

The land the Pilgrims settled was already occupied by the Wampanoag people. These were an agricultural people that used hunting and fishing to supplement what they could grow. Theirs was a society in which hospitality was an important part of daily life. This hospitality was extended to the Pilgrims, in spite of the fact that the Wampanoags had suffered many losses in recent years due to epidemics of diseases introduced by European settlers. After the English arrived, disease continued to decimate the people.

The leaders of the Wampanoag people were called *sachems* and *sagamores*. These leaders held responsibilities under the Great Sachem. These leaders were called Kings (or Queens) by the English but they were much more integral, down-to-earth members of the community than European royalty was.

Much of the early relationship between the Wampanoag people and early settlers was relatively friendly.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

This contributed to the generous way later settlers were treated. Not all interactions were so friendly and captains of slaving ships were known to supplement their “take” with native peoples.

Squanto, the Patuxet man that assisted the Pilgrims, had been taken as a slave years earlier. He had gained his freedom from monks in Spain and returned to his homeland as an interpreter for the British. When he reached present-day Massachusetts, he found that everyone in his village (Patuxet) had been killed by epidemics.

The Pilgrims initially stumbled into the deserted village of Nauset. This was one of the Wampanoag villages that had been devastated by disease. Almost everyone was gone. Those Nausets that remained left behind baskets of corn for the deceased. Unaware of the purpose for this food, the settlers almost took it home before the remaining Nauset warriors ran them off.

They did eventually occupy the site of Squanto’s old home, the abandoned village of Patuxet. The Wampanoags knew they were there but kept their distance throughout a winter that killed off half the settler population. The following spring, the dying Pilgrims were greeted by a Pemaquid sachem named Samoset. Samoset spoke some English from previous encounters with explorers and other settlers. He stayed the night and left for his home in Maine the following morning.

Samoset soon returned to the village with Squanto, who devoted himself to teaching these people how to survive for years. Squanto only left when he became ill and went back to his people for healing. It was Squanto that introduced the Pilgrims to the Great Sachem, Woosamaquin, which means Yellow Feather. He was called Massasoit by the English.

Thanksgiving Origins

The Wampanoags were once the most powerful and numerous people in the area. But they had lost more than half of their people in three devastating epidemics. The Naragansett people emerged as the most powerful force during the years leading up to the *Mayflower's* arrival. It is believed that Woosamaquin felt that it was a good political move to assist the settlers and sign treaties with them.

In the spring of 1621, Woosamaquin signed a treaty permitting the Pilgrims to occupy 12,000 acres of the future Plymouth Plantation area. Coming from two very different worlds, these people understood this in two very different ways. The Wampanoags perceived it as a sharing of land that could not be truly owned by any person. These English settlers saw it in the way that most modern people do: they *owned* this land. It was theirs and theirs alone. Therefore they could do with it as they wished and could prevent others from occupying it.

When the grateful Pilgrims invited Woosamaquin to their first harvest festival (the first Thanksgiving), the problems stemming from this difference of perception were mere seeds of the strife that would emerge and tear apart their peaceful relations. Woosamaquin and ninety of his warriors brought five deer to the three-day feast. The security of this harvest was relatively short-lived. That winter brought another ship from England and an additional forty people to feed. Once again, the settlers were aided by their native neighbors when Aspinet, sachem of the Nauset, brought them food.

These Pilgrims were not all Puritans and things changed after 1630 when a large number of Puritans moved into this area from the south, displacing most of the other Christian peoples. The Puritans were intolerant of other Christians and native peoples alike. They preferred to take rather than ask or offer trades for land and items.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Between 1640 and 1675, large numbers emigrated from England where Puritans were enduring even greater oppression than before.

Also by this time, the settlers had developed enough trade and commerce so they no longer needed the help of the native peoples. In fact, the trade and expansion of the English settlers altered the balance of power among native confederacies more than once. Native populations continued to decline, mainly as the result of epidemics but also due to wars. Conversion to a Puritan version of Christianity further destroyed native cultures and traditions.

The Great Sachem Massasoit/ Woosamaquin had the names of his sons changed to English names before his death in 1661. While his older son, renamed Alexander, became the Great Sachem after his father, it is the younger son, renamed Philip, who made history. Alexander was a strong and independent sachem, which did not go over well with the Puritan government at Plymouth. He died soon after eating a meal during talks with this government. Many native peoples believe he was poisoned and have rather convincing evidence to support this possibility. The Puritans said that he died of a fever.

Philip took over as Great Sachem and was called King Philip by the English. His goal was to prevent further expansion by the settlers into native lands. In order to accomplish this, he enlisted the help of other native nations. The situation got became increasingly worse until in 1675 what would be known as King Philip's war broke out.

The settlers made good use of native converts as spies and scouts, turning the native peoples against each other and gaining an otherwise impossible advantage. They also repeatedly refused to acknowledge the neutrality of certain native peoples, adding to the army on Philip's side. It also added to the number of people he was responsible

Thanksgiving Origins

to shelter and feed. This was not an easy task and intensified the difficulties native peoples were already experiencing.

It all blew up for Philip's people in August of 1675. Philip's wife and son were captured and were reportedly sold as slaves, although it appears that they did return to native peoples years later. Then Alexander's wife was drowned in an attempt to escape a village raid. Her head was displayed at a settler's village. Betrayed by an informer, Philip was captured and killed later that month. His head was displayed at Plymouth for many years. Peace treaties were not signed until 1678, before which most of Philip's accomplices were hunted down and their cornfields burned. Many of the tribes that fought in this war, particularly the Wampanoags, were nearly exterminated by the time treaties were signed.

There are two very different versions of the First Thanksgiving and the events surrounding it. I offer both here to give a more balanced view of this time and in the hopes that you will do your own exploring into our collective history. You can well imagine that most native peoples do not celebrate Thanksgiving as we do and many come to it with sadness and anger. This is something we might keep in mind as we give thanks for our blessings and investigate our own shadow sides.



Equinox Traditions

To *Autumn*¹

by John Keats

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Traditions Around the World

Even today, many of the customs of the season revolve around the Land. While a relative few of us in modern society raise livestock or grow crops, this remains a part of our collective consciousness and we recreate these experiences through our festivals and rituals. Some other common themes of worldwide customs are reverence for the dead, protection and prosperity, and giving thanks for our blessings. In this chapter, I list festivals under the land

Equinox Traditions

of their origin. Obviously, most of these celebrations have spread to other countries and some have been modified in the process.

Throughout the world, there are local harvest festivals that are too numerous to name. Apple and grape celebrations, wine festivals, and many musical events are common at this time of year. Check your local newspapers or the Internet to find out what's going on in your area of the world.

In some areas of the United States, fall foliage means tourists. People come out in droves to see the gorgeous colors as the leaves change. In fact this tradition is so popular that there are entire books and websites devoted to peak foliage: where and when to find it. Depending on your region of the country, peak viewing may range from mid-September to the end of October.

In New Mexico, this is also the chile harvest. There is a chile vendor roasting those addictive green chiles on just about every street corner in the cities. Roadside stands boast the fruits of the land, including red and green chiles. You know it is nearing autumn when *ristras*, long ropes of dried, red chiles, can be seen hanging from most front porches.

The Ancient Inca

Situa Raymi

The ancient Inca were an agricultural people and their main festivals revolved around the cycles of the land. They followed a lunar calendar of twelve moons. All major religious festivals began on the first new moon after a solstice or equinox. It is believed that these festivals were

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

fairly simple affairs for the Inca. General elements included animal sacrifice, usually from the sacred llama herds, offerings to the maize spirit, and ceremonial dances.

The moon that corresponded approximately to our modern September was the Moon of the Moon Feast, *Ccoya Raymi Quilla*. The Moon was the mythic mother of the Incan people, ruler of the starry heavens, and the Queen of the Sun who was King. The Virgins of the Moon served her and held key roles, along with high-ranking Inca women, in this festival. This was the time of planting.

While northern peoples celebrated the autumnal equinox, the Inca, of present-day Peru in the southern hemisphere, honored the spring equinox. Situa Raymi, also called the Ccapac Situa, or Ccoya Raymi was the Brilliant or Moon Feast. This third festival of the year was largely a purification ceremony signaling the beginning of the rainy season.

Situa Raymi was celebrated all over the Incan empire. The people held to a partial three day fast during which time sancu, small loaves of partially baked corn bread, were made as offerings. It is said that a tiny amount of the blood of a child was baked into these sacred loaves.

The Incan Sun Priest officiated at this Feast that was designed to eliminate the sickness that often accompanied the rainy season. Messengers would carry prayers throughout the land in the four directions and the people living near rivers took the prayers with them as they bathed and washed items in the rivers. The rivers were believed to carry the sickness and evil out to the sea.

During the festival, pieces of sancu were rubbed on the faces of the people, their doorways, and storage areas for cleansing and protection. The sancu were thrown into fountains for purification. They were sent to living

Equinox Traditions

relatives and sprinkled on the mummies of ancestors. The Inca preserved and honored ancestral mummies and even had the mummies of former kings and queens enshrined in the Temples of the Sun and Moon.

During the feast, all was shared and goodwill toward everyone in the community was the requirement. A special beer made of boiled white corn, called *chicha*, was the traditional drink. Chicha was also passed through a golden urn and a silver pipe into the House of the Sun. Four perfect llamas were sacrificed and a communion of llama blood and *sancu* followed. Omens were sought in the lungs of the sacrificial llamas. Then a small amount of meat was distributed to everyone and the bodies of the llamas were burned. The remaining llamas were killed for a great four-day feast of chichi and llama meat. More offerings, prayers, and blood-sancu were made before the festival finally came to a close, two weeks after it began.

The Ancient Greeks

Festival of Dionysus

In ancient Athens, Oschophoria was the celebration of the grape harvest. It was held on the seventh day of the Greek month of Puanepsion, which relates to late September or early October. Men would carry the vines, heavy with grapes, in a procession through the towns. This was a time of song and celebration, followed by a ritual meal that included myth performances and the telling of legends.

Dionysus is the Greek god of vegetation, resurrection, ecstasy, and of course ... wine. His worship reached its peak in the eighth century B.C. He was an early form of the possibly better-known Bacchus, although some scholars believe Bacchus to be a Roman perversion of the god

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Dionysus. It is said that the name Bacchus originated around the 5th century B.C. as a result of the loud cries with which Dionysus was worshiped at the *orgia*, or Dionysiac mysteries.

It was Dionysus that showed mortals how to cultivate grapevines and make wine. In ancient Greece, wine was often mixed with water. There is a fair amount of scholarly debate as to the reasons for this. In any event, priestesses would mix the wine for the Dionysian festivals and rites. This was then poured into goblets called *kantharoi* for the community.

Eleusinian mysteries

This religious festival was held each year in Eleusis, a city in Attica, just north of Athens, in the heart of the grain-farming region of Greece. The Mysteries honored Demeter and Persephone and were held in Eleusis because it was here that Demeter was welcomed during time of sadness and searching for Persephone. She nursed the sons of the king of Eleusis while her daughter was held in the Underworld by Hades.

The Mysteries began in the spring, with the Lesser Mysteries, honored at Agrae. This was the first of four stages leading to initiation. The Greater Mysteries took place in late summer to early autumn. This was the time of year when Persephone returned to the Underworld, just as the seed begins to lie dormant in the earth.

These Greater Mysteries began with the return of sacred ceremonial objects from Eleusis to the Eleusinion, a temple at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens. The next day, participants cleansed themselves in the sea and sacrificed a young pig. Initiates then took part in a great procession from the ancient cemetery, Kerameikos, in Athens to Eleusis for the actual initiation.

Equinox Traditions

During the procession, participants would reenact a story about an old woman who was believed to have made Demeter smile in her search for Persephone. The procession shouted out a reference to Iacchus, possibly meaning Dionysus, or perhaps another deity who was said to be the son of either Persephone or Demeter.²

Upon reaching Eleusis, participants would rest in preparation for the day of fasting that was to follow. After fasting in memory of Demeter's fast during her search, initiates drank a sacred, hallucinogenic brew called *kykeon*. This was a mix of barley water and a mint known for its medicinal properties. The initiation culminated in the great initiation hall, the Telesterion. It is believed that a reenactment of the Demeter-Persephone myth was a part of this, along with rites having to do with the continuity of life after death. No one knows for sure what took place during the initiation since it was strictly forbidden to speak of it to the uninitiated.

What we do know, from various Classical writers, is that Eleusinian initiates were blessed. They were gifted with happiness and knew the secrets of life –and of life after death. The Eleusinian mysteries were open to anyone, including slaves. The only requirement to become a *mystes*, or initiate, was that the individual be neither a murderer nor a barbarian. These annual events attracted thousands of people from throughout the Greek world. The Mysteries began in the Mycenaean period, possibly as early as 1600 BC. It is believed that they were originally a local ritual that spread throughout the agricultural areas.

With the advent of Hellenistic society around 300 BC, they were taken over by the state during a period when various cults were hugely popular. It is believed that they took place annually until the 4th century AD, when Alaric I of the Visigoths invaded Greece. Modern archeologists

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

have found the remains of the Telesterion near the modern village of Lefsinia, near the ancient site of Eleusis.

The Far East

Harvest Moon Festival

The full moon closest to the Autumn Equinox is known as the Harvest Moon. It is said that farmers would continue to harvest their crops under the light of the full moon. With the days beginning to wane, it was a struggle to harvest and store the food that would provide for them over the harsh winter months.

In China, this time is also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, held on the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. This is significant in that the Chinese calendar is a lunar one. The first day of a month is always the new moon, while the fifteenth is always on the full moon. The Mid-Autumn Festival is truly a Moon Celebration and its exact Western date varies with the moon.

The true origins of this festival are unclear but there are two versions of the most popular story that I will share here. The young wife of the bodyguard of an emperor in the Hsia Dynasty, Chang Er (also Chang-O), was believed to have taken a magic pill that turned her into a fairy. In this form, she flew to the moon to escape from the pursuit of her husband. Another version of this story says that Chang Er stole the elixir of youth and immortality from her husband. The drug allowed her to soar to the moon where she was doomed to remain as punishment for her theft. Chang Er can still be seen on this most beautiful full moon: the Western Harvest Moon.

Equinox Traditions

This is a time of moon watching and family reunion in China, celebrated with paper lanterns, feasts, and moon cakes. Children are permitted to stay up late and accompany the entire family outdoors to watch the moon rise before eating their moon cakes. Farming families honor Heaven, symbolized by the moon, for the blessings they have received throughout the year.

This date is also believed to be the birthday of Tu-ti Kung, the Earth god. For the Chinese, like those in the Western world, this festival celebrates the end of a hard year tilling the soil and the bounty of the Land. Therefore, Tu-ti Kung is honored along with the moon and thanked for his blessings.

The round, golden brown moon cakes symbolize family unity. They are traditionally made with sweet fillings of nuts, mashed red beans, lotus-seed paste or Chinese dates, wrapped in a pastry. These moon cakes are also symbolic of the Chinese rebellion that led to the formation of the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644).

At that time, the Chinese were under the rule of Mongolian people. Knowing that the Moon Festival was near, leaders of the rebellion had messages outlining their attack baked into moon cakes. For this reason, many people eat moon cakes in memory of this very successful rebellion that restored rulership of China to the Chinese.

Keirou-no hi

This is a Japanese national holiday occurring on September 15. Although not exactly on the equinox, it is appropriate to include here because it fits in well with the associations of the season. Keirou-no hi is Respect for the Aged Day.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

This respect for the elders is a traditional Confucian value and is much more than the American Grandparent's Day, which is mainly an excuse to buy more greeting cards and is not widely celebrated.

In ancient Japan, reaching the age of sixty was very important. Not only was it considered old back then, but also it represented the end of one complete astrological cycle. In modern Japan, sixty is no longer such a big deal and the emphasis has shifted to the age of seventy or older. Not just celebrated by family members, cities and towns offer gifts to citizens that are over seventy years of age.

Otsukimi

This is a Japanese version of the Harvest Moon celebrations. Like the Chinese, the Japanese go outside for picnics and sky watching on the night of the September full moon. Picnics often consist of rice-cakes, fruits, and vegetables. As they eat, the people give thanks for the year's harvest.

Higan-e

The Higan-e, the "Ceremony to Reach Enlightenment," is a Buddhist celebration that has been honored on the spring and autumn equinoxes in Japan since ancient times. It is celebrated for three days before and after each equinox, with the central day known as Shingon-shu, Higan no chu-nichi, and Shuubun-no hi. *Higan* means the "other shore," as opposed to *shigan*, which is "this shore" and is the world in which we live. The higan is the place of enlightenment.

Equinox Traditions

Because of the balance of light and dark, yin and yang, higan-e is an important ceremony of the Oneness of all things. It is also believed that at this time of equal night and day, the Buddha returns to earth for one week to lead stray souls to Nirvana. The six days before and after the equinox itself symbolize the Buddhist Six Perfections that are needed before we can leave the world of suffering and attain nirvana. It is believed that Buddhist practice is particularly powerful on these days. Through the rituals and offering of memorial tablets, the living might attain Buddhahood and even the dead might receive great benefits.

This is popularly celebrated by memorials and visits to family graves. Gravesites are cleaned up and families make offerings of flowers, incense, and twigs of sacred trees to their ancestors. Families also leave ohagi, round cakes of sweet rice and bean paste, along with sushi with vegetables.

India

Navratri

The Durga Puja, or Autumn Navratri (Nine Nights) is a nine-day festival honoring the goddess Durga. Again depending on the correspondence between phases of the moon and the Western calendar, this festival often begins on or near the Autumn Equinox and continues into October. Navratri is held during the bright, or waxing, half of the lunar month.

Durga is the Hindu goddess of strength and Motherhood. She is the protector of the universe and her worship dates back at least 5000 years. Durga has been one of

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

shakti's main forms for almost 2000 years. Shakti is the dynamic creative, feminine energy of Nature. During the nine days of Her ritual, the nine different aspects of the goddess are honored through nine sacred plants and specific rituals.

The legend behind Nine Nights is that two demons accumulated so much power that they were able to force the gods from their seats in the heavenly realms to flee for their lives. The gods had no recourse but to pray to the divine creative energy of the universe.

For nine days they worshiped this primordial power. They made offerings and prayed continuously. Finally shakti appeared in the form of Durga and destroyed the demons, restoring the gods and the balance of good and evil in the world.

Like many festivals throughout the world, this autumn festival contains a great many agricultural elements. Each day of the Puja is associated with special vegetarian meals. Durga is the creative element of the universe. Her vegetative aspect is honored through these foods and Puja rituals involving the nine sacred plants and five grains.

Mihragan

Mihragan is the Zoroastrian feast of Mithra, or Baga-Mithra. One of the oldest known festivals, this feast is a time of community and thanksgiving. It is normally celebrated on October 1 on our Western calendar. However since it is believed to be a carryover from an earlier New Year festival from the times when the Indo-Iranian year began on the Autumn Equinox, many feel that the equinox is when it should rightly take place.

Israel

Sukkot

This is the third and last of the Jewish festivals honoring the exodus out of Egypt. It is the Feast of Booths or Festival of the Harvest Season. Like the Japanese Higan-e, Sukkot lasts for seven days. The booths, or *sukkah*, are reminders of the time the Jews spent wandering in the wilds of Sinai. Because of the variability of the Jewish calendar, Sukkot may occur a few weeks after the equinox.

Sukkot is the singular form of *sukkah*: purposefully fragile, three-walled structures that must only hold up to wind and rain. The *sukkot's* roof must be created from some type of vegetation and it cannot be attached to the walls. Traditional roofing materials are palm fronds, bamboo poles, wood, and branches. The roof must also be in direct contact with the sky and cannot be placed under an overhang, even one with a skylight. Many people will completely move into a *sukkot* for the entire week of the festival, while others will eat, spend time, or study there.

Originally, Sukkot was a harvest festival, much like those of other cultures. Farmers would celebrate the harvest, particularly the grape and other fruit harvest. In this case, it was considered to be the final harvest. The booths were historically shelters for farmers while they worked the land. Called the Festival of Ingathering (Chag Ha Asif) in the Torah, Sukkot has retained much of its agricultural focus.

Not only is the roof constructed of vegetative material but four species of plants are gathered together and waved in the temple during Sukkot. The four species are *etrog* (fruit of citrus trees), *lulav* (branches of palm trees),

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

and branches of myrtle and willow. While the etrog is generally accepted the most precious component, this has become known as “waving the lulav.” The myrtle and willow are attached to the lulav, three myrtle on the right and two willows on the left. This is held in the right hand and the etrog in the left. After a blessing, both are waved together three times up and three times down in the four cardinal directions plus up and down.

As time went on, this festival came to symbolize the Jews’ time in the wilderness. The booths came to represent the fragile shelters the people lived in during this time as well as the fragility of life and the frail safety we create around ourselves in this modern world. In more modern times, Sukkot came to be a time a thanksgiving for the blessings of nature and God and the sukkah would be decorated with seasonal fruit in gratitude.

Rosh Hashanah

This is the beginning of the Jewish new year. In Hebrew, the words mean, “head of the year” or “first of the year.” Rosh Hashanah is celebrated on the first and second days of the Jewish month of Tishri. Once again, we find a lunar calendar in use that results in this holiday falling in the time period of the Autumn Equinox.

In the Bible, Rosh Hashanah is called Yom Ha-Zikkaron or Yom Teruah. This is a time of remembrance and of the sounding of the *shofar*, a ram’s horn. Traditional Jews do not work on this holiday, preferring to spend time in synagogue or reflecting upon the past year. A wonderful, although not Biblical, practice that is popular at this time is that of Tashlikh, which means casting off. Many years ago, Jewish people would walk to a creek or river and empty their pockets into the water, symbolically casting

Equinox Traditions

away the misdeeds and problems of the past year. In modern times, it far more common for people to throw bread crumbs into the river.

There is a rich tradition of food in this festival, as there is in most festivals at this time of year. Apples and bread are dipped in honey, hallah bread with raisins is braided and baked in round shapes, and pomegranates are included to symbolize the good deeds of the family and the blessings they hope to receive in the next year. Fish is cooked in a variety of ways as a symbol of fertility and prosperity.

The tradition of Tzedakah, honored in Eastern Europe, speaks to our modern pagan traditions of thanksgiving at this time. Before the New Year, messengers would go from house to house with sacks. The rich placed coins into the sack and the poor took from the sack. This was completely anonymous, yet everyone had what they needed to honor this High Holiday.

Yom Kippur

Ten days after Rosh Hashanah, Jews around the world celebrate Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. Usually falling sometime during the last two weeks of September and the first two weeks of October, Yom Kippur is considered by many to be the most sacred of the holidays. It is the first of the Jewish High Holidays, the second being Rosh Hashanah. This one-day holiday is a very solemn day of fasting beginning at sundown. Because of this, it is customary to have one or two festive family meals earlier that day.

As the annual Day of Atonement, this is a serious holiday, involving fasting, reflection, confession, and

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

prayer. The fast that is held on this day is not limited to eating and drinking. Also prohibited on this day are washing the body, sexual relations, wearing leather, and anointing oneself. No work is permitted to take place on Yom Kippur. It is traditional to wear white garments on this day, particularly a tunic-like garment called the kittel.

Kaparot is an ancient tradition that may take place any time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The preferred time is the day before Yom Kippur. In ancient times, this entailed swinging a chicken in the right hand over one's head while reciting a prayer. The prayer and action were intended to atone for vows made that were not fully satisfied during the previous year. The chicken would be slaughtered and given to the poor. It is said that the chicken is a substitute for the vows people should have fulfilled. It is also a substitute for the individual, who is believed should rightly be the one to die for their sins. In modern times, a bag of money is used in place of the chicken and later donated to charity.

Italy

Equinozio di Autunno

This is also the harvest season in Italy. In the Apennines, chestnuts are being harvested at this time of year. Many years ago, this harvest was the domain of women and girls while the men labored at other crops in the fields. Like so many other regions of the world, this is a time of hard work, community, and festivity.

From *The Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, we learn that, in Italian Witchcraft, “the Autumn Equinox marks the slaying of the Harvest Lord, and the resulting descent of the Goddess to find her lost love.”³ In the

Equinox Traditions

modern Aridian Tradition,⁴ the Autumn Equinox begins the time of the Wolf, called Lupus, as the Stag, known as Kern, is slain. However, in the Arician Autumn Equinox ritual, it is the death of the Harvest Lord that is honored. Raven Grimassi explains that this is “because the stag and wolf are older themes that pre-date the agricultural era.”⁵

Great Britain

Michaelmas

The time of Mabon coincides with the feast of the Archangel Michael. This was a medieval holiday celebrated as a holy day of obligation. It was later christianized by the Roman Catholic Church and given the name of Michaelmas.

In England and other countries, Michaelmas Day is traditionally one of the regular quarter days for settling rents and accounts. Apparently, it was originally a time of hospitality and forgiveness. Families would dress a goose and feast together, sometimes celebrating with friends. On the Isle of Skye, there would be a procession on this day and cakes, known as St. Michael’s bannock, were baked in honor of the Archangel.

Since the time of Ethelbert in England, a fast led up to this feast. Laws prescribed a three-day fast for all Christians and servants were not allowed to work during this time. A goose was a traditional means of paying rent on this feast day and geese were associated with money at this festival. To feast on something so rich as a goose was said to ensure prosperity throughout the year.

The Archangel Michael is a warrior. As St. Michael, he is often portrayed with a sword and his foot on a

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

dragon. He may also be seen riding a white steed, carrying a trident and a triangular shield. He is a guardian Angel, whose churches are often found in high places like Glastonbury Tor, Mon St. Michel, and Carnac. It is believed that Michael's churches replaced places of the worship of Lugh, the Celtic God of Light.

The New World

Harvest Home

Before coming to the "New" World, English settlers were accustomed to celebrating thanksgiving feasts near the end of September. It is generally believed that the Pilgrims first "Thanksgiving," which was more of a harvest festival, took place in October. The history of this holiday is rather shrouded and it depends largely on the source. In 1863, President Lincoln began the modern tradition of observing Thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November. To the early Americans, the beginning of autumn was marked by what became the Harvest Home festival. The first winter in this land was very difficult for the Pilgrims and many were lost to hunger and illness. With spring, they tended the earth, knowing that their lives depended on the crops they had sown.

With that first autumn, came the glorious crimson and gold of the forests. Animals of all kinds were seen roaming the countryside. The harvest was bountiful and the people stored it carefully for the coming winter. The great Wampanoag sachem, Woosamaquin, brought ninety men to the feast along with five deer they had hunted specifically for this occasion. Then, they rested, feasted, and played in the first harvest-home of the New World. The

Equinox Traditions

settlers entertained visiting Native Americans and shared in the meat they were gifted with by these native peoples.

The first feast at Plymouth was rich. They savored oysters and fish, turkey, goose, and venison, Indian maize, barley bread, all sorts of beans, grains, and root vegetables, along with cabbages, cucumbers, melons, and wild grapes.

Modern Norse

Winter Nights

Modern (Western) Asatru normally celebrates Winter Nights around the Autumnal Equinox. Much of our information on ancient Norse practices comes from the Sagas and the Eddas, which were written by the Icelanders. The Voluspá Saga contains indications that point to a year of eight seasons and eight festivals. It should be noted that many Asatru reconstructionists, traditional Icelanders, and those calling themselves Aslidar celebrate this festival in October or not at all. Winter Nights is also known as the harvest festival and Haustblot, which means autumn sacrifice.

Winter Nights is the Nordic final harvest and is sacred to Freyr (Frey) and Freyja. Other deities honored at this time include Thor, Sif, Idunna, Jord, the Landvaettir, and the Disir, of which Freyja is the only one whose name is known. This is a festival of thanksgiving and asking for protection in the winter to come.

Perhaps it is not so surprising that the Norse also believe in a Wild Hunt at this time of year, complete with riders on horseback and hounds from the Otherworlds. These myths abound in the Celtic, Germanic, Slavic, and Nordic cultures. For the Norse and Germanic peoples,

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Woden/Wotan or Grim, an aspect of Odin, leads the Hunt. In many myths similar to the Celtic legends, he carries off the souls of the departed. In others, he alternatively grants wishes or carries off the living for a variety of reasons.

Modern Druids

Alban Elfed

To the druids, the Autumnal equinox is Alban Elfed, sometimes written Alban Elued. Like the other equinox and the solstices, this is a solar festival, balancing the feminine, lunar energy of the four fire festivals. The solar festivals are the Alban, or Light festivals. Alban Elfed means Light of the Water. The ancient Celts saw the earth as being afloat in the Seas. To the West is the open ocean, where Tir na n'Og, the land beyond life, may be found. Alban Elfed, set in the west of the circle, is the time of the year descending into the ocean.

The Alban festivals are public events. They are generally more elaborate than the fire festivals and are times of festivity and entertaining guests as well as honoring the season. My druid group once offered these in full ritual regalia as open rituals at a local Unitarian Church. What a sight it was to see nearly one dozen fully robed druids weaving together a complex ritual web for up to 2 dozen participants of various paths!

This is the time of the main harvest and the ripened wheat sheaf is the main symbol, also representing the ripening of wisdom and experience, maturity moving into elderhood. We give thanks for the blessings of the Land and the Goddess, as we reflect upon the previous year in our

Equinox Traditions

own lives. At the center of many druidic rituals is the Eisteddfod. This may take the form of storytelling, music, teaching, or some other creative or philosophical sharing, and it generally revolves around the energies of the season.

Neopagan

Mabon

Mabon is a relatively recent term for the neopagan festival celebrated on the Autumn Equinox, generally around September 21st. This is the second of the three harvest festivals, midway between Lughnasadh and Samhuinn.

In many modern Wiccan traditions, this is considered to be a Lesser Sabbat, along with the vernal equinox and the solstices that were the only annual celebrations of the early recreationist druids. It has been said that Ross Nichols, former Chosen Chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, cooked up the modern neopagan Eightfold Year by getting together with Gerald Gardner and combining the two systems.

The myths and symbolism of this time are recounted throughout this book so I will not repeat them here. Suffice it to say that our modern traditions are reminiscent of the ancient festivals of the second harvest. This is the Pagan Thanksgiving: a time of reflection, sharing, balance, and celebration of the bounty of life. While our modern lives may not revolve around an agricultural way of life, and we may even need to drive to a Farmer's Market to see fresh crops being sold, this is one of the eight times each year that we consciously attune ourselves to natural cycles. Life may get in the way the rest of the year but at

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Mabon, we once again connect with the ways of our ancestors and the understanding of the Second Harvest.

Mabon is the time to meditate on the fruits of our own labors as well. What have you sown in this year? Are you reaping healthy and constructive fruits or are you paying the price for not nurturing your seeds, or for attempting to plant them in poor soil? This is the time to begin to consider what we want to change and the gardens we plan to sow in the coming year.

This is a time of community and kinship with the Land and all creatures. Many modern pagans will volunteer their time at soup kitchens or bless and donate wild animal food as part of their Mabon rites. It is also a time of community with all beings in all worlds. As such, we offer special honor to the dead and our spirit allies during time.

The traditions surrounding the cutting of the last sheaf of the harvest are varied throughout Europe. Some areas hold that the sheaf must be cut by a man; others insist that it must be a woman to take the final sheaf of grain. It is alternately kept in a place of honor, burned, thrown onto the fields to be ploughed into the soil, and fed to livestock in order to ensure health and abundance for the community. This harvested grain is frequently associated with the dying God who will be reborn in the spring. John Barleycorn was the spirit of the grain that was made into beer (or Scotch as the Scottish poet Robert Burns would likely prefer).

While the last sheaf is honored as the body of the vegetation God by many modern pagans, it was more often than not believed to belong to the Goddess by ancient peoples. This last sheaf was known as the Ivy Bride, the Wheat Girl, and the Corn Mother. The Corn Dolly is reminiscent of this perception.

Pagan Pride Day

This event is led by the International Pagan Pride Project. It was started in 1998 by Suzanne and Duke Egbert, high priestess and high priest of an Indianapolis coven. The mission of the Project is to “is to foster pride in Pagan identity through education, activism, charity and community.”

According to the International Pagan Pride Project website,⁶ each Pagan Pride celebration will include a public Autumn Equinox ritual, a food drive, press releases, and a variety of other activities to be determined by the local organizers. The goal of these events is to make connections both within the pagan community and with the larger local community. The intent is to work within the spirit of Thanksgiving, increasing tolerance and understanding to reduce discrimination. Therefore, Pagan Pride Day celebrations are open to the general public.

In the year 2000, nearly 10,000 people participated in Pagan Pride celebrations. More than 8,600 pounds of food, clothing, and other materials were collected along with over \$4,900. This was all donated food banks, women’s shelter, animal shelter, wildlife centers, and various other charitable and pagan organizations.

In 2006, over 40,000 people joined in, raising almost \$7,500 and collecting almost 26,000 pounds of food, clothes, and more for a variety of charities.

To find out more, contact The Pagan Pride Project, P.O. Box 11166, Indianapolis, IN 46201-0166 or email paganpride@paganpride.org.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

¹Quiller-Couch, Arthur Thomas, Sir. *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.
Bartleby.com, 1999

²See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleusinian_Mysteries

³Grimassi, *Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, pp. 29.

⁴created in 1998 by Raven Grimassi; offshoot of earlier Arician Tradition
created by Grimassi in 1981.

⁵Raven Grimassi, pers. comm.

⁶<http://www.paganpride.org/sitemap.html>



Myths and Deities

Most of the myths that are related at this time of year have to do with the changes occurring in the sky and on the earth during the autumn season. In these legends, we find gods and goddesses of the Land, of vegetation, and of the marriage of earth and sky. A common theme among these stories is that of a prisoner, held in the Underworld during the time of the earth's barrenness. In this, we see the recognition of the inward feeling of this time. This is the time when we, like the heroes in our myths, retreat inward to reflect upon our lives: our accomplishments, our dreams, and our shadows.

Another common theme of this season is the death of the Harvest Lord. He wears many names throughout the world and some of those are described in this chapter. He may take the form of a deity or we may see him hidden within the many stories of John Barleycorn, in Hans Christian Anderson's story of the flax, and in the Danish tale of Rye's Pain (Rugen's Pine).¹ No matter what his appearance, he is the manifestation of the Earth Mother's fertility, both

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

child and lover to her in a way. He personifies the vegetative life cycle that we depend on for our sustenance even today.

In *Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, Raven Grimassi writes that the Harvest Lord is “an ancient symbol of the slain god, the willing sacrifice, the sacred king and sacred seed. He is the Green Man seen as the Cycle of Nature in the plant kingdom. The Harvest Lord is cut down and his seeds planted into the earth so that life may continue and be ever more abundant. This mythos is symbolic of the planted seed nourished beneath the soil and the ascending sprout that becomes the harvested plant by the time of the Autumn Equinox.”²

The Greeks and Romans

Persephone

For modern Hellenistic pagans and the ancient Greeks, autumn begins when Persephone, known to the Romans as Proserpina, returns to the Underworld to spend half the year with her husband Hades. According to the myth, Demeter, goddess of the Earth and of the harvest, had a daughter named Kore with Zeus, her brother and ruler of the gods. The gods of Olympus didn't have any problem keeping it all in the family!

Kore was the most beautiful and joyful child. Even the crusty old Hades, Lord of the Underworld, couldn't help but love her. One day when Kore was out into the fields picking flowers with her friends, the ocean nymphs, Hades opened a crack in the earth and pulled the girl down

Myths and Deities

into his Underworld realm to make her his wife. When Kore married Hades, her name was changed to Persephone.

Demeter searched in vain for her daughter for nine straight days. Fearing she would never find her beloved daughter, she asked Helios, the Sun God, for his help. Helios, the all-seeing god, told her what had happened. He also told her that Zeus had seen what happened and said nothing. You can imagine how angry Demeter was on hearing of the betrayal of Zeus, ruler of the gods or not. She left Olympus and roamed the earth as an old woman, finally resting at her temple at Eleusis.

In Demeter's great sadness, she withheld her care and energy from Nature, preventing all fertility on earth. Finally Zeus could take this no longer and sent Hermes to bring the girl back. Hades did not want to lose her forever so he convinced her to eat some pomegranate seeds before she left his realm. The seeds of the pomegranate forever connect her to his realm and she must spend one-third to one-half (depending on the version of the myth) of the year in the Underworld with Hades. During this time, Demeter grieves for her daughter and the earth becomes barren until Persephone returns in the spring.

Demeter

Demeter was the Greek goddess of the earth, fertility, and the harvest. As a grain goddess, her name means *barley-* or *spelt-mother*. Spelt is a type of grain. Demeter was known to the Romans as Ceres, from whose name we derive the word cereal. She was Persephone's mother and it is due to her grief that earth is no longer fertile during autumn and winter.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Demeter is a daughter of Rhea and Cronus, from whom the rulership of the gods of Olympus was stolen by Zeus. While she wandered the earth in search of Persephone, Demeter was welcomed by the king of Eleusis in Attica. She agreed to nurse his two sons and attempted to make one of them immortal through a complex ritual of placing him into the household fire each night. The king's wife witnessed this one night and, ignorant of the magic of it, broke the spell.

Upon being discovered, Demeter revealed herself to be the goddess and asked that a sanctuary be built in Eleusis in her honor. Of course it was built and she secluded herself here to grieve for Persephone and to teach the people her rites. It was here that she gifted the king's other son, Triptolemos, with the art and knowledge of agriculture, which was then passed on to other humans.

Demeter is often depicted as a seated woman wearing a wreath of braided ears of corn or holding a torch and the fruits of the earth. The snake and pig are sacred to her. Thousands of ancient Greeks traveled to Eleusis each year to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries that venerated Demeter and Persephone/Kore.

Pomona

To the ancient Romans, Pomona was the much-beloved goddess of fruit trees. It is from her name that the French word for apple, *pomme*, and the term for the study of apples, pomology, are derived. Pomona was a *hamadryad*, also known as a wood nymph, and she was unsurpassed in her skill and love for gardening and the tending of orchards. She ensured that those under her care would not thirst or want for anything. In her right hand, she bore

Myths and Deities

the pruning knife and her passion for her trees was so great that she was free of the passion for men, and kept her orchards locked against them.

Pomona, like Persephone, was so full of life and beauty that everyone loved her. Many desired her, but Vertumnus loved her best. Vertumnus was the Roman god of the seasons. He ruled over the ripening of the fruits of the earth and is a patron of gardens and fruit trees. A master of disguise, he would visit her in many forms, simply to be able to see her and each time, his passion for her grew.

Finally, he could wait no longer and went to Pomona in the guise of an old woman. He admired the fruit of her garden and kissed her with a kiss rather unlike one you might expect an old woman to give a young hamadryad. He brought their attention to an elm tree on which a vine grew, full with grapes. Vertumnus, as the old woman, advised Pomona of the beautiful example of this tree and the vine, supporting and enriching each other in their association.

The old woman told Pomona of the true love Vertumnus held for her and went on to relate an old story of spurned love, death, and sorrow. The story told, Vertumnus dropped his disguise and appeared before her as a handsome, vital young man. To see him in his true form ignited a passion in Pomona that required no further convincing.

Venus

Venus holds an astrological association with the time of the equinox as the ruling planet of Libra. However, before she became known as the Roman goddess of love and beauty, she was a goddess of vegetation, gardens,

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

fields, and vineyards. She has been identified with the Greek goddess Aphrodite since the 3rd century B.C.

The seventh Sephirah of the Qabala is Netzach, also known as “the Sphere of Venus.”³ In this system, Venus is much more than a motherly Earth goddess and much deeper than a goddess of love and sexuality. She embodies the power and force inherent in these aspects. She is the fire and energy behind creativity and manifestation. Netzach is our emotion, our instinct, and our intuition. Without Netzach, intellect would be uninspired; creativity, including that of Nature, would be sterile.

Dionysus and Bacchus⁴

In truth, Dionysus is the earlier form of Bacchus, although some historians feel that Bacchus is a Roman perversion of the god Dionysus. The name of Bacchus originated around the 5th century BC in Greece, as a result of the loud cries with which Dionysus was worshipped at the orgia, or Dionysiac mysteries. These mysteries probably originated in the spring nature festivals and became huge parties full of drinking and other pleasures of the flesh. By the 2nd century BC in Roman Italy, these parties were known as the Bacchanalia and became so wild that they were banned by the Roman Senate. I wonder if the wine industry in Vancouver, Canada has any idea what their civilized modern-day Bacchanalia once was.

It was Dionysus who showed mortals to cultivate grapevines and make wine. As the Greek god of wine and cheer, he was a deity whose mysteries inspired ecstatic, orgiastic worship. During some of his festivals, wine miracles were performed, and he inspired the *maenads* or *bacchantes*. These were female devotees who roamed the wilderness

Myths and Deities

wearing fawn skins in ecstatic devotion to Dionysus. They were believed to possess occult powers and as his worshippers, Dionysus was good and gentle to them. He brought madness and destruction upon all that spurned his rites.

As a god of vegetation, Dionysus died each winter and was reborn each spring. It was through his yearly seasonal rites that the Greek dramas evolved. Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus wrote their great tragedies for his most important festival, the Great Dionysia, which was held in Athens for five days each spring.

Adonis

Adonis has his origins among the early Semites who honored him as a young local god. His name, as Adonai, derives from *adon*, meaning “lord.” This is also the origin of the name Adonis. Adonai is the name used in place of Yahweh (YHWH), which cannot be spoken, in the Old Testament and during prayers. There are several variations on his story among the Greek myths but in most, he is the son of the incestuous union of a king of either Assyria or Cyprus and his daughter.

When he was born, he was so beautiful that Aphrodite fell in love with him. Soon afterward, Persephone also fell for him and they fought over him constantly. In one version of the myth, he was killed by a boar during hunting. Both goddesses pleaded that he be restored to life and returned to them. Zeus decreed that he would have his life back but that he would spend spring and summer with Aphrodite and the rest of the year in the Underworld with Persephone. The myth says nothing about how that went over with Hades, the husband of Persephone.

The Egyptians

Hathor

Hathor has been worshipped as a cow since ancient times. Her original names, Het-Hert (the House Above) and Het-Heru (the House of Horus) indicate that she is a sky goddess. She has also been seen as a Mother goddess. Although not a goddess with any rites specific to this time of year, both wine and beer were sacred to Hathor.

According to legend, which has also been attributed to Tefnut and Thoth, the sun god Ra was angered by the disrespectful behavior of humanity. He sent Hathor to destroy them. In her form as the lioness-headed goddess, Sekhmet, her blood thirst grew as she slaughtered the ancient Egyptians.

Ra changed his mind when he saw the trail of destruction she left, but her thirst for human blood was so great that he could not convince her to stop. To trick her, he flooded the fields with grain and water, dyed red to mimic blood. When the sun came up, it warmed this mixture and fermented it, creating beer. Hathor drank all the beer and forgot all about her taste for our blood.

As a result, she was worshipped with a monthly Day of Drunkenness and became the goddess of love, joy, and drunkenness, among other things.

At the annual Hathor Celebrations in Bubastis, beer and wine flowed freely. Although most of the wine in Egypt was produced in the Delta, every temple had vineyards to supply some of the wine necessary for Hathor's rituals.

Myths and Deities

Osiris

Osiris has been associated with Dionysus. He taught the Egyptian people agriculture and the making of beer and wine, among other things. Like gods across the world, he is the god of vegetation who is killed and resurrected by the goddess, in this case his sister and daughter of the earth god, Isis.

His brother Set killed him, hid his body in a chest, and threw it into the Nile, which carried it out into the sea. The chest came to rest at the foot of a tree that grew to immense size and was cut down by the king of Byblos to use as a roof for his palace. When the tree was cut down, it emitted the most wonderful aroma. Isis heard of this event and knew that this was the resting place of her beloved. On arriving in Byblos, she nursed the king's son, much like Demeter did in Eleusis.

Like Demeter, Isis was caught by the queen performing rituals to make the child immortal, and like Demeter, Isis was forced to tell the truth of her identity and her search for Osiris. She brought the body home to Egypt and hid it but Set found it and cut it into fourteen pieces that he scattered across the land. Isis recovered every piece but the phallus. She put him back together and created a new phallus for him. Then she resurrected him and gave him the gift of immortality. Osiris chose to rule over the Underworld. The mummy of Osiris is sometimes depicted with protruding sheaves of wheat.

Isis

Great Mother and goddess of magic, beer, life, agriculture, and beauty, Isis has also been associated with Demeter, for reasons that are obvious after reading the story

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

of Osiris. She has also been identified with Persephone and Aphrodite.

Other Egyptian Harvest Deities

An early Egyptian snake goddess, Ranuta was also the patron goddess of winemakers and vineyards. During the harvest season, she was honored with many of the foods we see in more temperate regions of the world at this season: corn, melons and other fruits, game birds, and bread. During this time, the pharaoh personally offered a sheaf of wheat to the fertility god, Min and Wapwait, a local agricultural deity, received the first of the corn harvest.⁵

The Middle East

Archangel Michael

Since the Archangels appear in the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Zoroastrian religion, I have placed Michael separately, rather than categorize him under a particular Middle Eastern people or religion. His name is pronounced Mikha'el in the Hebrew and Mika'il in Arabic. He may be found as an angel in both the Bible and the Quran.

In Islam, like modern Christianity and many modern ceremonial magick traditions, there are four archangels. To the Zoroastrians, there are seven, although their names vary according to the source. The word "angel" means messenger and there are into nine generally accepted categories of angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.

Myths and Deities

Many sources give the meaning of Michael's name as "Who is like God?" In Christian tradition, he is the primary warrior against Satan and the champion of God's people. He rescues the souls of the faithful, particularly at death, and he brings the souls of humankind to judgment. In Phrygia, where his feast day originated, he was venerated as an angelic healer above all else. His worship stretches across the globe and his history is rich in colorful stories.

To medieval Qabbalists, Michael is associated with Chesed of the Qabbalic Tree of Life. This is the first Sephiroth of the manifested world and can be seen as the point of formulation that results in manifestation. Modern Qabbalists attribute Michael to Hod, the form that balances the natural creative force of Netzach, which corresponds to Venus, or to Tipheret, the point of balance of the Tree.

The Sumerians

Dumuzi

Dumuzi was a vegetation god, ruling over fertility and the Underworld. He was called The Shepherd and is the patron god of shepherds and their flocks. Dumuzi is a Gatekeeper at the doors of heaven and a forefather of Gilgamesh.

We find him in the Descent of Inanna myth as Inanna's husband. Dumuzi is one of those gods that began as a mortal and ascended to godhood over time. His marriage as a human king to Inanna ensured the fertility of the lands and the people. This is an association we find in many other cultures. He was chosen (some versions say sentenced) to rule over the Underworld for half the year. In ancient Sumeria, his time below was during the hot, barren summer and he returned to the earth on the Autumnal

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Equinox, which marked the Sumerian New Year. When he and Inanna reunited, fertility and abundance returned to the land.

Inanna

Inanna is without question the most important of the Sumerian goddesses. She is Queen Moon, Queen of the Universe, Mistress of Heaven and Earth. She personifies the planet Venus. She presides over love, fertility, grain, the natural world, and war, among a wide variety of other things. “Inanna’s Descent” is known throughout literary, psychological, and neopagan circles across the world. It is said that the original Dance of the Seven Veils told the story of Inanna’s descent into the Underworld, where an article of clothing or jewelry was removed at each of seven gates, until she arrived in the Underworld completely naked.

During this myth, Inanna stormed the gates of the Underworld where her sister Ereshkigal ruled. Upset that her sister would attempt to enter her Land in this way, Ereshkigal instructed the gatekeeper to allow her entry in the ancient ways, stripping her of her earthly possessions and clothing as she descended. When the sisters came face to face, Ereshkigal set sixty diseases on Inanna, which killed her.

While Inanna was in the Underworld, all fertility and procreation ceased on Earth. The vizier of the gods was deeply saddened by this and wept openly before Ea, Lord of Wisdom. Ea created a creature (some versions say two) to loosen Ereshkigal up. Apparently, this being was good at his job because the waters of life were sprinkled on Inanna, restoring her to her former self. As she passed back out through the seven gates, her garments and jewelry

Myths and Deities

were returned to her in exchange for the presence of Dumuzi, lover of her youth.

Some versions of this story have Dumuzi required to spend half the year in the Underworld, while his sister, Geshtinanna, spends the other half there in his place. In these versions, Geshtinanna presides over the autumn harvest of vines, while Dumuzi is the grain god. In any event, Dumuzi, as the vegetation god, spends the dark half of the year in the Underworld.

The Akkadians (Babylonians)

Tammuz

To the Akkadian people of Mesopotamia, Tammuz was the counterpart of Dumuzi. He too was a vegetation god and was married to the goddess Ishtar, counterpart of Inanna. Like Dumuzi, Tammuz died in the hot summer in the month named Tammuz, after him. When he dies, the Gallu demons take his spirit to the Underworld.

Ishtar is desolate without him and the whole world laments the loss of Tammuz. Ishtar descends to the Underworld and pleads with Ereshkigal, Ruler of the Underworld, for his release. After succeeding in a number of challenges, she wins his freedom and brings him back to the earth. At the equinox, Tammuz returns and the earth rejoices, becoming fertile and abundant once more.

Ishtar

The Descent of Ishtar is very similar to the Descent of Inanna, although Inanna's myth predates this one and is

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

both longer and more detailed. Ishtar is associated with Inanna, Aphrodite, and the Phoenician Astarte. Ishtar is a goddess of fertility and love. Tammuz was her lover and she went after him into the Underworld, leaving the earth to lose fertility and wither.

Siduri

Siduri is a priestess of Ishtar, although some scholars believe she may actually be a form of Ishtar Herself. She is the Divine maker of wines and beer. She sits, veiled in the garden of the sun on the seashore beyond the Land of Life, shaded by her vineyard and surrounded with golden bowls and golden vats given to her by the gods.

The Phoenicians

Adon

It was among the Phoenicians that the early form of Adonis was a young and handsome god called Adon. In the myth of Adon, we see a number of similarities to the Greek stories of Adonis. Adon was honored at a country shrine named Aphka at the source of a river. When the river ran red annually in autumn, the local people ritually mourned the death of Adon and believed the redness to be stained with the blood of the god. According to one legend, Adon had an affair with the goddess Astarte. Another god loved her and became so violently jealous that he took the form of a wild boar and killed Adon. At the place of Adon's death, red poppies grow each year. In the Greek myth, red anemones sprang from the blood of Adonis.

Myths and Deities

Astarte weeps over her lost lover and vows to return him to life each spring.

Ashtoreth

A Phoenician and Canaanite goddess of fertility, fruitfulness, and the moon, Ashtoreth is associated with Astarte and Ishtar. Cut trees known as asherim were erected in Semitic temples in her honor. Her name appears several times in the Christian Bible and even Solomon was said to worship her. Several scholars believe that the Old Testament refers not to one God but to a male-female creative pair, known as Baal and Ashtoreth.

The Hindus

Durga

Durga is the Hindu goddess of strength and Motherhood. Her festival of Nine Nights (Navratri) takes place around the Autumn Equinox. She is the protector of the universe and the power behind the growth of vegetation on the Earth. Durga upholds dharma, the cosmic order, by whatever means necessary. Her worship dates back at least 5000 years. Durga has been one of shakti's main forms for almost 2000 years. Shakti is the dynamic creative, feminine energy of Nature.

The Devimahatmya tells us of her powers and her way of saving her devotees from any number of troubles. Like many goddesses throughout the world, Durga has more than one aspect. She is commonly depicted with

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

three eyes and many arms. She often holds weapons and may be seated on a lotus. She is said to be the mother of the deities Ganesha, Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and Karttikeya.

Mithra

Worshipped in ancient India and Persia, Mithra was a god of the sun, light, and wisdom. He also ruled contracts and friendship. Mithra can be found as Mitra, usually with his twin Varuna, in the Hindu Vedas, specifically the Rig Veda. His feast, Mihragan, is still celebrated by Zoroastrians on October 1. The mystery cult of Mithra or Mithras spread throughout the ancient world until declining in the third century A.D.

Similarities between Mithraism and Christianity have been noted by many scholars, including the fight between good and evil and the hope of immortality through religious life. Mithra was born from a rock or cave. According to the myth, he fought the sun god and captured a divine bull. He dragged the bull to a cave where he sacrificed it before being invested with the power of the sun and ascending to the heavens. The blood and semen of the bull gave rise to plants and some animals on the earth.

Mithra was worshipped in the *mithraeum*, small temples that were crafted to resemble caves. Images depicting his life, particularly the sacrifice of the bull were depicted along with recreations of the cosmos. It has been suggested by some scholars that the cult of Mithra was based on star knowledge and an understanding of the precession of the equinoxes.

The Norse

Freyja

The most approachable of the Norse goddesses, Freyja presides over love, marriage, fertility, and childbirth. She offers protection in battle and peace. With her brother Freyr, another fertility deity, she also watches over the dead. Freyja has been associated with Ishtar and Inanna, not only due to her role as goddess of both love and war, but because her greatest treasure, the necklace Brisingamen, has been linked to one of the famous pieces jewelry Inanna/Ishtar had removed at the gates to the Underworld. Thanks to the magick of the dwarves, fertility comes to the land and the beasts whenever Freyja wears Brisingamen.

Freyr

As brother to Freyja and god of plenty, Freyr rules over the rain and sunshine, which are vital to growth of the land. When Freyr rode his golden boar across the skies, the light penetrated even into the shade, increasing the bounty of the land. Freyr and Freyja are of the Vanir race of gods, peaceful keepers of gentle rains, mild winds, and fertility.

Thor

Thor is not one normally associated with the equinox or the harvest, or even really the Earth itself. He is most often seen as a sky god, ruling thunder and lightning. However, he is the son of the sky god Wodan/Odin and the Earth Goddess. He links earth and sky and is married to Sif, the golden-haired goddess of the ripening grain. Thor has a little-known aspect as the Bringer of Fertility to

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

the harvest. Thor was historically a farmer's god, bringing rain to the fields. Some folklore links lightning and hail to crop fertility and Thor's Hammer is still seen by many as an amulet for vitality and fertility.

The Celts

Mabon ap Modron

Certainly, the most recognizable myth involved in this festival is that of the Mabon, the child of Light and the son of the Modron, Great Mother. It is from this Welsh myth, found in the tale of Culhwch and Olwen, that the neopagan Mabon festival receives its name. Mabon son of Modron (Mabon ap Modron) was stolen from his mother only three nights after his birth at the beginning of time.

In the ancient story, Culhwch had a curse laid on him, that he would never have a wife unless he could marry Olwen, daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief-giant. No suitor seeking Olwen had ever left the giant's fort with his life, for the giant knew his life would end with his daughter's marriage. So Ysbaddaden set thirty-nine impossible tasks for any potential husband, were he able to survive the initial meeting with Olwen's father.

Culhwch accepted each challenge with confidence and vowed to return from his quest victorious. Fortunately, he was accompanied by his cousin, the legendary Arthur, and Arthur's best companions. The very first thing they did was seek Mabon, for he was the key to the other wonders they sought. To do so, they had to rely on the memories of the Oldest Animals until eventually they came to the Salmon of Llyn Llyw, the most ancient of all the animals.

Myths and Deities

The Salmon took two of the companions on his shoulders to the wall of Caer Loyw, where he heard someone grieving since his earliest days. The companions heard the prisoner lamenting and asked who it was that cried out in the stone building. Amazingly, it was Mabon son of Modron, painfully incarcerated with no hope of escape. The companions battled for his release and won, after which Mabon joined them and Culwhch finally won the hand of Olwen.

With the birth of the Mabon to Modron, the Earth Mother, change comes to the earth. He is stolen from her only three days after his birth and her light disappears as she grieves over her lost child. The Autumn Equinox begins the seasons of cold and darkness in the northern hemisphere, paralleling the grief of the Modron. Just as her child is imprisoned deep within a stone cell, the plants and animals of the earth slow down and move inward until life returns in the spring. In druidic tradition, we honor the rebirth and release of the Mabon at the Winter Solstice, after which the days grow longer.

Celtic myth is full of similar stories. Rhiannon, a horse goddess and Earth Mother in her own right, had her son Pryderi taken from her soon after his birth. Her grief was unbearable until he was returned to the apparent world, much like the Mabon.

Cernunnos

Cernunnos, the Horned God of the Celts and Gauls, is the god of fertility, animals, and the Underworld. He is our guardian in this world and the Otherworlds. He is the lover and often the son and protector of the Great Mother. In many myths, he is born at the winter solstice and dies at the summer solstice. Yet in many agricultural areas, he is

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

one and the same as the spirit of vegetation that dies with the end of the harvest, often around the autumnal equinox. In many neopagan artwork and experiences, he is another aspect of the Green Man and of Herne the Hunter.

In ancient artwork, Cernunnos was sometimes shown with hair of vegetation. As Lord of the Forests, he was attended by snakes, deer and other animals. He has been associated with Dionysus and Osiris. On the interior of the Gundestrup Cauldron, found in a bog in 1891, Cernunnos is depicted with a snake in one hand and a torque for his marriage to the Goddess in the other. From his brow spring antlers, one of which culminates in leaves. On the exterior of the Cauldron, he appears much more like the common image of the Green Man.⁶

Green Man

My husband wears the most beautiful necklace of the Green Man, created by our old friends at Dragonscale Jewelry. This depiction shows the Green Man wearing the usual vegetation along with a cat's eyes, almost elven pointed ears, and the horns of Cernunnos. Our friends explained it as the forest guardian with the ability to see into the darkness. The Green Man is an almost universal symbol of the male aspect of creativity and the lover/son of the Great Mother. He brings us wildness with tenderness and strength.

He is the spirit of the forest and the wilderness. Our son first saw him in the hanging leaves of an ivy plant. What Karl described left no question as to whose face he had seen. The Green Man, like the world of vegetation, is rebirth and renewal. And he guides and protects us on our journeys into the darkness.

Myths and Deities

Green Man-type images can be found in many cultures. In Egypt, he is associated with Osiris and one wall panel from Nefertari's tomb depicts Osiris with a green face.⁷ In ancient Greece, Dionysus was seen as an antlered or horned god of vegetation that was crowned with snakes.⁸ The Green Man was even popular in Christian artwork where he came to symbolize the resurrection of Christ as well as the wooden cross that Christ was crucified on.⁹

Dagda

The Dagda is the Good God and the All-Father who presides over the earth, magick, life, and death. He possesses a great cauldron that supplies an enormous and inexhaustible amount of food. He also owns an immortal pig that provides an endless supply of food, an unending supply of drink, and three continually producing fruit trees. The Dagda summons the seasons with his magickal harp.

Arawn

Ruler of the Underworld Annwn, Arawn is also known as Gwynn ap Nudd and is often associated with Herne the Hunter. With his white, red-eared hounds, he leads the Wild Hunt to take the souls of those that have died in the previous year home to Annwn.

Annwn is the Celtic Underworld. It is the place of ancestral power. This is where we rest after death and immediately before rebirth. It is the cauldron from which all life emerges.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Ceridwen

The barley goddess, Ceridwen, is the brewer of the cauldron of wisdom that enlightened Gwion Bach and turned him into the great bard, Taliesin. She is the Autumn Crone, the Nurse of Seeds, and the visionary sibyl. An older form of the Great Mother, Ceridwen is the dark Mother of the Mysteries as well. Initiates of Ceridwen drank a mead-like brew similar to that imbibed by the initiates of Ceres¹⁰ and the Eleusinian initiates of Demeter and Persephone.

¹Grimassi, *Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, pp. 173-174.

²Grimassi, *Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, pp. 173-174.

³Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalab*, pp. 221-237.

⁴reprinted as it first appeared in *The Innerconnexion*, Litha 1998 issue.

⁵Pharaonic Egypt <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/index.html>

⁶Anderson, *The Green Man*, pp. 42-43.

⁷Anderson, *The Green Man*, pp. 37

⁸Anderson, *The Green Man*, pp. 34.

⁹Anderson, *The Green Man*, pp. 31.

¹⁰Nichols, *The Book of Druidry*, pp. 146.



Symbols of the Season

What would our lives be without symbols? Everything we see is a manifested symbol of something far greater...even our bodies. Language is comprised of symbols used to communicate. Each spiritual path and every religion has its own set of symbols that represent our values, beliefs, and deities or helping spirits. Pagans tend to understand a wider range of magickal symbols than most other spiritual groups.

We explore these symbols, studying their historical significance as we learn what they mean to us as individuals. We make use of these symbols in a wide variety of concrete ways for healing, creation, release, and self-knowledge. Our altars and jewelry boxes are full of significant symbols that hold meaning and power for each of us. Just as each path has its own symbols, each season and festival has special symbols that are almost universally associated with that time.

The Equinox season is no different and we find that the themes of harvest, giving thanks, reflection, and preparation for the dark times are found in cultures throughout the world. Along with these general themes, there are colors, food and drink, herbs, animals, and more that all evoke

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

the feelings, scents, and images of this most glorious season. Join me in exploring some of what makes the Mabon season so rich!

Colors

At this time of year, the Land changes as the leaves, grasses, and other plants turn the most astounding colors. Even the light seems to change, casting gold, orange, and rose light at dawn and sunset. This deepening light catches the leaves and the grasses, illuminating them and intensifying the color changes in the plants themselves. Orange pumpkins, red chiles, and purple grapes are prominently displayed at farmstands and in grocery stores.

For many of us, color is what autumn is all about. People flock to woodland areas to view the fall colors at their peak. This is such a popular activity that peak color times are noted on most newscasts and even on the Internet. It is not only the trees that change, though. Virginia Creeper, a popular vine throughout the United States, turns red. In the Southwest, Chamisa, or Rabbitbrush, turns a brilliant yellow. Even many grasses burst out in beautiful hues of red, pink, and purple.

This is an ideal time of year to work with specific color energies and candle magick. What are your favorite colors among the changing leaves? Do you find joy in the bright and sunny yellows or are you drawn more to gaze at the scarlet reds? Perhaps you find the transition of deep gold and orange to rose and indigo in the sunset to be truly awesome. Or maybe you prefer the dark reds, browns, and purples of we see in many grasses at this time of year. Each of the colors associated with this season can bring us new insights and create a special type of magick in our lives but it is often best to go with what calls to you first.

Symbols of the Season

Many people tend to dress in the colors of the season. Little do most of them know of the magick inherent in their actions. The colors we choose to wear bring those energies in to our auras. They affect how we feel and how we interact with other people. These colors are warming and comfortable. They are like a favorite pair of flannel pajamas or a warm afghan. Each individual color has specific energies associated with it.

If you are working with a particular challenge or goal at this time, check the list below to find an appropriate color to work with. Even without a specific goal in mind, consider what energies you would like to bring into your life at this time. What would benefit you most or what have you not yet integrated?

Then find creative ways to work with the associated color. Altar and home decorations are a wonderful way to bring this color into your spiritual space. Some people choose to modify their ritual garb by incorporating the colors and symbols of the season. You can work with this in very subtle and mundane ways, by dressing in shades of your chosen color more frequently or wearing appropriate jewelry. On a purely magickal level, we can experiment with candles, stones, and color meditations.

Colors

| | |
|--------|---|
| Brown | grounding, healing animals, the home |
| Red | passion, strength, physical vitality, sexuality, anger, aggression |
| Maroon | visioning, kundalini activation and balance ing, grounding |
| Orange | legal matters, success, will |
| Yellow | divination, mental powers, manifestation |
| Gold | the God, prosperity |

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Indigo intuition, inspiration, visioning
Violet clairvoyance, connection to spirit, opening to Otherworlds, clearing negativity

Stones

Amber purification, calming, manifestation
*frequently needs clearing
Citrine transmutes negativity, balancing energy, aligning chakras, personal power, creativity, manifestation, inspiration, and illumination
*rarely needs clearing
Golden Topaz mental clarity, communication, relaxation, friendship
Tiger Eye mental clarity, visioning, intuition, balance, soothing energy
Cat's Eye protection, intuition, awareness, luck
Amethyst meditation, opening crown chakra, clairvoyance, change, amplification of energy, psychic protection
Lapis Lazuli universal knowledge, magick, awareness, visioning, clairvoyance, creativity, dream work, protection, freedom
Sapphire joy, peace, wisdom

Animals

Depending on the culture and tradition, a variety of animals are associated with this time of year. Many of these are related to the myths and deities of the season, such as the series of Celtic Oldest Animals that led to the discovery of the Mabon by Culhwch and his companions.

Symbols of the Season

Others are symbolic due to migratory patterns or because the attributes associated with them resonate with the season.

All migratory animals are symbolic of this season, some more obviously than others as you will discover as you read this chapter. This includes those animals that are leaving our areas and those that come to stay with us through the winter. If you develop an awareness of the creatures you encounter, you may find that they are acting as messengers of Spirit for you. Books like *Animal-Speak* and the various animal divination decks are wonderful resources to begin exploring symbolism. Don't rely on what any person or book tells you, though. Trust your own intuition to feel what meaning these animals may hold for you personally.

Similarly, all those animals that are storing food and gaining weight and making other preparations for the coming winter are symbolic of the season and may hold even more meaning for us. Few of us move seasonally. Most of us are moving inward, reflecting on the past year, and preparing for winter and the upcoming holidays. Pay attention to creatures around you and take note of what they are doing. See if their actions spark a memory, feeling, or idea for you that is applicable to this time of year.

Turkey Vulture

Vulture, particularly as Turkey Vulture, is an appropriate bird to honor at this time of year. Many turkey vultures migrate to Central and South America. They head south on the Autumnal Equinox and return in the spring on the Vernal Equinox. They have frequently been documented returning to summer roosting sites on the exact day of the equinox.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

In truth, New World vultures are more closely related biologically to storks than to Old World vultures, but they look the same and do the same work and to us, they are Vultures. The Turkey Vulture is a common sight throughout the Americas. Negative perceptions about this bird are evident in Western movies, where it is the harbinger of death, hovering over some poor soul in the desert and waiting to eat him before his body is even cold.

This ugly, carcass-eating bird bears the scientific name of *Cathartes aura*, meaning “cleansing breeze.” This certainly does not sound fitting for a bird with such a negative connotation in our culture. But we rely on the very important work that vultures do. Can you imagine the stench and disease that would spread if all those carcasses were left to simply rot away? Vultures fill an important ecological niche through disposing of the dead and recycling the bodies and their energy through the food web.

As is appropriate to the season, Vulture energy guides us in clearing out all those old patterns and aspects of self that no longer serve us. At the equinox, we enter the dark half of the year and our focus begins to turn to the elders and the departed. Vulture has much to teach our modern society about the value of caretakers and the dangers in our current perspectives regarding caretakers, the sick, and the elderly.

Throughout the world, the vulture has been associated with the Goddess as Mother: She who gives life and receives us back after physical death, transforming our bodies and spirits to prepare us for rebirth. Our first indications of the Goddess in vulture form are found in Turkey, in the ancient city of Catal Huyuk. A vulture shrine, dating from approximately 6000 B.C. is found in this city. The vultures in the shrine are not painted black but red, the color of life. The vulture as purifier and the one to free the

Symbols of the Season

spirits of the dead is an image found among early Christians and ancient Egyptians. Myths and rites surrounding this belief are found from Tibet to North and South America.

According to *Animal Speak*,² the ancient Puebloans of the Southwest used Vulture Medicine to facilitate a return to one's self and grounding after shapeshifting rituals. This is interesting in that the Zone-tailed Hawk is known to mimic the appearance and behavior of soaring Turkey Vultures. It "shapeshifts" so well into a vulture that it can be extremely difficult to identify in the midst of a spiraling kettle of vultures. There are a variety of theories surrounding this but no one knows for certain why this hawk spends so much time with these vultures.

The spiral flight of vultures evokes the ancient symbolism of the Spiral. It is one of the most common petroglyph symbols throughout the world and its use dates at least as far back as 2000 B.C. The Spiral has come to mean continuity, inner mysteries, and spiritual transformation. As opposed to the labyrinths and caverns of the inner Earth, the vulture spirals, sometimes as high as 20,000 feet, to teach us of the mysteries of Air and Earth; of grounding our spirituality and elevating our manifestations to higher realms. Vulture watches over the transmutation of matter into spirit and back again as we reenter the egg of rebirth.

Blackbird

The Blackbird of Cilgwri was the first of the Oldest Animals visited by Culhwch and his Companions in their search for the Mabon. He knew not where the child of light was hidden and guided them to the next oldest of the animals. The birds of Rhiannon have also been identified

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

as blackbirds. These birds sang enchantments to Bran the Blessed and his followers in the tale of Branwen Daughter of Lyr and their capture was one of the many demands presented to Culhwch by the giant in order to obtain the hand of Olwen.

In Gaelic, the blackbird is known as *druid dhubh*, the black druid. The song of druid dhubh carries us into the Otherworlds, to work with dreaming and spirituality. This is the bird of the Otherworldly blacksmith, a magickal being that may lead us to create wonderful things in our lives.³

Stag

The Blackbird led the Companions to the Stag of Rhedynfre, who was equally unable to help them but he did take them on to the next oldest of the animals. The Stag has obvious associations with Cernunnos and Herne the Hunter. He is also known as the Lord of the Wild Hunt.

A male deer's antlers begin to grow back in early summer. By time of the rut in September, they are fully grown. Also in September, in the English village of Bromley, the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance takes place. This is a very old custom of men wearing antlered headdresses parading through the streets.

Like Cernunnos, the Stag is the male aspect of Nature. He brings protection, healing, and fertility. He is wildness and passion. The energy of the Stag is accompanied by independence and inner strength.

Symbols of the Season

Owl

The Stag led the Companions of Culhwch to the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, who also knew nothing of the Mabon. The owl is sacred to the pre-Celtic crone goddess, the Cailleach. This is a bird of the betwixt and between, not entirely of either this world or the next. It is often a messenger of the transition between worlds, particularly birth and death. Owl stands at the point of balance, like the equinox, and guides us into the mysteries that may be entered at this time.

Predominantly nocturnal, owls have incredible night vision. In addition, they have a heightened sense of hearing and touch (related to special facial feathers) that allows them to find their prey in total darkness. This is the bird to take you into the shadows and help you see what needs to be seen at this time of reflection and inner harvest.

Eagle

The owl accompanied Culhwch's company to the animal it believed was the oldest and the most widely traveled, the Eagle of Gwernabwy. The eagle is a powerful spirit ally for the early British, particularly the Welsh. It is one of four animals most commonly described in ancient tales.

A Gaelic name for the eagle is *suil-na-greine*, meaning "eye of the sun."⁴ Its ability to soar to great heights has led the eagle to be associated with the sun in many cultures. To some of the ancient North American pueblo peoples, the eagle had the ability to pass through the hole in the sky and enter the home of the sun. Because it flew so high, the eagle came to represent the zenith point, from which it could see into the four cardinal directions.⁵

At the zenith, at local noon on the equinox at the equator, a vertical object casts no shadow. At this time of

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

year, one can see into the past, present, and future with an “eagle-eye.” The predator inherent in eagle energy culls to maintain a healthy balance. The equinox custom of reflecting on our shadows and what we have reaped in the previous year can be truly powerful with this type of energy behind it, provided we allow the eagle to cull what is no longer beneficial to us.

Salmon

The great Eagle told the Companions that only once had he met with an animal that might be able to assist them in their quest. At Lyn Llyw, he tried to take a salmon that pulled him deep into a pool, from which he barely escaped. When the Eagle and his kinfolk set out for revenge, the salmon sent messengers of peace and gave a peace offering himself. This salmon was the most ancient of all the animals and finally led the men to the prison of the Mabon.

The Salmon of Wisdom dwells in the sacred pool known as Conla’s Well or the Well of Segais. This pool is the source of the River Boyne that flows through the Boyne Valley and feeds that land that is home to ancient sites such as Knowth, Dowth, and Newgrange. According to legend, five salmon swim in this pool and feed on the nuts of wisdom dropped by nine hazel trees. From the pool, spring five streams, which are associated with our five physical senses. In druidry, we learn that great knowledge can be obtained through the senses when we combine this physical learning with inspiration as we drink of the sacred well.

An old Irish tale of the shamanic Fionn mac Cumhaill roughly parallels the Welsh story of Taliesin’s initiation. A boy called Deimne went to fish in the River Boyne.

Symbols of the Season

He found an old poet on the banks that had been seeking the salmon of wisdom for seven years because of a prophecy that he would be the one person to catch and eat it, inheriting all knowledge the fish possessed. The man did catch the fish and gave it to the Deimne to cook, warning him not to eat any of it. The boy did as he was told but when a splash of the hot salmon juice landed on his thumb, he instinctively stuck his thumb in his mouth, like young Gwion Bach did. Deimne instantly received the wisdom of the salmon and was renamed Fionn, just as Gwion became Taliesin.

Pig

Pig is included in this chapter because of its many associations with the Celtic deities Dagda, Cerridwen, and Arawn. Arawn is credited with introducing pigs to Britain through his gift of the swine of Annwn to Pryderi, son of Rhiannon and Pwyll. In the Welsh tale of Math, they are described as small animals with better meat than cows and the name given to them is pig. It is also sacred to the goddess Demeter.

The boar, a type of male pig, also played a role in Culhwch's quest to fulfill all the demands of the giant. The boar symbolizes warrior energy and leadership. The sow, the female, is a manifestation of the Goddess.

The ancient Celts kept huge herds of swine and turned them out onto the fields in spring and autumn. The pig played a similar role in the lives of the Celts to that of the North American bison (buffalo) in the lives of Native Americans. It provided for the people in many ways and was honored in ritual as a result.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Many ancient burials in the Celtic lands contain pigs or parts of pigs. It is believed that these provided sustenance for the departed on the journey to the next world. Great pits have also been found containing animals, including male and female pigs, that were buried in thanksgiving for the gifts of the Goddess.

Wolf⁶

The wolf is sacred to Cernunnos and often appears in depictions of the Horned God, as is seen on the Gundestrup Cauldron. Several Celtic legends relate stories of wolves. The Morrigan has been known to take the form of the she-wolf, particularly when protecting Her own ego, as recounted in one of the stories of Cu-Chulainn. The Irish King Cormac is said to have been taken by a she-wolf while his mother lay sleeping. Since he was reared with her cubs, wolves forever held a special place in his heart. When Cormac was made king, a pack of wolves accompanied him everywhere. Merlin himself befriended and was befriended by a wolf during his time of “madness” in the forests. The goddess Cerridwen, in Her guise as Henwen, gifted Wales with a wolf cub. Also, in the Aridian Tradition of Italian Witchcraft, we move into the time of Lupus, the Wolf, at the Autumn Equinox.⁷

Wolf also represents the personal or collective Shadow. This may be one of the reasons why the wolf has been so maligned in modern culture. This highly intelligent animal with an elaborate social structure and a complex system of vocal communications has been portrayed as a violent criminal, wanting nothing more than to hunt us down and steal our livestock. Rarely are we informed that the wolf tends to avoid human confrontation and takes

Symbols of the Season

only what it needs for food: most often the sick or elderly of its prey species.

Like Eagle, Wolf can help us cull what no longer serves us in this time of reflection. But Wolf is a Teacher and a Pathfinder as well. This energy teaches us how to live in healthy community and how to maintain balance in ourselves and our relationships.

Snake

Snake seems to show up everywhere in the ancient myths of the Second Harvest. We see Snake in the form of Ranuta, an Egyptian Harvest goddess. It appears on the Gundestrup Cauldron in the hand of Cernunnos. The snake is sacred to Demeter. Dionysus, as a type of Green Man, was said to have been crowned with snakes.

The snake is a powerful symbol of the Underworld, with its ability to live within and disappear into the Earth. It has also been associated with resurrection and transformation, as well as fertility. As the snake sheds its skin, so can we enter the dark half of the year in honor, to be reborn in the spring as more balanced and healthy individuals.

Healing has been associated with Snake energy for millennia, as evidenced by its place on the caduceus, an ancient Greek symbol appropriated by the modern medical establishment. This healing aspect is also connected to the snake's association with the kundalini energy that rests at the base of the spine. This potent energy vitalizes the body and opens the chakras as it rises up the spine. The ancient Indians often depicted this as a coiled snake at the base of the spine or as two snakes winding their way up the spine. An old Welsh tradition says that the presence of one male

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

and one female snake in the farmhouse ensures health and happiness for the family.

Butterfly

To some of the native peoples inhabiting Mexico, the butterfly represents the fertility of the earth. In the American Southwest, the Hopi people perform a Butterfly Dance to ask the gods for a plentiful harvest. For these reasons alone, the butterfly deserves mention in this chapter. But more than that, butterflies and moths have come to represent death, powerful dreaming, and divine inspiration to cultures throughout the world. It may surprise you, but these are also migratory creatures.

Butterflies and moths will migrate. Some go one-way only to follow food sources while others do a round trip depending on season. But none make a trip of over 3000 miles like the Monarchs. Monarch butterflies need to migrate each year in order to survive the winter. Monarchs to the west of the Rocky Mountains travel to the California coast, while those to the east of the mountains go all the way to the mountains of central Mexico.

In huge groups, these butterflies migrate each year to the same winter roosts, often to the same tree. This migration is very similar to the migration of birds. Like birds, seasonal fluctuations in sunlight and temperature influence their travel. The second weeks of March and September are prime migration times for these insects.

The most obvious energy the Butterfly brings to us is that of transformation and rebirth. As we enter autumn, we each begin to move into our own type of cocoon or chrysalis, from which we will reemerge in the Spring. Butterfly has also been associated with the immortal soul and the transformation of physical death.

Symbols of the Season

But more than that, Butterfly brings joy and vibrant color, the lightness of Air and inspiration. This energy calls us to dance and float, trusting in the Great Spirit that carries us through the dark times and back into the light.

Mythical and Otherworldly Beings

Fays⁸

Fays are Albanian faery beings, appearing as tiny, winged beings. Their appearance changes with the season and they are responsible for helping the Triple Goddess turn the Wheel of the Year. In Autumn, they are believed to shake the trees to help loosen dead leaves.

Gnomes

The word gnome is said to derive from the Greek *gnosis* meaning “knowledge.” There are many types of gnomes throughout the world. Gnomes are all underground dwellers and bring in the energy of Earth. They are extremely long-lived and often appear as very short, old people wearing pointed hats or hoods.

Gulons

The Gulon is a beast from Scandinavian legend. It is described as a lion-hyena with the tail of a fox. It is said to have sharp claws. It is sometimes used as a symbol of gluttony.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Jimariños⁹

These are the seasonal faeries of Mexico and Central America. Like the Fays, they assist in the turning of the Wheel. They appear as little children and some believe them to be the souls of children that do not realize they are dead.

Plants

Acorns

Each acorn holds within its small shell all the potential of the great oak tree. This is an ideal symbol of cycles of life, the seasons, and immortality.

Acorn brings to us the innate power of the great oak. When we go within to seek our own truths and reflect upon our personal harvest, we can evoke our own greatness and grow to do wonderful things.

Apple

The apple is one of the main symbols of this season and there is a rich folklore surrounding this simple fruit. Carbonized remains of apples have been found in archeological sites dating back to the Iron Age. There is evidence of the cultivation of apples from the early stages of developing Asian agriculture. Ancient Egyptian, Babylonian and Chinese writings mention the apple as far back as the 4th century B.C.

The apple came to Europe via Roman invaders. The Europeans took it to North America and planted the first trees at Massachusetts Bay and in Champlain's first colony in modern Nova Scotia. The well-known story of Johnny

Symbols of the Season

Appleseed recounts how the real-life Jonathon Chapman planted a great number of seeds throughout Ohio and Indiana.

Like many historical people, early settlers used apples for food and drink, as well as for fun and medicine. Even today, we say “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Healing superstitions from England include this one from Devonshire: To cure warts, cut an apple in half, rub it on the warts, tie the apple back together and bury it. In Lincolnshire, it was said that a poultice of rotten apples was recommended for rheumatism.

The Isle of Apples is Avalon, the British Otherworldly home of Morgaine and her priestesses. On this sacred island, grew orchards of healing, restorative apples. The home of the god Manannan is believed to be a paradisaal apple orchard. Apple is a Chieftain Tree and protected under Irish law. It is also one of the trees of the Celtic ogham system of language, healing, and power, similar to the runic system of the Norse.

Fun Apple Facts

- * Apples are members of the rose family.
- * Apples float because 25% of their volume is made up of air.
- * Apple trees can reach to over forty feet and live over a hundred years.
- * Placing an apple in a bag of potatoes will prevent the potatoes from sprouting.
- * Eating raw apples eliminates more than 95% of the bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Apple Superstitions¹⁰

- * If an apple contains an even number of seeds, marriage is not far off. If the apple contains an odd number of seeds, marriage is not in the foreseeable future.
- * Rub an apple before eating to remove evil spirits that may be hiding inside.
- * Unicorns live beneath apple trees. You may see one if you visit an orchard on a misty day.

Aster

Also known as Michaelmas Daisies, asters bloom around the equinox. They are associated with the planet and goddess Venus.

Benzoin

Benzoin is often used as a base for incenses. It is a purification and prosperity plant.

Cedar

Often used in sweat lodges, this is a purifying herb that also prevents nightmares. The smoke is similar to sweetgrass in that it attracts beneficial energies. Cedar protects against many things, both physical and psychic. It has been used in prosperity spells and increases psychic abilities.

Symbols of the Season

Chamomile

Chamomile is also used in prosperity spells, although it is more commonly known for its relaxing and meditative properties. It is also used for purification and protection.

Corn

The Corn Mother is a goddess of fertility throughout the world. Corn is associated with the planet Venus and has been called Giver of Life and Sacred Mother. The first of the Egyptian corn harvest was given to a local deity known as Wapwait. It is used in blessing ceremonies and as an offering to the spirits.

Corn Superstitions^{II}

- * Pick an ear of corn at random. Count the kernels and divide by twelve (12 kernels per year) to find out how long you will live.
- * An ear of corn in the cradle will protect a baby.
- * Cornstalks hung over the mirror will bring good luck to the household.

Frankincense

Frankincense is a powerful tool for purification and protection. It raises the vibrations of those in its presence and eliminates destructive energies. According to Scott Cunningham, "Rosemary may be used as a substitute for frankincense."¹²

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Gourds

Gourds hung at the front door, placed in the four corners of the home, or carried on one's person, are protective. They are in season at the second harvest season and are wonderful to make into rattles. As a rattle, the gourd maintains its protective powers. Gourds may also be dried and used as scrying bowls.

Grapes

Grapes are sacred to Dionysus, Bacchus, Pomona, and Hathor. They are renowned for their ability to ensure fertility and are also used in money spells.

Hazel

In Celtic tradition, the Salmon swims in the sacred pool surrounded by nine hazel trees.

The nuts may be given or given for good luck. Hazel nuts are wonderful to use in spells for wisdom, luck, visioning, or fertility. The wood of the hazel, one of the ogham trees, has been used in window frames and over the door for protection of the home.

Hazel rods are often used as wands for druids or magicians. They have also been used in dowsing for water. The hazel is a Chieftain Tree in Irish law and is named as the wood for arms in Cad Goddeu, the Battle of the Trees poem that was written by Taliesin.

Hops

Hops is a vital component in making beers. Hops has also been used to alleviate insomnia and assist in healing mixtures.

Symbols of the Season

Ivy

Ivy is sacred to Bacchus and was a part of his early rites. It is also sacred to Dionysus and Osiris. In Cad Goddeu, ivy was chosen for its beauty. Ivy, another member of the ogham system, guards against negativity and supports love and fidelity.

Milkweed

Many people use milkweed pods as a symbol of this season.

Myrrh

Like Frankincense, with which it is often combined, myrrh purifies and uplifts. It is used in healing and consecration mixtures and is excellent to use during shadow or other trance work.

Nuts

Most nuts are harvested around the time of the equinox. These are commonly used in money and prosperity spells.

Pine

This tree is sacred to Venus, Astarte, and Dionysus. The thyrsus carried by the Bacchantes was topped with a pinecone, reminiscent of the fertile phallus and the creative, inspired energy of the male principle. Pine, or fir, trees were called to forefront in Cad Goddeu, as the leaders in battle. Pine/fir is an Irish Chieftain tree and one of the

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

ogham trees. Pine sawdust has been used as an incense base, while the incense itself is used for purification, protection, and healing.

Pomegranate

The pomegranate is sacred to Demeter and Persephone. It was the means by which Hades was able to keep Persephone in his realm for part of the year. This fruit represents blessings and good deeds at the Rosh Hashanah feast. The seeds have been eaten to increase fertility. Pomegranate branches over doorways prevent negativity from entering. The juice has been used as a magickal ink and substitute for blood.

Pumpkin

Although pumpkins are more commonly associated with Halloween, the pumpkin harvest in many areas begins in mid-September. It has been widely debated whether or not pumpkins were included in the first Thanksgiving in America or if this tradition began with the second feast of Thanksgiving. It is known that pumpkins were a staple in the diet of several Native American peoples and this did carry over to the diet of the settlers.

This is an ancient member of the squash family and is believed to have originated in North America, possibly more than 7000 years ago. This delicious form of squash is also good for you, being rich in vitamin A, potassium, and fiber. Pumpkins have been used in a multitude of ways, from home decorations to a wide variety of foods and drinks. Susan Dahlem of Dahlem's Handcrafted Soaps¹³ uses them in some of her soaps and there is even a Pumpkin Ale brewed in Hayward California by Buffalo Bill's

Symbols of the Season

Brewery. It is said that George Washington himself used pumpkins and other vegetables in his homebrews.

Roses

The rose is sacred to Demeter, Hathor, Adonis. In addition to its renown as a flower of love, rose petals and rose hips have long been used in healing mixtures. Roses can also act to protect the individual when carried. Drinking rosebud tea can bring on visionary dreams.

Rue

Whether eaten, carried, added to baths, or sprinkled around, rue is a powerful addition to any protection spell.

Saffron

Saffron is also known as Autumn Crocus. It is sacred to the goddess Ashtoreth and crescent-shaped saffron cakes were baked in her honor. Drinking a tea or infusion of saffron lifts the spirits and increases visioning abilities.

Sage

Both true sage (*Salvia* spp.) and sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) are healing plants that are also used for purification and protection. Both have been used in smudge sticks, though sagebrush is much more common. True sage is sometimes an ingredient in smoking mixtures for the sacred pipe of some Native American peoples.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Solomon's Seal

This is a general name pertaining to several perennial herbs of the lily family. Many bear berries, including the false spikenard whose berries turn bright red in autumn. It is widely appreciated for its power in protection and purification rituals.

Sunflower

The sunflower, which blooms in late August through the end of September, is often used at this time of year in place of the sun wheel or solar disk in home and altar decorations. Sunflowers have been used in spells to increase fertility and bring wisdom. The native peoples of the American southwest have used them medicinally as well as for crafting flutes and arrows.

Thistle

The ability of thistle to provide energy and strength can be important as we look within and prepare to enter the dark half of the year. It may also be used for purification, to break or deflect spells cast against you, and for healing.

Tobacco

This is one of the most sacred plants to the native peoples of North America. It was originally used in prayer and sacred ceremonies, or in personal rituals with honor, for protection, respect and healing. When used in the sacred pipe, tobacco holds Spirit, blesses the smoker, and the smoke carries one's prayers to the Creator.

Symbols of the Season

Vine

Vine, part of the ogham, is sacred to Dionysus, Bacchus, and Osiris. It represents inner reflection and trance work as well as the interweaving of conscious/subconscious and the individual with the community.

Wheat

This universally appreciated grain is associated with Ceres, Demeter, and Ishtar as well as Osiris and the Egyptian fertility deity, Min. This is one of the most important bounties of the land and is a staple food in many areas of the world. Wheat has been used magickally to bring fertility and prosperity.

Yarrow

A medicinal herb used at least as far back as the ancient Greeks, yarrow offers protection and purification. Yarrow chewed or taken as a tea may increase psychic powers and visioning abilities.

Other Symbols

Corpu copia

This is the Horn of Plenty that is filled with the bounty of the season. It is a never-ending source of food that has been linked to deities of many cultures. Epona, the ancient horse goddess, was often depicted holding the

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

horn of plenty. In ancient Greek myth, the Goddess of Plenty took over a horn that Heracles had torn off an opponent in a fight over the daughter of Dionysus. Water nymphs retrieved the horn and filled it with flowers before the Goddess decided to use it. The cornucopia has also been associated with Persephone. Originally, a curved animal horn, cornucopias are more commonly found today constructed of wicker basket material.

Burial Cairns

A cairn is a pile of stones that serves as a memorial. Our modern gravestones may have developed from these. The burial cairn is a symbol of the season for two reasons. One is because in many cultures, this is one of the main times during the year when we consciously focus on honoring our departed loved ones. People will meditate on ancestors, tend to gravesites, and begin to release lingering attachments to the dead. The other reason is because this is the equinox that stands on the edge of the dark half of the year. We are symbolically entering the time of inwardness and death and it is appropriate for us to also reflect on our own lives and our mortality.

Rattles

Rattles have been used by shamans for millennia to induce trance and facilitate the shamanic journey. Many people use them for trance work and to assist in creating altered states of consciousness for ritual work. Working with trance is an important element of this festival. Rattles, particularly those made of gourds, which are in season at this time, can be valuable additions to Mabon celebrations.

Rituals of Mabon

Sun Wheels

These are also known as solar disks and they are used as symbols at other festivals, such as the summer solstice. They usually take the form of circles containing equal-armed crosses or plate-like disks that are often covered in gold foil or painted yellow. Some people use sunflowers as a solar disk symbol. They represent the solar nature of the festival as well as the Wheel of the Year. The equal-armed cross represents the four cardinal directions and indicates the positions of the equinoxes and solstices. It can also be seen to symbolize the fact that the sun rises directly in the east and sets directly in the west, while at local noon on the equator, it is directly overhead, casting no shadow, except perhaps a metaphysical one straight down into the earth and into our inner selves.

¹much of this section is reprinted as it first appeared in *The Innerconnexion*, Yule 2000 issue.

²Andrews, *Animal-Speak*, pp. 202.

³Carr-Gomm, *The Druid Animal Oracle*, pp. 18-21.

⁴Carr-Gomm, *The Druid Animal Oracle*, pp. 84.

⁵Andrews, *Animal-Speak*, pp. 137.

⁶much of this section is reprinted as it first appeared in *The Innerconnexion*, Imbolc 2000 issue.

⁷Raven Grimassi, pers. comm.

⁸McCoy, *A Witch's Guide to Faery Folk*, pp. 219-220.

⁹McCoy, *A Witch's Guide to Faery Folk*, pp. 251.

¹⁰Cunningham, *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, pp. 36-37.

¹¹Cunningham, *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, pp. 83.

¹²Cunningham, *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, pp. 107.

¹³see *The Gift of Homemade Soap*, page 158



Rituals of Mabon

Hail Thor

*Hail Thor, son of the Earth Mother
Strong and noble Keeper of Thunder
Red-bearded Guardian of us all
Guide us through the seasons and the cycles of life
As you have your magickal goats to provide everlasting food
Bring the gift of fertility to the land
As we love and honor you
Let us find strength and wisdom within us
Hail Thor!*

Hail Sif

*Hail Sif, Great Lady
Bless us and our lands with abundant fertility
Golden haired goddess of the ripening grain
As we love and honor you
May we find beauty and grace within us
Hail Sif!*

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Altar Decorations

For most of us, our altars take on the feeling of the season with the addition of special decorations, symbols, or statues. You may change your altar cloth to one reminiscent of the colors or designs of autumn for Mabon. Statues of Mother Goddesses or the deities of the season frequently hold honored places in the home at this time of year. Since this is a point of balance, a yin/yang symbol or the addition of gold and silver candles to symbolize the balanced dance of god and goddess on this day would be equally appropriate.

Altars that are decorated with the fruits of the Land resonate with the energy of the festival. These might include autumn leaves (especially those dipped in paraffin), acorns, pine cones, pomegranates, corn, apples, gourds, wheat, nuts, and berries. If possible, gather your own local symbols of the season by taking a short nature walk. This will also help you attune to the energies of your area. Be sure not to harm any living thing or trespass on private property.

Incense

There are certain scents associated with the beginning of autumn that are unmistakable. Many of these are used indoors and during ritual in the form of incense. In the American Southwest, this time of year is the beginning of fireplace season and the aromas of juniper, pinyon pine, and cedar waft through our neighborhoods after dark. Many kitchens carry the smells of cinnamon and cloves from baking pies and mulling cider.

I find that I am drawn to add rosemary to my sage and sweetgrass smudge mixtures at this time of year. Many pagans I know will also burn benzoin (which is often used

Rituals of Mabon

as an incense base), musk, and jasmine at this time of year. And then there is the ever-popular myrrh and frankincense. Of course, you can purchase all these incenses. But to add to your enjoyment of the season, and increase your own attunement, why not try making your own?

If you can't find the herbs in dried or resin form, you may substitute a few drops of the essential oil or a powdered, ready-made incense. All you need to do is grind a small amount of the dried herbs together and burn it a little at a time over a burning charcoal disk in a fireproof container. As you grind and mix the herbs, meditate on the energies and associations of the season. Allow this energy to flow from your hands into the herbs. You may choose to add a simple chant, further attuning your incense to the festival.

Incense Blessing

Sacred herbs

Children of the Land

Bring us the blessings of the harvest season

Mabon Incense

2 parts Frankincense

1 part Myrrh

1 part Juniper

1 part Pine

Autumn Equinox Smudge

2 parts Sweetgrass

1 part Cedar

1 part Sage

1 part Juniper

1 part Rosemary

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Alban Elfed Incense

3 parts Willow

2 parts Jasmine

1 part Pine

1 part Apple Wood

Using Essential Oils

Oils made from the herbs and plants of the season can be used in other ways to attune you and your home to Mabon energies. These are wonderful alternative to commercial perfumes and tend to be less allergenic to those with chemical sensitivity. The other benefit to essential oils is that they hold the energies of the whole plant, unlike synthetic oils and perfumes.

These oils can be used in holiday potpourri to strengthen or add to the seasonal scents. We can also make use of the aromatherapy gadgets that have become so popular over the years. Most health food and metaphysical stores now sell ceramic rings that fit over light bulbs. These are ideal for anointing with a small amount of essential oil and are preferable to simply placing the oil on the bulb itself. As the light bulb heats the ring, the aroma is released into the room. There are also special dishes to hold the oil that are positioned in a special holder over a candle that is burned to create the same effect as the light bulb ring.

The Autumn Equinox is such a sensual and luxurious time. This is the time of rest before moving into the dark half of the year. We work with those energies as well when we pamper ourselves and delight in the joys of the season. Scent has been used for millennia to trigger memories and condition us to bypass the rational mind, allowing

Rituals of Mabon

intuition and inspiration to spring forth. Experiment with different scents in your home or on your body and discover the benefits of aroma for yourself.

Mabon Rites

Wiccan

This beautiful rite was crafted by our dear friends, Sparrow and Rowan of Our Lady of the Woods coven.¹ It was first publicly conducted by the coven in 1996 in New Mexico.

Setting up the altar:

- * Harvest altar with colored leaves, acorn, seeds, gourds, pine cones, etc.
- * As much as possible should be gathered at the site.
- * Several small baskets of apples rest together on the altar for cakes.
- * Several chalices filled with mead and cherry or apple cider, preferably local.
- * One perfect apple rests on the pentacle.

Attunement/Centering ; Harvest Chant

Our hands will work for peace and justice,

Our hands will work to bless the land

Gather round the harvest table.

Let us feast and bless the land.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Asperging

Priestess:

I exorcise thee, O spirit of Salt, casting out all impurities that may lie within

Likewise do I exorcise thee, O spirit of Water, casting out all impurities that may lie within.

Cast the circle

Priest:

I conjure thee O Circle of Power, that thou be'est a boundary between the world of humanity and the realms of the Mighty Ones, a guardian and a protection to preserve and contain the power we shall raise within.

All:

Wherefore do I bless and consecrate thee!

Call the quarters:

East:

Guardians of the Watchtowers of the East, Spirits of Air, I call upon thee . . . Thou who art zephyrs, breezes, and winds of all kinds . . . who art also mind, intellect, and imagination . . . Golden Eagle of the East, I summon, stir, and call thee up!

South:

Guardians of the Watchtowers of the South, Spirits of Fire, I call upon thee . . . Thou who art star fire, the deep heat at the Earth's core, and flame of all kinds . . . who art also energy, will and purpose . . . Red Lion of the South, I summon, stir, and call thee up!

Rituals of Mabon

West:

Guardians of the Watchtowers of the West, Spirits of Water, I call upon thee . . . Thou who art rain, rivers, lakes and oceans . . . who art also feelings, emotions and intuition . . . Silver Dolphin of the Western Seas, I summon, stir, and call thee up!

North:

Guardians of the Watchtowers of the North, Spirits of Earth, I call upon thee . . . Thou who art all fertile plains, hills and mountains . . . who art also foundations, our bodies, and all things material and solid . . . Black Bear of the North, I summon, stir, and call thee up!

Invoking God

Priest²

Great God Cernunnos, return to Earth again! Come to my call and show thyself to men. Shepherd of Goats upon the wild hill's way, lead thy lost flock from darkness unto day.

Forgotten are the ways of sleep and night- Men seek for them, whose eyes have lost the sight.

Open the door, the door that hath no key. The door of dreams, whereby men come to thee, Shepherd of Goats, O answer unto me!

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Invoking Goddess

Priestess

Cerridwen of the harvest, return to Earth again! Come to my call and show thyself to men.

Moon Goddess, Triple Goddess, White Sow of the Night, grant to us your bounty of knowledge and of light. Bring to us your cauldron, to drink and be reborn, with wisdom, power, magick, we come to be transformed. Turn the wheel, the wheel that spins the year; that brings to us the changes that we welcome and we fear. Goddess of the grain, come unto me here!

Stating the Purpose

Priestess/Cerridwen:

In the time of harvest, we celebrate the abundance of the land. In this time of feasting, it is well to remember the days of hard work that went into producing the abundance we now enjoy. There is a relationship between abundance and the discipline of work which we would all do well to remember. This is the wisdom of the first drop from my cauldron.

The time of harvest is also a time of reflection upon the past. We gain little by experience alone. We gain much by experience combined with reflection. One does well to mind the lessons of experience. This is wisdom of the second drop from my cauldron.

The harvest is the end of the cycle, the time to release power to those who will come after. The ability to

Rituals of Mabon

know when one cycle is ended and to turn to the next without regret is the wisdom of the third drop from my cauldron.

Raising Power

Spiral Dance slowly widdershins into the center of the circle, accompanied by drumming only. When all are gathered in a tight circle around the altar, leaving just enough room for the Priestess and Priest to move around it, the Priestess stands before the apple on the pentacle, turns it on its' side and cuts it in half crosswise.

Priestess/Cerridwen:

(points to the five pointed star at the apple's heart) Behold the mystery of life and death, the witch's star. Containing the essence of the four elements Air, for inspiration *(points to a seed)*, Fire, for will *(points)*, Water, for emotion *(points)*, Earth, for manifestation *(points)*, and that which animates them all, Spirit *(points)*, Here, in the heart of the harvest.

Priest/Cernunnos:

We wind the circle down the tower into the depths. At the base of the tower, deep in the dark, stands my lady Cerridwen with her cauldron. She waits for me. She waits for us all. In the balance of light and dark, the road lies ahead in the twilight. As I have given that part of me that is the grain of the fields, as I now give that part of me that is the fruit of leaf and branch, soon she will call for me to enter the cauldron and give the remainder, which is my flesh. And I will go, willingly, even gladly, for to hang on to the past, is to deny the hope, and life, and joy that may be – no – *will* be,

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

waiting for us in the future. It is also to stop the wheel, which is the true death of the soul, from which no life can be reborn.

However, the cauldron is not yet, and in the final weeks, it is well to turn ones thoughts back, reflecting on the year that is passing. What did you experience? What did you learn? Some memories are easy and pleasant to dwell on: the beauty of the spring and summer, perhaps a new love, or a better job. Some are painful: a divorce, perhaps the death of a friend or loved one, or one more lesson about boundaries and communication.

Judge them if you will, but I tell you that they are all sacred lessons that lead you by one path or another to the same place, to us. “All acts of love and pleasure are Her rituals.” Love enough to forgive, not just those around you, but yourself as well. Tread lightly upon your spirit, for soon all but it will be gone. Ego, your body, even the memory of all that has gone before, will be a pale shadow of reality before the endless sea of Her love, of which we are all a part.

I call upon you to view your lives – not through the eyes of your ego – but through the eyes of The God and Goddess and see the beauty and majesty that lies within.

So Mote It Be

Priestess/Cerridwen:

(to participants) Have you learned from your harvest?

Rituals of Mabon

Participants:

Yes

Priest/Cernunnos:

(to participants) Will you see yourself as She does?

Participants:

Yes

Sending Power

Priestess/Cerridwen and Priest/Cernunnos:

(join hands and unwind the spiral deosil singing the chant to raise power) Free the heart and let it go, What we reap is what we sow.

When the spiral is completely open, continue circling deosil until the power has peaked. Do not let it bog down. If it starts to, either weave some "S" shapes into it, or wind it back into the center deosil.

Earth the Excess Energy: Cakes and Wine

Priestess/Cerridwen and Priest/Cernunnos:

(facing each other, both holding aloft a chalice in their left hands and an athame in their right. Speaking together:) As the chalice is to The Lady, So the athame is to The Lord. Together their union manifests all things!

(Both athames in both chalices together. Share both chalices together. Share with the circle)

(Both pick up a basket of apples)

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Priest/Cernunnos:

As the seed is the spark of life,

Priestess/Cerridwen:

And the Earth is the womb of the Mother,

Together:

By their union we all are fed.

(Share an apple together. Share with the circle)

Farewell to The Goddess and The God

Priest and Priestess:

(Ad hoc)

Farewell to the Quarters

Each one in turn:

Powers of _____, we honor and thank thee for thy help, energy and protection. Please remain with us for the duration of the festival. Blessed Be!

Release the Circle

Priest:

(Ad hoc)

Open the Circle

All:

Merry meet and merry part and merry meet again!

Rituals of Mabon

Druidic^B

Altar Set up

- central altar with God and Goddess candles
- bread
- wine, mead, or apple juice.

All enter from West, saluting East before taking places in the circle. East enters last.

East (*saluting East*):

O Great Spirit, O Spirit of this circle, we ask for your blessing on this our ceremony. *Turns back to face center.*
Let the circle now be consecrated.

West:

With blessings of the sacred well of Segais, I consecrate this circle.

South:

With blessings of the inner fire of the Sun, I consecrate this circle. Now, let us begin by asking the blessings of the Three Realms

North:

We ask the blessings of the Land, the Earth Mother, and the spirits of Nature. Allies and kin of stone and stream, soil and tree, fruit and flowers; beings of fur, feather, and scale, we invite you to share in this circle. We are all children of the Land and we offer you welcome. Bless us and guide us, protect us in the work we do here this night. May our every action honor you.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

West:

We ask the blessings of the Sea, the Otherworld, and of the ancestors. Beings of the deep oceans, so different from us on the surface yet of the same spirit, we bless you and invite you to share in this circle. Ancestors and Otherworld guides, we offer you welcome. Bless us and guide us, protect us in the work we do here this night. May our every action honor you.

East:

We ask the blessings of the Sky, the Home of the Sun and the starry heavens, and of the Shining Ones. Hear us eldest and brightest, keepers of the turning of the Wheel. Gods and Goddesses of our ancestors and of this place, known and unknown, we offer you welcome. Bless us and guide us, protect us in the work we do here this night. May our every action honor you.

South:

Let us recite the Druid's prayer.

All:

Grant, O Spirit, Thy protection
and in protection, strength
and in strength, understanding
and in understanding, knowledge
and in knowledge, the knowledge of justice
and in the knowledge of justice, the love of it
and in the love of it, the love of all existences
and in the love of all existences,
the love of Spirit and all goodness

Rituals of Mabon

North:

Let us give peace to the directions, for without peace,
can no work be.

South (*turning to face outwards and raising right palm*):

May there be peace in the South.

West (*as above*):

May there be peace in the West.

North (*as above*):

May there be peace in the North.

East (*as above*):

May there be peace in the East

North:

May the harmony of our lands be complete

Pause, then all turn inwards

West:

As the Sun sets in the West, so the year sets in Autumn.
We stand at a point of balance, equal night and equal
day before moving into the Darkness of Winter. Alban
Elfed is a time of reflection and thanksgiving. As we
gaze into the sacred fire at our center, let us contem-
plate the harvest of this past year and give thanks for all
that we have received.

Brief silent meditation

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

East:

At Lughnasadh we hailed the first harvest; at Alban Elfed we thank the Goddess, for the full fruitfulness of the Land.

South:

In Her honor, I call for the fruits of the Land.

East takes bread and West takes wine or mead and distributes it to each in turn, deosil, saying:

East:

Seed becomes bread; may your body be blessed.

West:

Water becomes wine; may your Spirit be blessed.

When all have been blessed, East and West return to their places.

North:

I speak for the abiding Earth and Her Laws, now and forever. Be wise!

East:

Speak for the Seed of Life; now and forever. Be renewed!

West:

I speak for the blessings of Water; the power of Love, now and forever. Bless and be blessed!

Rituals of Mabon

East:

It is the hour of recall. As the light dies down (*candles are extinguished*) let it be relit in your hearts. May your memories hold what the eye and ear have gained.

South:

Let the Three Realms be thanked for their blessings and protection.

North:

Guardians and guides of the Land, the Earth Mother, and the spirits of Nature, we thank you for your presence with us this night. We honor your protection and blessings and give thanks for your presence throughout our lives. Stay if you will, leave if you must, know that you are always welcome with us.

West:

Ancestors and Beings of the Otherworlds and the Sea, we thank you for your presence with us this night. We honor your protection and blessings and give thanks for your presence throughout our lives. Stay if you will, leave if you must, know that you are always welcome with us.

East:

Shining Ones, spirits of the Sky, we thank you for your presence with us this night. We honor your protection and blessings and give thanks for your presence throughout our lives. Stay if you will, leave if you must, know that you are always welcome with us.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

South:

I now declare that this Festival of Alban Elfed is closed in the apparent world and in this circle. May its inspiration continue within our beings.

Dorse Harvest Blot (*pronounced blote*)

This rite can be done with a priest (Gothi) and priestess (Gythia), or the Gythia can be the blot leader in place of a Gothi, if you prefer. The Valkyrie is the ritual assistant. As my friend Laeknir Eirarson says, the male-female balance is believed to be inherent so it is not necessary to reflect this in the ritual structure.

Altar Set-up

- * in the North with a drinking horn or chalice
- * mead, beer, juice, or milk and honey
- * a ceremonial bowl (blotbowl)

Introduction

Gothi:

The harvest is complete as we move into the cold and darkness. The trees change color and the animals store food for the coming winter. The body of Jord cools and prepares for the coming frost. As we feel the chill of the north winds, we retreat for reflection and thanksgiving.

Valkyrie:

Soon the Wild Hunt will be upon us and the veils between the worlds grow thin. We come together in

Rituals of Mabon

thanksgiving to ask for blessings of protection and guidance from the Old Gods.

Hallowing

Hammer Rite

Gothi makes the invocation and swings a ritual hammer or makes the sign of the hammer (an upside down “T” shape surrounded by a circle in the air), at north, south, east and west, moving around outside the circle of participants.

Thor, Hammer-Hallower, I call you to hallow this stead and hold this sacred space.

Invocation

Standing with arms outstretched over the head in the Z rune Elhaz, the Gothi invokes the deities of the harvest season.

Gothi:

I give thanks to the Landvaettir for their blessings and for sharing this space with us. Those who should fare, fare well. Those who should stay, stay in peace and protection. Harmless to me & mine

Hail Freyja, Golden One! Holder of the glorious Bris-ingamen, that brings fertility and abundance. As we love and honor you, may we find love and power within us. Join us and accept our thanks. Hail Freyja!

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Hail Freyr, Harvest God! Keeper of the rain and sunshine. As we love and honor you, may we find creativity and inspiration within us. Join us and accept our thanks. Hail Freyr!

Hail Sif, Great Lady! We come to this place, grateful for your gifts. Golden-haired goddess of the ripening grain. As we love and honor you, may we find beauty and grace within us. Join us and accept our thanks. Hail Sif!

Hail Thor, son of the Earth Mother! Strong and noble Keeper of Thunder, Red-bearded Guardian of us all, guide us through the seasons and the cycles of life. We thank you for the fertility of our lands and for the abundance we have received this year. As we love and honor you, let us find strength and wisdom within us. Join us and accept our thanks. Hail Thor!

Consecration

Gothi takes up horn. The Valkyrie pours the drink into the horn.

Gothi:

(makes hammer sign over horn then holds it up over his head)

Hail Gods and Goddesses of the Harvest! I offer this horn to you. Hallow it and accept it as our sacrifice.

Sharing the Offering

Gothi raises horn and toasts the deities invoked.

Valkyrie takes horn around to the company, saying “In peace, may the inspiration of Kvasir be with you” to each participant.⁴

Rituals of Mabon

Three more rounds are made, either reflecting on past, present and future or sharing poems, jokes, and boasts of your deeds over the previous year. Refill the horn if necessary and make sure that some of the drink remains at the end of the toasts.

This combines the blot and sumbel, two separate rites. It can take a fair amount of time depending on the number of participants. Alternately, the Gothi gives a short speech on the past, present, and future before the first and only round, during which participants make brief offerings of their own.

Libation

The remains of the horn are poured into the blotbowl. As it is poured onto the earth, **Gothi** says: Thus do all things return to the earth.

Gothi:

Hail to the gods of the harvest! Hail Jord, Earth and Mother of Thor, for all your blessings!

I give thanks to the Landvaettir for their blessings and for sharing this space with us. Those who should fare, fare well. Those who should stay, stay in peace and protection. Harmless to me & mine.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

NeoShamanic

Altar Set-up

- * In the north with two (two white or one white and one black) candles
- * objects that are sacred to you or embody your spirit allies
- * a cauldron with sticks or other material for a small fire
- * smudge stick or loose smudge mixture and smudge fan.

Smudge the altar and entire circle in clockwise fashion, saying as you go: “Spirits of the sacred smoke, cleanse and purify this space that we may work to the highest good of all”

Return to altar and add juniper or cedar to smudge mixture. If you are using smudge sticks, simply use the same stick. Smudge yourself and all participants in clockwise fashion.

Return smudge to altar and thank the sacred herbs for their blessings.

Drum (or rattle) a monotonous tone over the altar three times then turn and direct the tone around the circle, inviting the spirits of the circle and the spirits of place. Drum three times at each direction or allow a special rhythm to develop as you invite in the Spiritkeepers of the four directions. Holding the drum out to front, continue your slow, monotonous rhythm and invite your spirit allies to join you. Allow participants to invite their allies. Direct the tone up to invite the sky spirits and below to invite the

Rituals of Mabon

spirits of the earth. Direct the tone beyond your left shoulder to invite the ancestors.

While drumming, meditate on the energies of the season. Allow a power song to come through you. Keep it simple and encourage participants to join in.

*Point of balance we are here
Thankful and releasing
Walk with strength into the dark
Guide us and protect us*

Light the two altar candles: “We stand on this earth at a point of balance and I light these candles as symbols of this time. May they illuminate our beings and bring light into our shadows.”

Prepare to enter the shamanic journey. You may choose to lie down or sit. You might want to keep a blanket nearby in case you get cold. One person may drum for the journey or you may prefer to use a shamanic journeying drumming tape. Keep in mind that this is an outline. A true shamanic journey cannot be led so if your travels take you in different directions, trust in what comes up for you and go with it.

Call on your personal spirit guides to join you in this journey. Ask for their guidance and protection as you travel the Otherworlds. Enter the Lowerworld journey with the intent to find outworn patterns in your life or old energies that no longer serve your best interest.

Be aware of how the Lowerworld looks at this time of year. You may find that the trees are changing or that the color

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

of the light is slightly different. You may find that you meet different beings or animals than at other times of the year. Allow yourself to be led down the paths that take you to your goals. Observe and get to know the energies and patterns you are led to see. Recognize they are a part of you already as you gather them up and carry them with you. You may wish to use a bag to carry them about the Lowerworld.

You may choose to release these energies and patterns in two ways. Many people find that the combination of the journeying action with the more physical action after the journey is very effective so I have written both here. It is equally effective to use only one if you feel complete with that action.

Once you have found all that you will, or all that you are prepared for at this time, return to your entry place from the Middleworld (this reality). On the way, you pass through a large meadow or open space area that has just been ploughed. Bury all of the outworn energies and patterns you have been carrying around in this freshly broken earth. Ask the blessings of the Earth Herself in releasing these and moving forward on a healthier path. Watch as they are ploughed under into the earth.

Return to the Middleworld and your physical body. When everyone is back to the circle, the ritual leader will stop drumming or turn off the tape. Give everyone a moment to fully return to normal ritual consciousness.

Return to the altar and drum three times over the cauldron. Start the small fire in the cauldron. Call up any lingering energies that you released during the journey. Send them

Rituals of Mabon

through your hands and breath into this fire for purification and transformation. Blow the images and feelings out into the fire. Thank the spirit of the fire for this gift.

Drum the circle as you did in the beginning, holding the energy of thanks for all the spirits that joined with you and blessed your journeys. Allow everyone a few moments to thank their personal guides and speak if they wish. Then blow out the candles and douse the cauldron fire. Drum three times over the altar followed by one loud final beat and the circle is open.

Ritual for Children

This is written with the young child in mind. Older children can take on more responsible roles with a parent's permission. Each time the Adult role is written, a child can assist with or mimic the adult's words and actions.

Altar set-up

- a festive altar cloth
- symbols of the season
- ritual items
- a candle for the God and the Goddess
- a large cornucopia or wicker basket
- cookies and juice
- any special items participants want included.
- Have each person bring a non-perishable food item with them to the circle for the Give-Away. This may be substituted with clothing or food for wild animals.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Adults may cast the circle if they wish. A child, generally over the age of 5, can assist in this by using a plastic knife, toy sword, or wand and mimicking the adult's actions. The use of imagination works well with children.

After each direction invocation, adults can light candles, with children's assistance if age appropriate. You may also use this as a teaching experience by having a feather fan at east, a candle or sparklers at south, a bowl of water or fishbowl at west, and a globe or bowl of earth at north.

East:

Here we bring light and life in at the East

South:

Here we bring light and life in at the South.

West:

Here we bring light and life in at the West.

North:

Here we bring light and life in at the North.

Adult:

We ask for the blessings of the Great Spirit and the God and Goddess. We call upon the spirits of Nature, the faeries, and our spirit guides. We invite you to join our circle. Come play with us. Bless us with your guidance and protection.

An adult tells the story of John Barleycorn and explains how he is the spirit of the grain and the manifestation of the god who dies at this time of year to be reborn in the spring. It is great fun to follow this with a dance or reenactment of the story. This also helps the children

Rituals of Mabon

remember it. Be sure everyone has settled down as much as possible before moving on with the ritual.

Adult:

This is the time of giving thanks; of honoring our blessings and giving back to the land and to those that are in need. This is the time for the Give-Away.

Going clockwise around the circle, each person says something that they are thankful for then brings their offering of food or clothing to the altar. "Thank you for the good things in my life. I offer this _____ to those in need. May the gods bless them" Then the child or adult places the offering in the cornucopia or basket.

Ritual leader holds cookies and juice out. Everyone else comes together in one circle, holding hands. The people on either side of ritual leader place one hand on his or her shoulders or arms.

Adult:

As we chant the Om, allow your blessings and prayers for the dark half of the year to flow into the cookies and juice.

Chant Om, three times then pass the juice and cookies around the circle.

East:

Powers of the East, thank you for sharing our circle.
Thank you for being part of our lives always.

South:

Powers of the South, thank you for sharing our circle.
Thank you for being part of our lives always.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

West:

Powers of the West, thank you for sharing our circle.
Thank you for being part of our lives always.

North:

Powers of the North, thank you for sharing our circle.
Thank you for being part of our lives always.

Adult:

We thank the Great Spirit and the God and Goddess for their presence in this circle. We thank the spirits of Nature, the faeries, and our spirit guides for being here and for blessing us with their guidance and protection.

All:

Merry Meet and merry part and merry meet again.

Eclectic Pagan Pride Ritual⁵

This is directly from a now-defunct page on the International Pagan Pride Project's website. They graciously allowed me to reprint it for the original edition of this book as written. Descriptions and explanations have been edited for space.

Preparing for ritual

Ground and Center

Find the center point within you, the place where you feel "together" and balanced. Sense that that point is connected

Rituals of Mabon

to everyone else's balance point, and that of the Earth, the universe. Know that whatever method you use to sense this is just a tool; the end result is what counts, the feeling of relaxed tension, balanced focus. And know that where we are about to enter is truly Between the Worlds.

Gathering In

Before the ceremony, allow people to stand in a circle and introduce themselves: we always start with the Priest and end with the Priestess, and let everyone else go in order. Appropriate introductions would be Craft name, city you're from, and group affiliation if any.

Blessing of the Elements

The Priest takes the incense and the Priestess the cup of salt water, and they follow around the circle in blessing with the elements: We bless you with the smoke of autumn leaves on the Air and the Fire of fall bonfires. We bless you with the Water of September rains and rich Earth yielding her harvest.

Creating Sacred Space

Casting the Circle

Priestess:

From the four directions, we gather together, to join in this circle.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

From our many traditions, we call together, those
whom we honor.

Different: in the names we speak, the ways we seek, the
paths we travel.

Together in our reverence: of nature, of the cycles of
life, of inspiration within.

To create the sacred Circle and join our energies to-
gether, we will sing:

All:

We are a circle, within a circle,
with no beginning, and never ending (repeat)

Calling the Quarters

East:

Celebrate here now together the spirit of Air,
In the wind's low clear whistle, the rush of the gales
through our hair.

The wind's autumn dances that lighten the mind.
Of what would you be freed?

Think it, and let the cool breeze come to lift it away.
And the winds of change will blow harvest gifts our
way.

All:

Though many, though different, we stand proud to-
gether
And call out: Welcome to the East!

Rituals of Mabon

South:

Celebrate here now together the spirit of Fire,
In the crackling of logs and the leaf-smoke, so radiant
and warm.

The autumn bonfire that inflames the spirit.
In what would you take heart?

Will it, and let the bright flames burn to brand it within.
And the fires of fall will empower our harvest desires.

All:

Though many, though different, we stand proud to-
gether
And call out: Welcome to the South!

West:

Celebrate here now together the spirit of Water,
In the patter of raindrops, the damp crunch of the frost
on the leaves.

The September rains that soothes the heart.
From what would you be healed?

Feel it, and let cool water flow to wash it away.
And the waters of autumn will quench us like harvest's
rich juice.

All:

Though many, though different, we stand proud to-
gether
And call out: Welcome to the West!

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

North:

Celebrate here now together the spirit of Earth,
In the scent of ripe wheat, the thudding of feet on firm
ground.

The harvest-time fruits that nourish the body.
In what would you plant hope?

Believe it, and let fertile earth nurture dreams to take
root.

That the rich fields of plenty might yield enough har-
vest for all.

All:

Though many, though different, we stand proud to-
gether
And call out: Welcome to the North!
Priest and Priestess:
And so now the Circle is cast.
And with sacred space surrounding us, we turn to the
center.
Welcoming the Divine

Priestess:

Through all the ages, the Divine has been called by
many names imagined in many faces honored in many
ways.

Priest:

Today, we call old Gods in new ways and new Gods in
old ways and search for the Divine in ourselves and
others.

Rituals of Mabon

Both:

Let us join together at Equinox, a balance-point of the year and call clear and proud the Names we choose to honor today.

The circle starts a simple rhythm of clapping hands, and people are free to call the names of whatever God, Goddess, or God and Goddess pair they welcome at this ritual. The circle responds 'Welcome' between names.

When the calling dies down:

Priestess:

To these many names and many faces; To the Lady of the Harvest, Demeter, Isis, Arienrhod, Inanna, Freya.

Priest:

To the God of the Grain, Dionysus, Osiris, Cernunnos, Dumuzi, Frey; to the spark within each of us, for Thou Art God and Goddess.

Priestess:

and to the Divine immanent in the universe, we cry:

(all)

WELCOME!

Celebrating the Season

Spend a moment to ground and center and feel our connection with the Earth and each other.

Feel the different energies in the Circle; if you can't feel them, imagine them. We are all different. We all view the

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

God, the Goddess, ourselves, the elements, in slightly different ways. We all practice in different ways - some of us celebrate the Full Moons, some only part of the eight seasonal holidays, some other days altogether. We all use different symbols, different words; some of us celebrate with others regularly, others alone. Yet we all stand together under the name Pagan and take pride in it. Why? Because while the words, the techniques, the practices may differ, the core behind it is the same: we choose to celebrate in ways that mean something to each of us, practices that touch our hearts because they touch us, not because someone has told us we are supposed to practice this way. We have each been called by faces, aspects, views of the Divine that don't match traditional Western religion; we see the Divine as Goddess, as earth, as the ancient Gods our ancestors worshipped, as a force throughout Nature, as new inspirations from new myths as well as old. We don't need intercession from others - we can connect with the Divine ourselves. And in some way, we all perceive the sacred, the numinous, somewhere in the natural world. We seek God, Goddess, the Divine, in cathedrals of canyons, in temples of stands of oak trees, at sanctuaries that are the shores of the sea. We seek the Divine in the spark that calls to our hearts, the spark that grows while staring at the starry sky, gazing at the Full Moon's glow, watching the soaring flight of the eagle, feeling the solid stone beneath our feet. We seek Divine in individual inspiration, inspiration by the cycles of life. We are Pagans. And we stand together despite our differences because by standing together we can ensure that all of us can stand tomorrow.

On the altar is a cauldron or other container filled with grass seed (if you're in a grassy area; sand if you're on a beach).

Rituals of Mabon

The **Priestess** stands before the cauldron:

We are many, as these seeds are many. We take the support we need from the community around us, as we take these seeds.

Now, each person can come to the altar and take a handful of seed.

After this, the **Priestess** continues:

This is Autumn Equinox, the time of the harvest. As we harvest what we need from the community so do we also give back, and in giving, plant the seeds of tomorrow...

All:

Together we stand, strong and proud, and harvest the seeds of rebirth... (repeat)

Now, know that for as much as has been given us, as much as we have created for ourselves, we are capable of that much more, and the adventure lies in the fact that greater things are on their way, whether or not we can see them now. While holding the seeds, the chant increases, and leads into the next one.

All:

We give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way; we give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way; we give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way! (repeat)

Raise a cone of power, guided by Priest and Priestess. At the peak of the power, we throw the seeds into the air, knowing that we send out this harvest to seed the next! Then relax and center again.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Feasting and Fellowship

We direct our attention to the results of the food drive, and bless it along with the bread we share with each other.

All: (to the tune of “All Good Gifts” from Godspell)

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered by Her abundant hand.
She sends the snows in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the seedtime and the harvest, and summer’s gentle rain.

All good gifts around us have come from our Mother Earth,
then thank Her now, O thank Her now, with love and joy and mirth...

We thank You then, O Mother, for all things bright and good,
the seedtime and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
No sacrifice You ask for, for all Your love imparts,
for You are our great Mother, Your love is in our hearts.

All good gifts around us have come from our Mother Earth,
then thank Her now, O thank Her now, with love and joy and mirth...

Pass the cup and bread; feel the grounding of the bread,
and the fellowship of the cup. *“May you never hunger.” “May you never thirst.”* At this point, announcements can also be made.

Rituals of Mabon

Closing the Circle

Priest and Priestess:

Goddesses and Gods, all and one, we thank you and ask for Your blessings as we depart, knowing You are with us always. Hail and farewell! Blessed be.

East:

Spirit of the East, essence of air, we thank you for the gift of freedom.
Hail and farewell, Blessed Be.

South:

Spirit of the South, Essence of Fire, we thank you for the gift of heart.
Hail and farewell. Blessed be.

West:

Spirit of the West, Essence of Water, we thank you for the gift of healing.
Hail and farewell, Blessed Be.

North:

Spirit of the North, Essence of Earth, we thank you for the gift of hope.
Hail and farewell, Blessed Be.

All:

The Circle is open, but unbroken.
May the peace of the Goddess
the love of the God,
and the support of our community
go in our hearts.
Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again.
Blessed be!

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

¹Visit their website at <http://www.ladywoods.org>

²adapted version taken from *The Witches Bible Complete*, by Janet and Stewart Farrar, pp. 44. First published in Dion Fortune's *Moon Magic* as Invocation to Pan, pp. 176.

³the main body of this ritual is based on the Alban Elfed alternative ritual of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids.

⁴Kvasir was the wisest of the Vanir. He was killed by two dwarves that mixed his blood with honey. This fermented, created mead or strong beer, and those who drink of it become divinely inspired.

⁵International Pagan Pride Project website <http://www.paganpride.org/prideritual.html>



A Feast of Thanksgiving

Sir John Barleycorn

anonymous

There were three men came from the west
Their fortunes for to tell,
And the life of John Barleycorn
As well.

They laid him in three furrows deep,
Laid clods upon his head,
Then these three men made a solemn vow
John Barleycorn was dead.

They let him die for a very long time
Till the rain from heaven did fall,
Then little Sir John sprang up his head
And he did amaze them all.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

They let him stand till Midsummer Day,
Till he looked both pale and wan,
Then little Sir John he grew a long beard
And so became a man.

They have hired men with the scythes so sharp,
To cut him off at the knee,
They rolled and they tied him around the waist,
They served him barbarously.

They have hired men with the crab-tree sticks,
To cut him skin from bone,
And the miller he has served him worse than that,
For he's ground him between two stones.

They've wheeled him here, they've wheeled him there,
They've wheeled him to a barn,
And they have served him worse than that,
They've bunged him in a vat.

They have worked their will on John Barleycorn
But he lived to tell the tale,
For they pour him out of an old brown jug
And they call him home brewed ale.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

Can you smell it, even if only in your imagination?
The thought of Mabon evokes the warm scents of cooling
apple and pecan pies wafting through on the crisp autumn
breezes. Mabon air just feels and smells different. It is

A Feast of Thanksgiving

clearer and usually a bit cooler than the preceding months, unless it is accompanied by an Indian Summer period of warm temperatures. Merely thinking about this time of year calls to mind memories of the warmth of a fireplace and smell of pine and juniper burning.

Autumn brings with it some of the most wonderful foods and drinks. As the time of the second harvest, and in preparation for the coming winter, we honor this time of bounty with gratitude and celebration. As such, it is known as the Pagan Thanksgiving and we indulge just as much at our Mabon feasts as anyone does at the mundane Thanksgiving in November.

Oh, do we feast! We share in all things made of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains. Bread, corn, beans, squash, and root vegetables are traditional fare, along with apples, berries, grapes, and pomegranates. We delight over cider, ale and wines, muffins, popcorn and caramel apples. This is truly a time of self-indulgent comfort before the winter winds begin to blow.

All foods harvested and stored are part of the abundance we share at this time of year. Many of us find that, like the animals that share our world, we are also beginning to put on weight for winter. It is nearly impossible to resist the comforting, warming, and mouth-watering treats of the season!

Food

The foods of autumn are like no other. These are heartier than summer fare yet lighter than most winter foods. They offer us a delicious combination of Lughnasadh and Samhain. The bounty of the second harvest is what makes up our Mabon feasts.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

For many people this marks the beginning of hunting season. Special prayers are offered by those pagans that eat meat. We honor the animal that gave its life for our sustenance. We ask blessings for this being and release its spirit to the next world.

The cornucopia of the season is full of apples, grapes, berries, pomegranates and nuts. Beans, squash, corn, and root vegetables fill our stomachs in myriad ways. And then there are the wonderful, aromatic breads of the grain harvest! These are often baked in sun shapes or with sun designs cut into the dough before baking. They may be filled with the fruits and vegetables of the season and many of them are meals in themselves.

As any Kitchen Witch will tell you, the preparation of food and drink should rightly become a sacred event and a time to work blessing magick for your loved ones. Our energy affects the foods we prepare even when we are not consciously directing it. Therefore, it is important to be aware.

If you are feeling tense or are in a generally rotten mood, don't come to your kitchen with all that energy. Take a moment to purify your personal space or experience a grounding meditation before starting dinner. Do whatever you need to do let go of your tension, anger, or worry so you may come to this food in peace and love.

Meal Blessing

Once your energy is clear, you can consciously direct blessings for your family into the pots you use, the utensils, and all the ingredients that go into your meal. Simply hold your hands out with palms open to these objects, take a deep breath, and visualize your love and prayers flowing through your hands into the food and drink. You may

A Feast of Thanksgiving

want to charge these items with specific prayers or just send white light for your loved ones to use as they will. You may also want to direct a special mealtime prayer to the food. The following prayer may be used in this way. It is also a wonderful blessing for the whole family to say together, bringing a sense of gratitude and honor to each meal.

Great Spirit

We thank you for the gift of this food

*We send blessings of peace, love, and release to all
whose bodies and energies went into bringing us this nourishment*

We honor you in our enjoyment and utilization of this meal

May it bring us health and joy

Reminding us of our interconnections with All That Is

As we receive, so do we give back

And give thanks for this gift in the Cycle of Life¹

Green Chile Sauce

Red chile sauce can be a bit much unless it is in a stew. But my husband makes a green chile sauce that is so mouth-wateringly delicious, we even put it on omelettes.

You will need:

- 1 cup chopped green chile
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- ¼ to ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 Tbsp flour
- 1 cup water

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

1. Saute the onion and garlic until transparent.
2. Mix in flour then water and green chile.
3. Bring to a boil for one minute then simmer for 10 minutes. Can be frozen for several months or kept in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Salsa

This is for those of you that prefer a more Tex-Mex taste.

You will need:

- 3 ripe tomatoes
- 1 onion, red or Vidalia
- 3 cloves garlic
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cumin
- ½ cup chopped red and green peppers
- 1 small can of diced green chile

Mix all ingredients together, including the tomato juice. Store in a refrigerator for at least one hour before serving. Can be frozen for several months or kept in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Vegetarian Chili

This recipe makes great use of the new soy products that are not only delicious but also healthy. You may want to experiment with the ratio between sausage and beef flavors to meet your own personal taste. Other meat substitutes can be used in place of Gimme Lean® in this recipe.

You will need:

A Feast of Thanksgiving

½ package beef flavor Gimme Lean®
½ package sausage flavor Gimme Lean®
½ onion, chopped
3-4 cloves garlic
1 tsp cumin
1 Tbsp chili powder
¼ green pepper, chopped
¼ cup salsa or green chile sauce
1 can black or kidney beans
Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese, grated

1. Saute the onion and garlic until transparent. Add cumin and chili powder.
2. Cut Gimme Lean® into small pieces and sauté along with onion and garlic. Add beans and all remaining ingredients except cheese and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Serve alone or on rice with grated cheese on top.

Rowan's Cheesy Squash

I have never liked squash, except in its pumpkin incarnation. Imagine my surprise when Rowan of Our Lady of the Woods coven brought this to dinner and I couldn't get enough. I even ate it cold as a midnight snack! The spices can be altered to give it a less Cajun taste, by adding more Italian or Southwestern spices or by eliminating any spices other than salt and pepper.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

You will need:

6-8 medium summer squash, either crookneck or zucchini
1 large onion, chopped
butter or margarine
1 cup cracker crumbs
1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
salt
pepper
Cajun spice mix

1. Wash and slice squash and cook over medium heat in enough water to cover until tender. Drain very well.
2. Saute chopped onion in margarine until clear.
3. Mash squash, draining again if needed.
4. Add onions, cracker crumbs, 1 cup cheese and seasonings to squash and mix well. Taste and correct the seasonings to suit you. It should be flavorful, but not so hot it burns.
5. Pour into a greased casserole dish, sprinkle ½ cup cheese on top
6. Bake in a 345° oven for 30 minutes.

Baked Salmon

Not only is salmon the wisest and eldest of the Celtic Oldest Animals, but most species of salmon in the Pacific Northwest spawn or migrate in the fall. Try to purchase wild Alaska (sockeye, Chinook, coho, chum, and pink) salmon if possible. ²

A Feast of Thanksgiving

You will need:

2 salmon steaks or the equivalent amount in filets
1 Tbsp olive oil
4 Tbsp butter
1 Tbsp light soy sauce
1 Tbsp lemon juice

1. Marinate the salmon in the butter mixture for 3 hours or more, covered in the refrigerator.
2. Uncover and bake for 25 minutes at 400°F or until the fish flakes off easily with a fork.
3. Serve with rice and your favorite harvest vegetables.

Pomegranate Chicken

This is a surprisingly tasty dish. I make it with extra butter and serve it on rice. For Jewish people honoring Rosh Hashanah, the inclusion of the pomegranate is a traditional symbol of good deeds and blessings. For most pagans, the pomegranate is representative of the journey of Persephone into the Underworlds and her return to her mother, Demeter. Either way, it is a powerful symbol of the season.

You will need:

2-4 boneless chicken breasts
4 Tbsp flour
juice of 2 pomegranates
1 onion, chopped
pomegranate seeds
½ tsp salt
butter or margarine
¼ tsp pepper

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

grapes (optional)
2 cups chicken broth

1. Soak chicken pieces in pomegranate juice for about 45 minutes
2. Combine flour, salt, and pepper. Coat the chicken pieces in this mixture. Keep the pomegranate juice ready on the side.
3. Saute the onion until clear then add the chicken until browned.
4. Add the pomegranate juice, and simmer for 25 minutes. Add the pomegranate seeds and grapes just before serving.

Green Chile Stew

This is a staple in much of the Southwestern United States, where we are addicted to chile. With the rise world-wide in the popularity of Southwestern and Tex-Mex foods, this is sure to be a crowd pleaser. If you cannot find green chile, simply substitute carrots and bell peppers and add a little extra spice. To make a delicious vegetarian autumn stew, replace the meat with carrots, peppers, and squash.

You will need:

2 pounds stew beef
½ onion, chopped
4 Tbsp cornmeal
2-3 cloves of garlic, chopped
cooking oil
3-4 potatoes, chopped

A Feast of Thanksgiving

1 7-oz. container chopped, frozen chiles or 2 4-oz. cans chopped chiles

*if you can get fresh chiles, this takes about 12 roasted, peeled, and chopped chiles

6-7 cups water or broth

1. Coat the stew beef in the cornmeal.
2. Saute the onion and garlic in the cooking oil until clear in a deep pan or pot. Add the beef and potatoes and cook until browned. You may wish to drain excess fat before going on to the next step.
3. Add the chile and water or broth.
4. Bring to a boil then simmer for one hour.

Mabon Cornbread

Cornbread is customary for this time of year and it is the perfect addition to a meal of stew. It is also traditional native bread and, as such, honors the original peoples of several lands. If you can get blue corn meal, try that in place of the everyday cornmeal you can find in all grocery stores. You might also try adding a teaspoon of cinnamon or sage for a distinctive autumn taste.

You will need:

1 ½ cups buttermilk

2 Tbsp baking powder

2 cups cornmeal

¼ cup sugar

1 tsp salt

2 eggs

1 cup general purpose flour

1/3 cup melted butter or bacon fat

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

1. Heat oven to 425° F.
2. Mix all ingredients together. Beat for 30 seconds.
3. Pour into a round 9-inch pan (1 ½ inch deep). Cut a sun symbol into the center of the bread. Bake for 20 minutes until golden brown, checking at 10 minutes to recut sun symbol if necessary.
4. Optional: stir in 1 4-oz can of chopped green chiles or ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese

Corn Chowder

Corn is an important crop at this time of year to people on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. A type of corn stew is traditional to many Native Americans and may have been served at the First Thanksgiving. I offer my favorite vegetarian chowder here, but many people prefer to add bacon or chicken.

You will need:

- 1 red onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 16 oz. corn kernels
- 2-3 potatoes, diced
- 1 leek, sliced
- 6 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp paprika
- 2 Tbsp pepper
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 ½ cup vegetable broth
- 2 pints half-and-half

A Feast of Thanksgiving

1. Saute onion, leek, and potatoes in butter until onions are transparent and potatoes are soft.
2. Add flour and seasonings and cook for one minute, gradually adding broth. Stir frequently until mixture thickens. You may choose to puree this mixture now.
3. Add corn and half-and-half. Simmer for twenty minutes.

Pumpkin Puree

Sure you can buy this in a can, but nothing quite tastes like the real thing made with your own hands. Be sure to get fresh pumpkins (some will even be labeled as baking pumpkins) and ones that are not overripe.

You will need:

1 lb of pumpkin chunks, peeled and seeded. This usually requires a 1 1/2 to 2 lb pumpkin.

cloves, cinnamon, or other spices to taste.

1. Boil or steam the pumpkin chunks for twenty minutes, until soft.
2. Drain well and puree in a blender or food processor. Strain the puree before using or storing.
3. This can be kept in the refrigerator up to one week or it can be frozen. Use in soups, muffins, breads, cheesecakes, or other feast foods.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Who hasn't tried to do this at least once? It seems such a shame to waste all those seeds leftover from baking or carving. Pumpkin seeds are a delicious and healthy treat alone or added to salads.

Once you have removed them from the pumpkin, rinse them well and remove all the pumpkin. Air dry for at least 3 hours, then toast lightly or toss with a small amount of olive oil and bake for twenty minutes, until golden brown, at 350°F.

Saffron Crescent Cakes for Ashtoreth

These are traditionally baked in honor of Ashtoreth, but they are appropriate for any goddess that is associated with the Moon. To honor those harvest deities that are not associated with the moon, simply cut into round, or other, shapes and bake as directed. Saffron is expensive, so you may prefer to substitute yellow food coloring, an additional ¼ cup honey, or ½ cup chopped nuts instead.

You will need:

- 1 egg
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup milk
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ - ½ tsp saffron

1. Mix egg, milk, oil, and honey in a large bowl.
2. Add remaining ingredients and stir until just mixed.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

3. Cut into wedges and roll up, starting at the rounded edge.
4. Place on greased cookie sheet with points down and shape into crescents.
5. Bake for 20 minutes at 400°F.

Berry Jam

Jams and jellies are not as hard to make as you might expect. You can also substitute honey for the sugar to make it a healthier treat or experiment with maple syrup instead for a different taste that honors the native peoples of the Northeastern United States.

You will need:

4 pints fresh berries

3 cups sugar

2 Tbsp lemon juice

hot, clean glass jars with hot lids that seal tightly:
enough to hold about 5 pints of jam

1. Mix the sugar and berries and store in the refrigerator overnight.
2. Bring the berry-sugar mixture to a boil. Stirring constantly, boil for twenty minutes.
3. Add lemon juice and boil for another ten minutes.
4. Immediately pour into jars smoothly to minimize air bubbles. Leave ¼ inch of headspace before wiping the rims and sealing tightly with hot metal lids.

*Many people use a sealing compound under the lids to ensure a good seal. This can be purchased where canning supplies are sold.

Blue Ribbon Apple Pie

This recipe was submitted by my friend, Sandy Bryan,³ Blue Ribbon winner at the New Mexico State Fair. This is not her Blue Ribbon recipe but as far as we are concerned, everything this Kitchen Witch creates is a winner! You can use pre-made pie crusts if you prefer.

You will need:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg (optional)
- dash salt
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 3 Tbsp cornstarch or 1/3 cup flour
- 9-inch pie plate
- 7 cups peeled and sliced apples (Golden Delicious or your favorite pie apples)

1. Mix sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and cornstarch (or flour). Toss with the apples.
2. Line pie plate with bottom crust and add apple mixture, arranging apples to mound slightly in center.
3. Cut butter into bits and scatter over the apples. Add top crust, tuck edge under bottom crust, and crimp edges to seal. Use a sharp knife to cut a few slits in top crust to allow steam to escape.
4. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Bake 10 minutes at 425°F. Reduce oven to 350°F and bake 40 minutes or until crust is lightly golden brown and filling is just beginning to bubble.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

To make the crust:

You will need:

2 ½ cups unbleached white flour
½ tsp salt
¾ cup shortening
1/3-1/2 cup ice water
waxed paper or plastic wrap
pastry cloth or tea towel

1. Mix flour with salt. Cut in shortening using a pastry blender or two knives drawn across one another in a crisscross motion, until the bits of flour are about the size of peas.
2. Add ice water, a little at a time, stirring into the flour mixture with a fork. Add only enough water to form a dough that can be gathered together.
3. Form into two balls, flatten into disks, wrap in waxed paper or plastic wrap, and chill for 20 minutes. Roll dough disks out on a floured pastry cloth or tea towel to a size a little larger than your pie pan and follow directions above.

Apple Cobbler

I remember having apple cobbler everywhere in autumn as a child. It was one of the few things I liked in the school cafeteria. At home, we would have it warm and loaded with vanilla ice cream. This is definitely a Feel-good food. So whip up a batch and enjoy!

You will need:

½ cup sugar
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
6 cups apples: peeled, cored and sliced ¼ tsp ground nutmeg

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Topping:

3 cups general purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
2 cups sugar
5 eggs
2 cups milk
1 tsp vanilla extract

1. Mix sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg together in a large bowl. Add apples and toss until the apples are evenly coated. Let sit for 20 minutes.
2. Mix flour, baking powder and sugar in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs and then whisk in the milk, vanilla extract, and lemon zest. Add this to the large bowl containing dry topping ingredients and stir until smooth.
3. Spread the fruit on the bottom of a greased baking dish and top with the topping mixture.
4. Bake for 90 minutes at 350° F.

Oatmeal Walnut Cookies

These cookies are great anytime but they are particularly appropriate during Honoring the Family Ancestors.⁴ If you don't like nuts, try substituting raisins.

You will need:

½ cup sugar
¼ tsp baking powder
½ cup brown sugar
¼ tsp salt
½ cup softened butter
1 egg

A Feast of Thanksgiving

½ tsp baking soda
1 ½ cup quick oats
½ tsp cinnamon
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp vanilla
1 cup walnuts

1. Mix everything but oats, flour, walnuts in a large bowl.
2. Stir in oats, flour, and walnuts.
3. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet.
4. Bake for 10 minutes at 375°F.

Popcorn Balls

These are fun for the whole family. Experiment by adding a few drops of food color or mixing in some raisins or chocolate chips. Adults should be encouraged to indulge in these wonderful treats of the season as they sip spiced, and perhaps spiked, cider. This recipe makes about 12 balls.

You will need:

9 cups popped corn (measure after popping)
1 cup sugar
1 Tbsp butter
2 cups corn syrup

1. Boil sugar, syrup and butter until thick. If you are going to add food color, add a few drops before moving on to the next step.
2. Pour mixture over popped corn and blend well. If you want to include raisins or chocolate chips, add them now.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

3. Coat your hands in butter and form the mix into balls.
4. To store, wrap in wax paper or colored plastic wrap.

Drink

In my family, we love to make special drinks for each season, whether they include alcohol or not. In this way, we can always raise our glasses for a special toast and have something reminiscent of the season to sip as we read, talk, or gaze at the stars. At this time of the Second Harvest, we delight in the liquid bounty of the season, produced from the crops of this harvest.

Drinks made from apples, grapes, grains, and corn abound at this time of year. No matter what region you live in, you can usually find fruit juices and ciders. Home brewers and winemakers are preparing their next batch of ale, mead, or wine. Creative people everywhere create delicious new combinations that resonate with the season. Some of our favorites are cherry-apple cider, blackberry ale, and raspberry mead.

This is the season of Dionysus and Bacchus. In honor of the grape harvest, many areas hold their wine festivals at this time of year. We sample the bounty of former harvests and take part in a very civilized, modern version of the Bacchanalia. As you taste your wine samples, raise your glass to these Gods of wine and grapes. Toast the much-loved Pomona. Offer a few drops to the Earth and give thanks to Demeter, Gaia, Dumuzi, and Tammuz. And don't forget to honor the Nature spirits and local Spirits of Place for all their blessings.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

Special blessings for drinks are a wonderful way to incorporate the sacredness of this time into our festivities. Unlike a food, it is often easier to feel a liquid filling our bodies and bringing those blessings to every cell. Those of you that consecrate cakes and ale at the end of your rituals will find it easy to follow that same general format in blessing your special drinks for the whole family.

For the rest of us, it is sufficient to follow the procedure outlined in the Meal Blessing and open your hands around the drink or glasses to direct energy to the liquid. In place of a mundane toast, why not charge the liquid for a long-lasting blessing?

- * Hold your cup in both hands and raise it to your third eye
- * Take a deep breath and feel the energies of Earth and Sky fill your being and pass through your hands and forehead into the cup
- * Offer this drink to the Great Spirit or God and Goddess
- * State that you honor Them as you drink it and ask that They fill with Their blessings
- * If you have specific prayers or energy you need, see this flowing into the drink
- * Ask that the liquid fill your being, permeating your cells and resonating with your energy field to help you manifest these blessings
- * End with “So mote it be” or “Ho” and, with each sip, appreciate the consecrated liquid this special drink has become.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Mabon Party Fruit Punch

This is a festive addition to your Mabon feast, particularly when your Grove or coven has the children over for some equinox fun. The amounts you add will depend on the size of your punch bowl and how many people you are serving. Many people add sugar or syrup to fruit punches. I find that too sweet. It also interferes with the natural sweetness of the fruit harvest that is our focus at this time of year. If you need it sweeter, consider adding 2-3 teaspoons of local honey. Serve it cold in a big punch bowl, surrounded with seasonal wreaths and paraffin leaves.

You will need:

- Juices of apple and grape in equal amounts
- blackberry (or mixed berry) soda
- 3-4 very small apples
- 1 cup of mixed berries
- crushed ice (optional)

1. Combine the juices and soda in a 2:1 ratio in the punch bowl.
2. Float the apples and berries in the punch.
3. Add ice immediately before serving.

Hot Mulled Cider

Apple cider is a drink that whole family can enjoy. I remember visiting apple orchards and watching the apples being pressed to make cider each autumn. There was a strong, tangy aroma to the area as we walked down the line, watching the entire process on the way to the orchard store. Adults may want to try a shot of dark, spiced rum added to their cider.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

You will need:

½ cup brown sugar
dash nutmeg
1 tsp whole allspice
3 cinnamon sticks
1 tsp whole cloves
2 quarts apple cider
¼ tsp salt

4. Combine brown sugar, allspice, 1 tsp cloves, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon and apple cider in large saucepan.
5. Bring to boiling. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
6. Strain to remove spices.

**Apple cider can be frozen for up to one year.

Blackberry Wine

This is from Edain McCoy's book, *Witta: An Irish Pagan Tradition*.⁵ It is a popular recipe and has been posted to several email lists as well as a few websites. If you have the time and the storage space, I highly recommend this one. There is nothing like using wine you made yourself at holiday rites.

You will need:

2 & ½ pounds fresh blackberries
3 cups sugar
2 cups hot water

1. Let the berries set out in a large bowl for about four weeks, stirring them occasionally.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

2. The berries will get a rank smell and may begin to mold.
3. With mortar and pestle, crush the berries into as smooth a pulp as possible. Stir in the sugar and then the water.
4. Pour the wine into casks to ferment for eight to ten months. The longer it is kept the better it will be. The wine will have to be aired every few days to allow building gases to escape. This wine has a gentle port-like flavor when finished.

Quick Meade

This recipe developed out of an idea kicked around on a pagan parenting email list. We worked it and worked and happily worked it again until we had something that really Worked! It is much easier than home brewing and a lot more fun than buying a few bottles of mead from a liquor store. Considering the amount of mead it produces, it's cheaper too.

You will need:

- ½ lb honey, preferably local
- 1 gal. white wine
- 6-7 autumn spice tea bags
- 1 apple, cut into 4-8 pieces or a handful of blackberries (optional)

1. Mix honey, wine, tea bags, and fruit in a large stockpot.
2. Bring to a boil for one minute, then simmer for 2-3 minutes.
3. Let cool, then transfer to glass bottles or jars and refrigerate for 3 days.

A Feast of Thanksgiving

Libation for Freyja⁶

For those of you interested in the Norse paths, there is a wonderful website called Fealcen Stow's Asatru Frithstead.⁷ *The Wain* journal is included on the Vanic Ve pages where I found this wonderful libation. It was mixed to the taste of author, Inge Ristil, who first sampled it on holiday. She cautions that the elderflower cordial is very strong and the amount should be increased with caution. It is suggested for use in honoring or meditating on Freyja.

You will need:

- 320 ml clear apple juice
- 40 ml elderflower cordial
- 720 ml mineral water (still or sparkling)

Chill the ingredients before mixing and enjoying.

¹Madden, *Pagan Parenting*, pp. 115. First published in Circle Network News, Summer 1997 issue.

²Farm-bred, Atlantic salmon often have color added and are a health concern due to environmental contaminants. These fish are also raised in large-scale, crowded facilities that often allow feces and chemicals to seep into surrounding water systems.

³Sandy Bryan is a professional astrologer. Visit her website at <http://www.thuntek.net/~sstars/sandy.html> or telephone 505-255-5001 (9am-9pm MST, except Sundays).

⁴from Morrison, *The Craft*. See this book chapter The Fun Stuff, pp. ____

⁵McCoy, *Witta: An Irish Pagan Tradition*, pp. 199.

⁶Ristil, *The Wain*, issue 14, Winter Nights 2000

⁷this website has been removed since the original version of *Mabon* was first published.



A Magickal Mabon

While some may feel that magick should be avoided during equinox times, most of us work toward balance, harmony, protection, and prosperity during these periods. The Autumn Equinox is the beginning of the dark half of the year. As such, it is beneficial to begin turning within during our magick and meditations.

This is a potent time for personal shadow work. We begin the process of reflecting on the past, releasing attachments that no longer serve us, giving back to the universe for our blessings, and beginning to decide on the seeds we wish to plant in our lives next year. We may choose to sit in meditation, use scrying, or get active with spellwork. But no matter what method we choose, the point of balance between dark and light, yin and yang, is ever-present in our thoughts and our magickal workings.

Protection

A Protection Bottle

Protection bottles are either kept in a windowsill or buried, either outside the front door or at the four directions around one's home. If you have a young child, a

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

protection bottle in their window or kept under the bed may be just the thing to keep nightmares and bedtime fears at bay.

You will need:

a clean, clear glass bottle with a cap
sand

herbs, such as angelica and rosemary, or other items that symbolize protection, such as salt, specific stones, blood, or broken glass.

- * Fill the bottle part of the way with sand. Add the protective herbs or items you have chosen and fill to the top with more sand before sealing the bottle with its cap. As you add each of these items, visualize it keeping negativity away or destroying destructive and fearful energies.
- * Once it is filled and capped, offer it to the Great Spirit or God and Goddess. Ask that all the ingredients work together to keep you safe and sound. Thank them for their protection and place it in your windowsill or bury it. If you choose to bury it, carve a pentagram or spiral into the earth above it and ask that the Earth ground and purify all negativity drawn in by this bottle. Be sure to periodically offer water, sacred herbs, or cornmeal to the earth and the spirits of your land as thanks for their grounding and protection.

A Protection Amulet

Amulets may take many forms. Here we will create an herbal protection pouch that may be hung in a car or

Magickal Mabon

home. It may also be carried or worn when you feel the need for a little extra safety boost.

You will need:

smudge or purifying incense
a circle of red or black cloth, at least 4 inches in diameter

A red, black, or white string, at least 10 inches long
protective and sacred herbs, such as angelica, mugwort, rosemary, sage, sweetgrass, and vervain

- * Smudge yourself and your working space. Then smudge your cloth and string. Holding your hands, palms out over the herbs, ask for their blessings and protection. Ask them to work together to bring you security and peace.
- * Place the herbs in the center of the cloth circle and tie it securely with the string. Offer your amulet to the Great Spirit or God and Goddess. Ask for their blessings on this amulet and for you personally. Ask that only beneficial energies enter your space while you are in the presence of this amulet and feel it charged with the energy of your requests. Thank the spirits of the sacred herbs for their assistance and wear your amulet with confidence.

Home Protection Amulet

We can also use amulets or talismans in protecting our homes. Some people will bury one item in either a central location or around the perimeter at each of the directions, while others hang pouches and amulets inside the house. As with the Egg of Protection, this is designed for children and parents. Adults can alter it to fit their needs. Amulets can also be used to protect your person, tent, office, or car.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Involving children in the creation of amulets, talismans or altars for the house is an excellent project. It helps them to feel like an integral part of the family while it teaches them and empowers them. Simply by holding the belief that these methods will keep them safe, children will feel more confident and will attract safer situations.

Begin by creating a large disk of clay with your children. Write your names on it or simply write Protection and include a drawing of the house. You may choose to make up a simple chant for protection and write that on one side of the clay disk. Make it a simple, easy chant that your children will be able to recite with you when you charge the amulet. Something like this works well with young people:

*Spirits of this Place I pray
Bring us protection, harmony and play
Guard us and our privacy
Let in only happy energy*

- * Once the disk has been baked or air-dried, wrap it in a red or black cloth until you are ready to charge it with your family's energy and your chant.
- * Prepare your altar with black and/or white candles and either Dragon's Blood or essential oil of cedar, frankincense, rosemary or sandalwood.
- * Count yourself and your children down into a light trance state. Thoroughly smudge, or purify in your usual manner, your entire home. Really clear it out and see it filled with white light.

Magickal Mabon

- * Cast a Circle or call upon the spirits of the directions in your usual manner. Call in any helping or guardian spirits that your family members work with and ask their assistance in this rite.
- * Count down from ten to one again, into a slightly deeper trance state.
- * Bring out the clay disk and hold it in your hands. Have your family members hold hands around you. Each person on either side of you should place one hand on your arm nearest that person. Guide everyone present to direct his or her attention and focus to the disk as you recite your protection chant.
- * Then, go around the circle and allow each person to say any specific needs they have that they would like the amulet to assist with. These should be general or specific family protection, happiness, or success issues and they should be very important. As ritual leader, you should be funneling these prayers into the disk.
- * Repeating your special chant or prayers, allow each person to anoint the disk with the Dragon's Blood or essential oil. Guide them to really feel the disk filling with this energy. Then wrap the disk in the red or black cloth and close the ritual, thanking all spirits and deities that were called for assistance.
- * You may choose to bury the disk immediately after the rite or later on. Just be sure that each person who participated in the rite is present for the burial. Once the disk is fully buried, have everyone place their hands on the ground over the disk. Guide them to feel the energy of their prayers radiating out from the disk and surrounding your home. Once again, give thanks to the Earth Mother and all helping spirits.

The Spirit Ally

Because he occasionally had nightmares when he was younger, our son created his own “dreamcatchers” to help him feel safe at night and have pleasant dreams. On the three walls nearest his bed, he has cut outs of one of his special spirit guides. He created a “kid” spirit animal, a Mommy, and a Daddy. The number and type you choose will be highly personal and adults may prefer to get more elaborate than this, but the act of creating these protective objects can be far more powerful than simply purchasing a picture of your spirit guide and hanging it up.

You will need:

construction paper

glue

items for decoration, such as markers, glitter, colorful string, etc.

a small crystal or small herbal pouch

- * Sit in front of your working space for a moment and call upon the spirit guide you want to bring in through this process. Ask for their guidance in your creation.
- * Cut out an outline of your spirit guide from the construction paper. It does not need to be realistic or even in “real” colors. Create this image as you see or feel this guide, using whatever decoration you are drawn to use. Really get into it, adding your energy and feeling the energy of your guide flow through you.
- * Holding the small crystal or small pouch of herbs, feel the energy of your guide fill the object. Speak to your guide and tell them what you fear and what

Magickal Mabon

type of protection you need. Be as specific or as general as you feel is right for you. When you feel ready, glue or tie this object onto the cut out.

- * Sit with the cut out for a moment and feel the presence of your guide and guardian. Give thanks for their blessings in your life and for their assistance in this project. Then hang your cut out where you feel it will do the most good.

The Egg of Protection²

Many adults do this almost automatically, reinforcing the auric egg that surrounds us. This is also an excellent exercise to teach children, or to do for them until they are ready to take it over on their own. It can be taught as soon as a child knows what an egg is, can understand simple directions and has begun to engage in imaginative play. It should be a great game of make-believe in order to keep it fun and creative for the child. As written, it is designed for children and parents. Adults can alter it to fit their needs. It can also be used to protect your home, property, tent, office, or car.

- * Have your child take a really good look at an egg. If it is a younger child, you may want to use a plastic or hard-boiled one, unless you feel like cleaning up a mess. Let them really inspect it from all sides.
- * Now, tell the child you are going to play a game. Together, close your eyes and picture an egg surrounding them. Ask the child what colors it is and what else can be seen inside it. You may want to write this down.
- * Now, tell the child that on the outside of this egg, he or she is going to make a beautiful white shell.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Really encourage the use of imagination in creating a shell that goes around the child on all sides. Let the child know that they need to make sure there aren't any holes, so that the inside of the egg won't leak. Encourage them to see this shell as glowing or sparkling white.

- * An older child can add an outward-facing mirror, an additional shell of fire, or anything else that spurs the imagination and encourages a feeling of safety.
- * While the child is doing all this, use your own imaginative or telepathic abilities to watch what they create. If you see a hole, let them know. Tell them what a great job they are doing and how beautiful the shell looks. Ask for permission before adding any of your own energies or seal up a tear in the shell.
- * Occasionally in everyday life, ask how the egg is doing. Tell the child how your egg is, so it becomes a game you play together. You may want to play the egg game again periodically, to check for holes and continue to develop their abilities in this area.

Prosperity

The Prosperity Candle

Candle magick is a wonderfully simple way to create powerful results. Candles have a way of speaking to our souls and evoking a belief in all that just might be possible. They are full of mystery and potential. As such, they quickly allow us to bypass our analytical minds and create real magick.

Magickal Mabon

You will need:

smudge or purifying incense
matches or a lighter
a green or gold candle and candleholder
a pen or pencil
a small amount of ground nutmeg
essential oil of almond, cinnamon, jasmine, or one
of the commercial money oils

- * Smudge yourself and your working area. Take a deep breath and center yourself.
- * With the pen or pencil, inscribe your wishes into the candle. Be as specific as possible and clearly visualize your dreams fully realized as you do this. You may also want to use special symbols of prosperity, such as the runes Othala or Fehu; the Ogham plants reed, fir, furze; or perhaps simply the money symbol \$.
- * Anoint the entire candle with the essential oil, feeling the energy of prosperity seep into the wax with the oil. Sprinkle the nutmeg over the oil. Ask the spirits of the nutmeg, oil, and the herbs used to create the oil for their assistance in bringing you joyful abundance.
- * Light the candle, seeing the flame and its light releasing brilliant green and gold energies. Clearly visualize the wishes and dreams you inscribed on the candle being released to the universe then hold the image of these coming to fruition as long as you can. When you can no longer hold that image, release it to the flame and allow the candle to burn itself out.

Elemental Prosperity Weaving

In this type of spell, we weave together the energies of the four basic elements with an understanding that Spirit is included in all that we do.

You will need:

- matches
- a fireproof container
- charcoal disk
- paper and pen
- water in a container
- a pot of earth or a spot in your backyard
- loose herbs: cedar, cinnamon, comfrey root, or vervain

- * Hold the herbs in your hands silently. Attune your mind to their energies. Allow the prosperity you desire to come to mind. Ask the energies of these plants to bless your work and assist you in creating what you want. Pass your left hand then your right hand over the herbs. Holding them in both hands, feel the energy of your desire flow into them, from one hand to the other. Visualize your dreams realized.
- * Call on the Energies of Air and Fire. Ask them to join you and bless the work you are about to do. Light the charcoal disk and one-third of the herbs. See your wish release to the universe in the smoke (Air) and fill the room. As the herbs are smoking, write your wish on a piece of paper. Be as specific as possible. Place the paper on top of the burning herbs, add half the remaining herbs and burn both herbs and paper. See the fire add another level of release to your prayers.

Magickal Mabon

- * When it has cooled, take the remains and bury it in a spot in your yard or in a pot of earth, to be given to the Earth in a park or other outside area at a later time. Ask the Earth to receive your wishes as seeds and help them grow into reality.
- * When you are ready to return the remains to the Earth outside, take the final third of herbs and sprinkle them into a container of water. Ask the spirit of the Water receive these energies and carry them into the flow of the universe, getting the energy moving and assisting in manifestation. Pour all the emotions you have attached to your desires into the water. Allow the water to cleanse them and carry them into creation. Pour this water onto the earth where you have buried the remains of your herbs and paper.

Prosperity Spell

This spell is a bit more involved than the previous ones. It is well worth the time and trouble because it really works! I suggest using it as a last resort or when you are in need of something that feels “big” to you.

You will need:

- a square board, approximately 1 foot square and covered by a white or green cloth
- salt
- a crystal
- money, pictures of what you desire, or a short description of your needs
- 4 votive candles: green, orange, or white

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

- * Place the money, picture, or list in the center of the board with the crystal on top.
- * Set up the candles at each of the four cardinal directions. As you light each one, ask the powers of that direction for their guidance and assistance in this magick of prosperity.
- * Take up crystal and focus on your money, picture, or list. Allow your personal image of prosperity to fill you and flow into the crystal. Breathe your intention into the crystal and replace it in the center of the board.
- * Starting at the east, sprinkle a circle of salt clockwise all the way around, on the inside of the candles.
- * Touch the crystal where it is and focus your intention for 7 minutes.
- * Blow out candles in clockwise fashion, beginning in the east.
- * Repeat for 7 days, then bury everything in the earth where it will not be disturbed.

Blessing the Garden

The equinox is an ideal time to go through your garden. Harvest what is ready and tend what is not. Depending on where you live, this will be either the second or final harvest. Give thanks to the plants and the earth for their bounty. Allow a few plants each year to go to seed without harvesting them. If these are not sterile, hybrid seeds, gather and store them for planting next year. They may be blessed at Imbolc. If they are sterile, offer them to the birds to continue the cycle of giving.

As you harvest, attune yourself to the spirits of this place. Remember that as you use locally grown plants, you

Magickal Mabon

are tapping in to the living essence of that land. It is important to honor this. When we align our actions with respect for the Land and Her children, we continue the cycle of support and protection. Our homes come to feel like sanctuaries of welcoming peace and joy.

As you harvest or cut back for the winter, let your plants know what you plan to do and ask for their blessings as you do it. Break up the soil around plants that will remain in the garden through the winter to allow their roots to grow deeply before the winter freezes the ground. Just before the first frost in your area, lay down a mulch of shredded bark, straw, or even fallen leaves. Ask that the mulch keep and protect your plants until the returning sun warms the soil once again.

Create a small area of your yard as permanent sacred space to honor the spirits of this land. In a corner of our yard, we have a small stone altar that we use for this purpose. Around the equinox, we make a special offering here. Leaving a small portion of the final harvest around the base of the altar, we offer prayers of love and gratitude from our hearts. Then we take a moment of silence and turn our focus to preparing the harvest.

Offerings to the Animals

This is migration season for many of our feathered friends. It is also the time when many others are storing food and fat reserves for the coming winter. All of life is interconnected and we honor our place as stewards when we offer food and water to our animal relations. You may not have the space, money, or desire to create a backyard wildlife habitat, but even those in apartments can do their part to help these beings prepare for winter.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Scatter seeds and grains on the ground in a special shape, perhaps a sun symbol, a yin/yang, or in the shape of a cornucopia. As you do so, ask the Mother of All and the Lord of the Wilds or the Great Spirit to bless all those that receive these gifts. Charge the symbol and the seed with prayers of health, warmth, and happiness.

Solar Disks for the Birds^B

Using a needle, draw pieces of monofilament cord through several sunflowers. Hang the flowers in trees so the birds can eat the seeds. As you hang each flower, say something like:

*Symbol of Sun, Who now departs
And leaves the world both cold and dark
Live on within these seeds of Light
And feed our feathered friends in flight
That they may thrive in Winter's chill
Until again with light you fill
The Earth and shine again anew
Replacing ice with morning dew*

Magickal Habitats

Many people are creating specifically designed habitat for wildlife these days, whether they own properties or rent apartments. Since natural, undisturbed habitat is rapidly disappearing, these places can mean the difference between life and death for many wild animals. We can take this one step further and create a magickally life-affirming space in which wildlife can feel safe and nourished on all levels.

Magickal Mabon

Your local bird store, nursery, wildlife rehabilitation center, or Game and Fish Department should be able to help you find the resources you need to create an appropriate habitat for your area. In the back of this book, I also list some website that may prove valuable. Suffice it to say that all animals need three things: food, water, and cover. It is particularly important that food be available during seasons when it is not as easily found in nature and that it is located close to the cover for protection from elements and predators.

Even those people with no more space than an apartment balcony can provide these things with some creativity. Without a balcony, you can still provide at least food and water, and possibly cover. We fed a pigeon couple for a couple of years in an apartment from our balcony. Eventually, they built a nest and even had chicks on the space just above our bedroom air conditioner. Empty spaces like that, if left alone, can be just what these animals need, provided we are not overly concerned with what the neighbors think or the potential problems animals may cause.

There are plenty of resources available on this subject so I will focus instead on the magickal aspects. This is, after all, the *Magickal Mabon* chapter. Certainly, animals will come if you provide food and water. But we all need more than that and animals are attracted to the sanctuary-like energy of a place.

Treating your wildlife sanctuary or birdfeeder as a sacred space is the best way to maintain this feeling. The first step is to sit in meditation or in ritual and ask the spirits of the land what they need most. Allow them direct your creation and trust that you will be drawn to whatever is most appropriate. Promise to hold the energy and safety of this space as best you can. Let the spirits of this place

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

know that you understand that in giving back to nature, you are continuing the cycle of blessings and are grateful for all you have received from the Land.

Hold that feeling of sanctity as you set up your feeders and animal houses. If you plant specifically for cover or food, bless the plantings and thank them for their presence in your special garden. Once you have completed your habitat, hold a special ritual to bless and sanctify the space. Dedicate it to animals and spirits of your land. If you work with certain spirits or deities, or if some have come to you as a result of this project, invite them to share in this space. Ask them for their blessings and protection on all that use it.

Just as we do our best to clear frustrations or anger before cooking for our families, so should we be conscious of the energy we bring to refilling feeders and hanging bird or bat houses. You might want to periodically check on the energy of your space and clear it if necessary.

On a physical level, it is important to keep feeders clean and the food fresh. This is important for all animals. Certain diseases (that are rarely transferable to humans) may be transmitted through food and food containers. Also keep in mind that hummingbirds are highly susceptible to fungal growth. Their feeders need to be disinfected and the food changed regularly.

It would be beneficial to have contact information for wildlife rehabilitators or your local Game and Fish Department handy, just in case you find an injured or orphaned animal. Rehabilitators are the best people to help these animals. Each animal has special needs that you may not be aware of unless you have the proper training and experience. All wild animals can be dangerous, particularly when injured, but use extra caution when handling raptors, big cats, bears, or others that are known to be dangerous.

Magickal Mabon

See the back of this book for basic directions on handling injured or orphaned animals and resources to help you find a rehabilitator in your area.

Augury

At its most basic, augury is divination by the movements of animals, particularly those of birds. However, unlike many other divination systems, there are no manuals for augury, because it requires experience, an understanding of the normal behavior of the animals in question, and a fair amount of psychic/intuitive ability.

If you are interested in developing this ability, autumn is one of the best times to begin. This is when animals are migrating or preparing for winter in some way. I suggest becoming an amateur naturalist and studying one particular species or type of animal. You may choose to focus on red-tailed hawks or you may prefer to study behaviors that are common among raptors. A good field guide will be an invaluable tool. Ted Andrew's *Animal-Speak* and Paul Rezendes' *Tracking and the Art of Seeing*⁴ are wonderful additions to the spiritual naturalist's library.

Begin by learning to identify your animal. Watch what they do and where you frequently see them. Keep a journal and take detailed notes. Include time of day, if the animal is alone or in a group, temperature, proximity to water, etc.

Combine your scientific observation with silent meditation as you watch. Stop labeling for a few minutes and try to connect with the energy of the animal. Feel your energies merge. Follow this up by a shamanic journey or other pathworking to connect with the spirit or archetype of the species. Once you get to know the animal on a rational and spiritual level, you will begin to recognize unusual sightings or behavior. When you open to the animal,

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

you invite it to work with you and be a messenger of Spirit for you.

Working with the Ogham (pronounced *oham*)

The ogham script is an ancient Celtic tree alphabet that was used as a method of communication and as a magickal mnemonic device, similar to the runes of the Germanic/Norse and the Qabbalah for the Hebrew mystics. It was invented by Ogma, son of Elatha, King of Ireland. Apparently Ogma was a skilled Bard and the ogham was believed to be a language of the Otherworld. Another story tells us that Ogma was inspired by the flight of cranes (a form of augury) and saw the beginnings of the ogham script in the way they held their legs in flight.

From the ogham, we can learn much of the sacred trees associated with each letter. As we investigate each tree, we learn its magickal, medicinal, biological, and other ceremonial or historical uses. We can move forward from this point to establishing a personal relationship with many of these trees, as well as local trees and plants.





















We can also use it as a system of divination, such as Liz and Colin Murray created through the *Celtic Tree Oracle*.⁵ You might want to begin exploring one letter per week. Get a stick that has fallen naturally from a tree and use it for your ogham board. Each week, carve your chosen letter into the board. Later on, this stick may be used to practice writing your name or other words.

Using index cards, you can create your own ogham cards by writing the name in English and Irish on the card along with a drawing of the ogham letter and specific associations that accompany it. The letter equivalent is the first letter of the Irish name. The most commonly used ogham script is divided into four sets of five symbols. Creating

Magickal Mabon

your own cards is a wonderful way to learn the language and commit it to memory. These associations will also assist you in using your deck as a tool for divination, similar to a tarot or sacred animals deck.

The Ogham Script

| <u>Irish</u> | <u>English</u> | <u>Divinatory Associations</u> |
|---|--------------------------|---|
|  | <i>Beith</i> Birch | new beginnings, purification |
|  | <i>Luis</i> Rowan | divination, protection |
|  | <i>Fearn</i> Alder | foundation, ancestors |
|  | <i>Saille</i> Willow | intuition, life lessons |
|  | <i>Nuin</i> Ash | interconnections/linking inner/outer worlds |
|  | <i>Huath</i> Hawthorn | cleansing, protection |
|  | <i>Duir</i> Oak | doorway, endurance |
|  | <i>Tinne</i> Holly | justice, directed effort |
|  | <i>Coll</i> Hazel | wisdom, creativity |
|  | <i>Quert</i> Apple | the Otherworld, eternity |
|  | <i>Muinn</i> Vine | the line between knowledge and madness, visioning |
|  | <i>Gort</i> Ivy | transformation, beauty |
|  | <i>Ngetal</i> Reed | harmony, generosity |
|  | <i>Straif</i> Blackthorn | fate, unexpected change |
|  | <i>Ruis</i> Elder | transition, end of a cycle |
|  | <i>Ailm</i> Fir/Pine | strength, opportunity |
|  | <i>Onn</i> Gorse | gathering, wisdom |
|  | <i>Ur</i> Heather | unity, healing |
|  | <i>Edhadb</i> Aspen | truth, overcoming adversity |
|  | <i>Ido</i> Yew | rebirth, immortality |

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Connecting Earth and Sky

At the time of the equinox, when there is an identical amount of day and night, Sun and Moon are equal. The sun rises directly in the east and sets exactly in the west. Therefore, the directions are in harmony. This is an ideal time to work with directional energies or the energies of Sun and Moon. It is also a perfect time to work on bringing your relationships and your inner god/goddess into greater balance.

Find Your Libra

Have your astrological chart run and see where Libra lies in your life. There are several websites⁶ that offer a free wheel plus a basic overview of meanings. Check out an astrology book from your local library and explore what Libra means to you and your relationships.

Sun God/Moon Goddess

Although in many ancient cultures the genders of sun and moon deities were reversed, we can use these common modern associations as archetypes to assist us in getting in touch with our own inner god and goddess, or inner male and female. We each have a little of both and how we handle this can impact our image of self as well as our relationships to both men and women. Knowledge can be power, particularly when it relates to the Self.

Association Web

Using the words Sun, Moon, Male, and Female (or Man and Woman) as the origin words, write the origin in the center of your paper. Then write down whatever

Magickal Mabon

comes to mind as you think on the origin word. Free associate as you please. If an associated word leads to something new, add that to the web, linking it from the word that sparked it. You may be surprised to see what comes up in relation to the origin words.

Masking

Create a mask, according to the directions in the Games and Activities chapter. Try on a Sun mask one day and a Moon mask the next day, or alternate with a man/woman or dark/light masks. Really act the part and allow that aspect of yourself to come through as you wear the mask. How does this aspect differ from the everyday “mask” you wear? Make a plan to gradually incorporate the beneficial aspects of this Self into your usual identity.

Into the Shadows

The dark time of the year is ideal for peering into our own shadows. The shadow side is a term coined by Jung and adopted by many shamanic practitioners. It describes that place within each of us that holds all that we do not want to acknowledge and don't want other people to see. This is where our fears, angers, embarrassments, and traumatic memories reside. This is often where we will find fragments of ourselves, those parts of our spirits that splintered off as a result of fear or other trauma.

During the dark time, we often find it easier to uncover and reintegrate these fragments. At the equinox, when the sun at its zenith at local noon casts no shadow at the equator, it may require less effort to bring light into our own personal darkness. The shadows may be temporarily cast aside, allowing a rare glimpse into our inner selves.

Shadow Meditation

- * Follow your breath down, deep within yourself. Allow your breathing to carry you into the center of your being.
- * Deep within your center, you see a dark doorway. Take a deep breath and pass through this doorway and into the darkness beyond. Become aware of your spirit guides surrounding you as you move into the darkness.
- * As you move deeper into your self, images pass by you. Recognize these as images and symbols of your own beliefs and experiences. Call forth the shadow aspects with the least emotion to approach you first.
- * Look deeply within each image. See them what they really are, at their cores. What do they have to say to you? What can you learn from their presence? Be aware of any communication from your guides during this process.
- * Reach out and embrace these images, one by one or all at once, whichever feels right for you. Acknowledge them as a part of you that has been denied. Feel yourself become more complete as you integrate these experiences and feelings.
- * Take a deep breath and blow all the fear and judgment and discomfort you have associated with these aspects of yourself into a bubble of shadow. Take another deep breath and feel them leave your body as you blow them into the bubble.
- * See the bubble fill with light. It expands and transforms these feelings. It fills to overflowing with

Magickal Mabon

light and pops, releasing these transformed energies back into your center. These are enlightened energies that are now free of their bonds. You may now choose to use this energy as you wish.

- * Be aware of any communication from your guides at this time. Fully experience the transformation that has taken place. Feel stronger and more complete.
- * Now follow your breath back to your physical body. Move up through your center back to your body and this circle. Thank your guides and your Self for this tremendous gift. Honor your guides and thank them for their continued guidance and protection before opening your eyes in the circle.

Scrying

Scrying through fire or water is a powerful method of gaining self-knowledge. To scry in a fire, simply gaze into a bonfire or a candle flame. Allow your thoughts to slip away as you open your mind to the fire. You will begin to see images in the fire or you may begin to receive spontaneous thoughts, feelings, or memories. Allow these to come through without judgment and analyze them later.

To scry with water,⁸ you will need a scrying bowl, preferably one that is a solid dark color on the inside. Fill the bowl at least halfway with water. Pass your left hand, then your right hand over the surface of the water, aligning your energy with that of the water and sensitizing yourself. Ask that you be honestly and gently allowed to see your inner self in the water.

Keep in mind that this is largely a projection of your own Self. Therefore you control your access to and interpretation of what you see. When you are satisfied that you have seen all you will or all you desire to at this time, give

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

thanks for this blessing and dispose of the water with respect.

Letting go

The Mabon season is also the beginning of the time of release. As we reflect on the previous year, we release those things that do not serve our best interests or the common good so that we may make room for more constructive energies. In honoring our ancestors and departed loved ones, we realize that it is ok to let them go so that we may both move forward. At this point of balance, choose to move into the dark of the year with clarity and the strength to enter a new year without the baggage you carried through this one.

Fire Release

This fire release is based on a Vaishnava tradition. All you need is a fire and a bowl of some type of grain. Build and light a bonfire outside or a fire in your fireplace. Taking up a handful of the grain, sit in meditation before the fire. As you gaze into the fire, bring to mind all those issues, patterns, or situations that you want to let go of. Send each of these into the grain in your hand. When you are ready, throw the grain into the fire. As it burns, see and feel those issues purified and released.

Water Release

This method is based on the Jewish Tashlikh, which is a custom during Rosh Hashanah. Take a small bag of

Magickal Mabon

breadcrumbs to a river or stream. Taking up handful, send all that you want to release into the breadcrumbs. When you are ready, drop them into the water. As they are carried away in the current, see and feel the issues separate from you and flow away.

Continuing the Cycle

Inherent in any spirit of thanksgiving is the recognition that we must give to receive. We must continue the cycle of love and generosity, so that we may continue to be blessed. It includes being thankful not only for all that we have received but also for what we will receive; for our ancestors and for our children; for our families and for all our communities, both local and global. In this spirit, we make it a point to work for balance and equilibrium in nature or in human affairs. We give selflessly of ourselves to those that are less fortunate.

Most newspapers contain a section on how you can help your community by donating time or specific items. In many areas of the country, there are organizations that welcome and rely on volunteers to accomplish the very important work they are involved in. Consider how you can serve your local community or a larger community through organizations that serve the needy, the elderly, or the environment. If you have children, teach them the value of volunteering through your example.

The Give-Away

The Give-Away is a ceremonially blessed offering in the spirit of returning energy to that universal flow of blessings and abundance. We give packages of food and drink to the homeless, collect baskets of goodies from our

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

garden to share with a neighbor who has no garden or who has had a rough year, gather donations of food or clothing for favorite charities, and volunteer our time in a variety of ways.

The actual physical give-away can be seen as a type of Medicine.⁹ It is a part of our selves and our energy that we freely release and offer to others for their own pleasure and benefit. In this way, the energy is free to move throughout the community and the planet bringing balance, happiness, and abundance to all. This process is a means for us to accept our role in the great Web of Life and to integrate the understanding that we will be taken care of, as long as we remain in that flow.

In modern society we can get so focused on ourselves and our own problems that our communities suffer. In looking out for Number One, we may lose sight of the needs of others, including those of our ecosystems. The Give-Away is a ritual recognition that all our needs are related. The process of Give-Away takes us outside of ourselves and allows a more expanded, less personal view of our situations.

Once we have collected or determined what it is we will give away, we bring that into ritual. If we are donating time, we bring the image and intent into ceremony. If there are specific deities related to our donations, they are invoked at the beginning of the ritual. Then, in the middle of the ritual, we consecrate the donations (including image and intent). We bless them all with the highest good for all involved; that everyone contacts these gifts may be blessed. We ask that these gifts restore balance and be accepted as thanks for all we have received so that the cycle of blessings may continue.

The most important thing about the Give-Away is that it does not simply end with the end of the ritual. We

Magickal Mabon

have to handle the practical aspects of how to carry out the giving of our offerings. We must actually follow through and complete what we have intended. This is an excellent lesson for all of us, particularly our children, in keeping promises and following through on actions

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¹adapted from Madden, *Pagan Parenting*, pp. 66-67.

²adapted from Madden, *Pagan Parenting*, pp. 64-65.

³Morrison, *The Craft*, pp. 176.

⁴HarperCollins, Firefly Books, 1999.

⁵St. Martin's Press, 1988.

⁶check out www.astrology.com

⁷adapted from Madden, *Shamanic Guide to Death and Dying*, pp. 57-58.

⁸adapted from Madden, *Pagan Parenting*, pp. 168-170.

⁹much of this section from this point on is as it first appeared in *The Innerconnection*, Litha 1998 issue.



The Fun Stuff

Games and activities have a way of bringing out the kid in each of us. This is part of what makes the holidays such special times. They are serious and yet lighthearted times of relaxation and celebration. When we celebrate with an open heart, we allow ourselves to connect naturally to Spirit and the abundant joy of the universe. Families with children will find plenty in this chapter to keep everyone occupied and involved during this season.

The Festive Home

Each of the eight festival seasons has its own unique feeling that we incorporate into our decorations and celebrations. Here in the American Southwest, red chile ristras are the decoration of choice at this time of year. In other areas, the changing leaves are reaching peak color and we use them for decorations. Establishing this connection to the cycles and traditions of your particular area can be extremely valuable in connecting to the energies and spirits of that place.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Paraffin Leaves

Paraffin can be found at most hobby and craft stores where candle making supplies are sold. Melt the paraffin according to the manufacturer's directions and quickly dip your chosen leaves in. Set them aside on wax paper to dry. Once they are dry, you can gently inscribe them with your names or special words and symbols of the season. Use them to decorate your home and altars.

The Harvest Branch

This is a harvest version of the Bardic silver branch that denoted divine inspiration and a possible journey to the Otherworlds for the Celts. These bronze branches look wonderful in a vase decorated for the season. It does take about 3 weeks, so if you want it for a Mabon party, start early.

You will need:

- leafy branches, either fallen or cut during autumn pruning
- tall glass or vase
- glycerine
- pliers

1. Mix glycerine and hot water in a 1:2 ratio. Mix up enough to fill about 3 inches of the glass or vase.
2. Crush the ends of the branches (opposite the leaves) with the pliers and peel back at least 3 inches of bark. Put the branches in the glass or vase, with the crushed end in the glycerine and leave them alone for about 3 weeks. Transfer to a clean, dry vase for decoration.

Fun Stuff

Sun Wheel

Sunflowers are often used as Sun Wheels or Solar Disks. With young children, we have also made Sun Wheels using paper plates and gold glitter. Another common form of the Sun Wheel is the equal-armed cross within the circle. To create this form, have ready a circle of grapevine or other natural material. Some people choose to use a gold metal circle instead. Select two sticks that equal the diameter of the circle and wire or glue them together to form the equal-armed cross. Secure the cross within the circle and decorate it as you see fit. Hang it above your front door or altar.

Corn Dolly

The Corn Dolly is an ancient Celtic tradition that has also been known as the Wheat Mother, Wheat Bride, and Kern Baby. It is created from the last sheaf of wheat or corn. Few of us today have access to the last sheaf of the harvest, but we can honor the spirit of this tradition by creating our own Dollies from purchased wheat sheaves or corn stalks.

Simply braid three sheaves of wheat or three corn stalks together in honor of the Triple Goddess and dress it in colorful cloths or small clothes. Keep the Dolly on your altar or in some honored place throughout the winter and ritually burn it in the spring. If you have a garden, scatter the ashes over the soil before fertilizing and planting.

Apple Dolls

Apple Dolls seem to be a custom practiced mainly in the southeastern United States. They take a bit more skill than Corn Dollies. Because they require the use of a knife

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

and sewing needle, this is not an activity that is recommended for children unless an adult is willing to take on the potentially dangerous jobs. To make them you will need apples that are not very ripe. You don't want them too juicy or mushy. You will also need stuffing, cloth for the clothes, and a short stick to attach the body to the apple head.

With a small, sharp knife, carve a face into one side of the apple. Wrap the apple in a brown paper bag and put it aside in a cool, dark place until the apple is dry. While you are waiting for it to dry, you can make the clothes for your Apple Doll. Did the face you carved have a certain personality or age? Is there a color or theme you want to bring into your festivities this year? Do you want a modern Doll or one that represents your ancestors? The answers to these questions will determine the clothing you create.

Make the body first, about 6 inches long. A simple one outline like this is sufficient.



Sew up the sides and leave the neck area open. Turn it inside out so that the seams are on the inside and stuff it. Almost anything can be used as stuffing from old dryer lint to potpourri, just keep in mind that the more hard pieces you include inside, the bumpier your Doll's skin will be. Sew the neck nearly closed, leaving a hole for the stick.

Fun Stuff

Once the apple is dry, insert the stick into the bottom of the apple where the neck would go and place the bottom of the stick into the body. Sew the body tight around the stick. Depending on how well you sew, you might want to add a few drops of glue around the stick so the stuffing doesn't come out. Then dress and decorate your Apple Doll to your heart's content. Add a little corn silk or yarn hair, dress it in special clothing, give it a hat, or a staff, or even a mini-cornucopia.

A Mabon Centerpiece

Follow the instructions below for creating an autumn wreath. Rather than hanging it up, place it in the center of your holiday table. Place a small cornucopia filled with apples, nuts, and grapes in the center along with one gold and one silver candle. Alternatively, you may wish to place a moon and sun candle alone in the center of the wreath.

Thanksgiving Placecards

Fold construction paper squares in half and cut out leaf shapes to form a placecard for each person. Choose autumn colors and write the names of each family member and guest on the front. Just before giving thanks for the meal, ask each person to write something they are grateful for on the inside of the card. When you are finished eating, share your blessings together.

Corn Husk Placemats

These add a rustic touch to any harvest celebration. They are also in keeping with the idea of recycle and reuse – using all parts of the harvest and wasting none.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

You will need:

corn husks
needle
thread, medium weight

1. If you are using husks removed from corn that you bought fresh, allow them to dry completely in the sun before using.
2. Tear the husks into small strips and soak for an hour in warm water.
3. Beginning with three strips, braid them together. When you are more than halfway down the strips, add one more strip to each braid strand. Continue adding strips once you are past the halfway point.
4. Tie the braid tightly when it is long enough or when you have run out of strips.
5. Coil the braid, sewing the coils together as you go.

Homemade Candles

Sheets of beeswax, small granules of wax, and candle wicking can be purchased in most hobby and craft stores. These provide the opportunity for anyone to create their very own handmade candles. They are also the basis for wonderfully simple craft ideas to use with children.

Hand-poured Candles

You will need:

fireproof containers: terracotta pots, baby food jars,
or glasses that you don't plan to use
wax granules in the colors and amounts of your
choice
candle wicking cut $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch longer than the
height of your container.

Fun Stuff

1. If you have a clear container, you may want to plan out a color scheme or design before filling the container with wax. Even the very small terracotta pots often have holes in the bottom, so you may want to line the bottom with aluminum foil before filling.
2. Place the wick in the center of the bottom, leaving just enough wick to be secured in place as you add wax granules. Add the wax gradually, ensuring that the wick remains in the center. Pack the wax down gently as you fill the container. The wax will melt and solidify as the wick burns.

Hand-rolled Candles

You will need:

a variety of beeswax sheets, allow 2 sheets per candle
candle wicking
a butter knife
scissors

Below I describe two fairly simple ways to roll candles from beeswax sheets.

- * Cut a wick $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer than the length of a sheet. Using one or two sheets, place the wick along one edge and roll the sheet(s) straight across, as tightly as possible. Smooth the edges into the body of the candle when you reach the end.
- * Cut a wick $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer than the length of a sheet on the diagonal, from corner to corner. Cut two sheets in half on the diagonal. Take one sheet and cut off $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the already cut side. Placing this sheet on the outside, and the wick at the end of

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

one of the cut corners, roll the candle as tightly as possible. Smooth the edges into the body of the candle when you reach the end.

Autumn Wreaths

Seasonal wreaths can be found in most garden centers throughout autumn and winter. While most people associate these with the Yule season, autumn wreaths are becoming more and more popular. They can be a nice change from the typical evergreen and red bow wreaths that are so common in December and it is a wonderful activity for adults and children alike.

To create a wreath, you need to begin with a good base. This can be anything from a grapevine to a wire or Styrofoam frame. The base will determine the general shape of the wreath, so what you use is entirely personal preference. Next you will add the filler. Evergreen branches are common fillers for winter wreaths. For an autumn wreath, you may prefer to use green and colored leaves, ivy or other green vines, and Spanish or sphagnum moss.

Leaves and ornaments will probably require a glue gun to attach. Moss and vines can be fairly easily wired or woven onto a base. If you are using a Styrofoam base, many ornaments, such as dried flowers, can be secured by simply poking them into the Styrofoam.

Once you have your filler, you need to decide whether to leave it as is or to add ornamentation. Many of basic leaf and greens wreaths are gorgeous on their own. But the addition of other seasonal items can create a truly breathtaking wreath. Experiment with adding red chile peppers, pinecones, dried seed heads, berries, baby Indian corn, sheaves of wheat, or sunflowers. Children love to

Fun Stuff

spray paint pinecones gold and add them to Mabon wreaths. I have a friend that created one entire wreath out of dried sunflower heads and another completely out of red chile peppers. They were absolutely beautiful. After the holiday, she put the sunflower wreath out as an offering to the wild animals.

Living Herb Wreath

This is from Dorothy Morrison's book, *Bud, Blossom, & Leaf*.¹ It is a wonderful method of keeping herb cuttings fresh indoors. I use it after cutting back my outdoor herbs for the winter. It is also a wonderful autumn project for kids.

You will need:

- 1 wire wreath form
- hair pins
- sphagnum moss
- sterile soil
- time release fertilizer
- floral wire (if you choose the single wreath form rather than the one with a top and bottom that snap together)
- assorted plant cuttings (about two cuttings for every inch of the form diameter)
- rooting hormone

1. Fill the form bottom with sphagnum moss, being sure the line the form sides. It's important to leave a distinct indentation in the bottom between the sides too, because that's where you'll plant the cuttings. Sprinkle the indentation with fertilizer, then fill it ½ full of sterile soil.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

2. Carefully remove any leaves two inches from the bottom of the stem, then dip the stem in rooting hormone. Chant something like: *Leaves fly off and fall away, make way so roots can sprout today, I dip you in this powder rare, so you'll mature without a care.*
3. Spacing them evenly, plant the cuttings in the soil. Dorothy suggests planting a little ivy to cover bare spaces. This does make a beautiful addition to any wreath, but you may want to experiment with other types of cuttings or decorations that the plants can grow around.
4. When you are finished planting, fill the rest of the wreath with sphagnum moss, then use hair pins to secure any trailing plant ends. If you are using the single wreath form, wrap the wreath intermittently with the floral wire to keep the plants in place. For the snap-together type, just attach the top.
5. Caring for this wreath is simple. Lay it flat in the bathtub or shower and give it a good soaking when the moss feels dry, then hang it to drip dry. As it grows, remember to clip it regularly.

Chile Ristras

These deep red ropes of dried chile peppers bring richness and a sense of ancient culture to homes in the American Southwest. Beginning in mid-September, green chile ripens and turns a fiery red. In New Mexico, the nation's leading producer of this addictive little plant, it is traditional to harvest the chile and string it into ristra ropes, where it is allowed to dry in the sun. It is stored on the ropes for use throughout the winter. Ristras are so popular

Fun Stuff

that a chile ristra hot-air balloon is one of the crowd favorites at the annual Kodak International Hot Air Balloon Festival in Albuquerque,

To make a ristra, use red chiles that have no remaining green in them. If you are using freshly picked chile, let it sit for a few days to dry out a bit before using.

You will need:

approx. 150 red chiles for an 18-inch ristra
cotton string, medium weight
baling twine or wire
a small dowel or stick

1. Using the cotton string, tie a cluster of three or four chiles together. Wrap the string around all the stems then bring it up between two of the stems and pull it tight. Tie one half-square knot around all the stems and pull it tight. Continue the same process with more clusters each about 3 inches above the previous cluster. When you have strung all the clusters your string can hold, cut and tie the string and start over until you have used up all your chiles.
2. Hang the baling twine or wire at least 3 feet from the floor. Loop the stick or dowel into the bottom of the twine to prevent the chiles from falling off. Now braid your clusters around the twine and push the center down to tighten. Braid all your clusters from the bottom up and arrange the individual chiles so they stick out in all directions. Hang in full sun with good ventilation to dry. If you plan to use this for decoration only, you may want to use a clear sealant spray to preserve the chiles.

Connecting with the Earth

Tending Your Garden

Once the harvest is brought in, we not only clean up and put the garden to bed but in doing so we are preparing for the next harvest season. One thing you want to do is note what plants are where in the garden this year. Certain plants drain nutrients from the soil. While soil inoculants are available at garden stores to return nutrients, it is always a good idea to rotate vegetable plantings from year to year.

Clear away old annuals and dead stalks. Check your gardening books to determine if your perennials need to be pruned, cut back, or otherwise prepared for winter. This is a good time to add some fertilizers, such as manure or compost, to your garden. Even if you do not add anything, loosen up the soil down to at least 6 inches, including around the base of your perennials. This allows roots the freedom to grow even when the topsoil freezes.

Many people will add mulch at this time. Be careful not to allow commercial mulch to come in contact with living plants because it can burn them. Read the directions on the package carefully. Many gardeners prefer to use a different type of mulch, such as straw, fallen leaves, and pine needles. We use fallen leaves and chop them up with the lawn mower first. These types of mulch are wonderful in that when they biodegrade, they also add nutrients to the soil.

Planting for the New Year

In many areas, autumn is the time for planting bulbs, vines, and new trees. Once the harvest is complete and we

Fun Stuff

have properly tended the garden, we can begin to look forward to next spring. If you want to have grapes or berries next year, plant them now. This is the ideal time to plant bulbs that will bloom early with spring flowers. Each type of bulb will come with specific instructions on planting depth and spacing between plants, or you can take the easy route and get the bulb-planting tool available in most garden stores.

Gourd Rattles²

In autumn, various types of gourds and pumpkins begin to show up on the shelves at many grocery stores and roadside stands. Most people use these for colorful, fun decorations of the season. Since ancient times, gourds have been used to create rattles, bowls, and even water dippers. I have also seen them used as bird feeders, toys, and in costumes.

There are two schools of thought on the gourd-search experience. Either you can decide ahead of time what you intend to create and seek out just the right shape, or you can simply bring home what feels right, allowing the creation to flow naturally from the gourd. Once home, they can be cut open to clean out the flesh and seeds. It is important to cut them into exactly the right shape for your purpose because they can be difficult to cut once dry. At this point, they are simply hung to dry. You can also purchase dried gourds, which makes the process that much easier.

Once dry, the colors of the gourd will be paler but the skin is perfect for drawing or carving. This is the time to inscribe your names or magickal symbols. Children love to paint or color them with crayons. If you have created a

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

water dipper or bowl, you might want to use a light sandpaper to smooth the inside. Care should be taken in using paints or pens on anything that is intended as a utensil for human consumption.

For a rattle, put a small amount of dried beans, seeds, or even small stones inside before inserting a handle into the opening. You may choose to seal this with glue or just wrap it tightly with leather or cloth. Whatever you use to seal it, ensure that it is fully sealed before you or your child play with it. Trust me, lots of little seeds in the carpet is not as much fun as an intact rattle!

Nature Walks

Whether you are out taking in the fall leaf colors, picking grapes and apples, or simply enjoying the crisper, cooler air, this is an ideal time to get out into Nature. This is also a good time to honor nature and continue the cycle of blessings by taking along a garbage bag and picking up any trash you see as you walk. If you can take a bag for trash and a bag for recyclables, that is even better and you won't need to sort when you get home.

Look at a compass and be aware of the four directions as you wander. Attune to the energies of the land. Notice the difference in these energies between now and the summer, or between now and the winter. Sing a lullaby to the plants and animals. Carry a small amount of water or mead and offer libations of gratitude and blessings to the trees.

Sit for a few moments in a special spot. Breathe deeply and focus on feeling your connection to the ground. Visualize the energy of the earth flowing into you, calming and healing your entire self. Turn your face to the sky and feel a connection to the sun and sky. Breathe deeply and

Fun Stuff

visualize the energy of the sky flowing into you, invigorating and healing your entire self.

Carry a field guide with you and begin studying for your work as a spiritual naturalist. Get to know the autumn habits of the animals you want to use in your augury practice. This is one of the best times to learn about migration, hibernation, and the other ways animals prepare to survive winter. As you walk, keep an eye open for naturally fallen branches of trees that are part of the ogham system or have traditional uses in your part of the world. Bring home a few examples to assist you in integrating this system.

Find the Colors

In the next chapter, I describe the different pigments contained in leaves and how these contribute to the gorgeous fall colors. This is an experiment I learned back in college that allows you to see those pigments, even in a green leaf.

You will need:

- coin
- rubbing alcohol
- glass container
- aluminum foil
- tape measure or ruler
- tape
- coffee filter, cut into one-inch wide strips, pointed on one end
- leaves that have not yet fully changed color or dried out

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

1. Put a leaf on one of the filter strips, about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the point. Roll the coin over the leaf, pressing some juice into the filter strip.
2. Let the paper dry while you pour $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of rubbing alcohol into the glass container. Cover the container with the foil and measure the distance to the surface of the alcohol. Tape the strip to the underside of the foil so that the tip of the filter strip just touches the alcohol when you cover the container again. Be sure that the section containing the soaked-in leaf juice does not touch the alcohol.
3. Watch what happens as the alcohol moves up the strip. Don't let it seep all the way to the top of the filter strip. In about 15 minutes all the colors should have separated.

Make a Compass^B

We used this activity in conjunction with a homeschool unit study on the four directions and the animals, energies, cultures, and ideas associated with each direction. Making your very own compass is a great way to begin and children love it! Use this on the equinox to find exact east (where the sun rises on this day) and exact west (where the sun will set on this day).

You will need:

- a cork from a bottle
- a sewing needle or long pin
- a magnet
- a bowl of water

Fun Stuff

1. Rub your needle against the magnet in the same direction 30-40 times from the eye to the point. Try to rub all sides of the needle against the magnet.
2. If you are using a wine bottle cork, you may want to cut it in half so it floats more easily without toppling over. Insert the magnetized needle into the center of the cork, near the top.
3. Float the cork and needle in your bowl of water and see where it points. You can turn it around, submerge it, take it out and put it back, but the point of the needle will always return to north.

Predict the Weather

This group of weather activities is perfect for kids and adults alike. I kept them simple enough for young children but you can expand on these and get as elaborate as you want.

Temperature

1. Listen to the sound of a cricket chirping. Count the number of chirps in 14 seconds and you will know the temperature where the cricket is.
2. Get an outdoor thermometer and chart the temperature at various times throughout the day. Is the temperature at your house the same as the temperature reported on the news?

When is it coldest/warmest at your house and how does the temperature vary on the different sides of your house? Have little ones figure out how cold it has to be for ice to form.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Rain Gauge

You will need:

a clear glass cup or jar
permanent marker
a ruler

1. If your glass is not completely flat on the bottom, use some clay or modeling compound to get a flat base.
2. Measure up from the base and make marks at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch intervals on the outside of the glass.
3. Leave it outside when it rains and see how your rain levels measure up to those reported for your town on the news.

Wind

You will need:

a straw
a pencil with an eraser
lightweight cardboard
a straight pin
a knife

1. Place the straw perpendicular to the pencil and secure the straw to the eraser using a straight pin.
2. Cut two slits, parallel to the pencil, through each end of the straw.
3. Cut an arrowhead shape out of light cardboard and insert it into one slit.
4. Cut a long triangle out and insert it into the other end of the straw. These will catch the wind for you and turn your weather vane.

Fun Stuff

5. Hold the pencil up outside or stick it into the ground so it remains upright.

This is a good time to use the compass outlined above and determine the wind direction. This is also an excellent way to begin discussions on the four directions and their associations, as well as teaching kids about weather science and how the weather vane works.

Feeding Wildlife

Even those of us that live in cities have the opportunity to provide for wildlife. We may be feeding pigeons or other backyard birds. Some of us may have squirrels or lizards that may wander through our yards or balconies every now and then. In addition to the magickal methods described in the preceding chapter, we can make feeding wildlife a season-long (or year-long) activity that will entertain and instruct children and adults alike.

Gourd Birdfeeders

The uses of gourds are only limited by our own imaginations. I have seen gourds used to create birdhouses. However, at this time of year the need is not for homes to raise chicks in but for food to support the adult birds through the winter.

When choosing a gourd for a birdfeeder, try to find one that is less ornamental and has a thicker skin. It needs to be able to hold the weight of the birds. It is best to find one that is pear-shaped, with a wide enough bottom to hold birdseed and a small bird or two. Try to leave a large enough lip on the bottom to attach a perch to. It can be

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

carved so that the upper part of the gourd forms a stabilizer and hanger for the feeder. A shape like this is ideal.

You will need to clean and sand the inside, even if you are using a pre-dried gourd. For a birdfeeder, you may want to spray or paint it with a water sealer. Once dry, the sealant will be harmless to the birds. If you are unsure about whether the paint or sealer you have is safe, ask at your local hardware or bird store.

Now you are ready for the perch. This step is not essential, since most birds will use a feeder without one, but it does make it easier for the birds. Drill a small hole, 1/2 inch or smaller, into each side of the bottom lip. Insert a small amount of glue and a short dowel or stick into each hole. When the perches are dry, your birdfeeder is complete.

You can paint the outside of the gourd and decorate it to your heart's content. You can also add a very small drainage hole in the bottom to drain rainwater or a cover to prevent rain and snow from getting into the seed. This is not a birdfeeder that will handle a large number of birds. It does need to be frequently refilled but it certainly works for a few small birds, and you have the added satisfaction of knowing you created it with your own hands.

Sun Wheel Squirrel Feeder

While you can always just stick a corncob on a nail attached to a block of wood, you might find this squirrel feeder much more fun and symbolic of the season. You may decorate this as you please. Please be sure that your decorations are safe for the animals.

Fun Stuff

You will need:

4 cobs of corn, uncooked

nail

one 20 inch diameter circular frame, metal or wire

metal poles: one 20 inch and one 24 inch long with diameter small enough to fit easily in the center of a corncob

wire, medium gauge

heavy wooden block at least 20 inches across

drill and drill bit equal to the diameter of the metal poles

1. Wire the metal poles tightly together to form an equal-armed cross. One pole will obviously be longer. Using the nail, make a hole into the end of each cob. This hole will be your starter to work the cobs onto the metal poles.
2. When each cob is fully inserted onto a pole, wire the circle around the outside of the poles to form a sun wheel.
3. Drill a hole in the block of wood. Secure the longer pole into the block of wood and put it out for your squirrel friends to enjoy.

Connecting with the Sky

Have an Equinox Party

A party based predominantly on the solar event can be just as much fun as a Mabon feast! Send out invitations that are half-moon and half-sun. Invite everyone to come dressed as the equinox and to bring something to use to

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

create one of the autumn crafts in this chapter. You may be surprised at what people come up with.

Decorate your home using sun and moon symbolism. You may want to create a feeling of daylight on one side of the room and nighttime on the other side. Or you might choose to create a sunrise at east, a sunset at west, and hang a sun wheel from the exact center of the ceiling. Fill an equal number of black and white balloons, with helium if possible. Prepare equinox party hats and have the makings for face paints.

Plan to make crafts for this holiday or get an early start on making Yule gifts. Purchase a star map or print one out from the Internet and go outside after dark to find common constellations. See if you can find Libra and Virgo. Make it a harvest potluck or prepare a simple buffet that guests can munch as they craft or explore the skies.

Equinox Masks

Not only can these be great additions to an Equinox Party or holiday ritual, they can also be used to make equinox studies more fun for children of all ages.

You will need:

- paper plates
- Popsicle sticks
- colored markers
- construction paper
- glue
- glitter: gold and silver

1. The paper plates will be the base for the mask. Hold your plate up to your face and mark where your eyes are. Take it away from your face and cut eyeholes large enough for you to see through.

Fun Stuff

2. Now let your imagination go as you create one half of your mask as a Sun face and the other side as a Moon face. When you are finished, glue or staple the Popsicle stick to the bottom for a handle and let your mask dry for a few hours.

An alternative to making masks is to get face paint or makeup and paint your faces half and half.

Sun Stone

In the tradition of our ancestors who created elaborate stone circles, mounds, and caverns to mark the date of celestial events, we can use natural materials in our own backyards for similar reasons. Although we know when the equinox occurs, we use a standing stone to find the moment that the sun is directly overhead (local noon) where we live. Unless you live right on the equator, where the sun directly passes overhead, a standing stone will still cast some shadow at local noon but the shadow can be surprisingly informative on this day.

1. Erect a long, relatively thin stone about 2 feet tall on a flat area of ground. Try to make it as perpendicular to the surface as possible. If you cannot find a stone like this, you can substitute a 2-3 foot board secured to a sturdy base board.
2. Beginning about 10 minutes before noon, measure the length of your shadow every 5 minutes. When the shadow starts to get longer, you have reached local noon.
3. Find the tangent of the length of the shortest shadow and you will have your latitude! Well, you'll have your approximate latitude since this project is

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

not likely to be completely accurate due to variations in the stone, whether or not it is perfectly perpendicular to the earth's surface. The tangent is also equal to the sun's declination, which is the angular distance of the sun from the earth's equator.

The Spirit of Community

Honoring Your Elders and the Young

In a way, our elders and our youth are really two sides to one great mystery. On one end, they have just entered our world from the Great Beyond and on the other end, they are preparing to return beyond the Veil of Life. These are two of our most fragile and precious elements of society, yet often disrespected or ignored.

We can honor our past and our future, by consciously choosing to spend quality time with the elders and youth of our families and communities. We can devote our full attention to them without worrying about work, doing chores, or planning for the future while we spend time doing what they want to do.

You might consider volunteering to read to the elderly at nursing homes or retirement communities. Volunteer with hospice or offer to sit with elders and children in hospitals. Donate toys, clothes, and time to one of the many organizations that shelter homeless children or families.

Fun Stuff

Letters of Thanksgiving

This is kind of like a Secret Santa, in that you should pick one person secretly about a week before Mabon, making sure that everyone in your group will get a letter. Write this person a letter expressing how thankful you are for their presence in your life and tell them just how wonderful they are. Then, either find a way to get this person their letter secretly or invite everyone over for a feast and allow time for each person to place their letter on the plate of the person it is addressed to. Read your letters at the end of your meal and celebrate with dessert.

Honoring the Dead

This is a traditional practice at this time of year throughout the world. Consider visiting and cleaning up the area around family gravesites. Bring some fresh flowers or plant some fall bulbs around the headstones. Take along an autumn wreath or grave blanket of evergreens, acorns, dried leaves, and pine cones to be placed on the headstone. It is traditional to leave apples on burial cairns, but we can certainly do this on modern gravesites as well.

Honor those that have passed on with a silent dinner or a few moments of silence at a dinner in their honor. Whether they are friends or family, human or animal, you can honor them and create a sense of connection and gratitude in your own heart by taking a few moments before partaking of a feast and meditating on their lives and all they brought to this existence. Follow that with some consideration of what you would like to create or contribute through your life.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Honoring Family Ancestors⁴

Prepare a feast of oatmeal walnut cookies (see recipe on page 152) and apple juice. Set a place for everyone present, and include place settings for the honorees. Go through family albums or photographs, recall the life stories of the ancestors pictured, and meditate upon the importance of their lives. Remember how each family member gone before lives on in you. End by thanking the ancestors for the roles they continue to play in your lives, by saying something like:

*For your lives, I give you thanks
You, who live now in the ranks
Of memories of times now past
Whose blood still flows within me fast
Whose personalities I share
Whose mannerisms here and there
Come out in me from time to time
Bringing reason to my rhyme
I thank you for the parts of me
You've put in place that I might be
I promise now that you shall thrive
With loving thoughts throughout my life
For all I am and all I'll be
Is because you live in me*

The Gift of Homemade Soap

Susan Dahlem of Dahlem's Handcrafted Soaps⁵ graciously sent me this wonderful recipe for old-fashioned, cold processed, all-vegetable soap. It is adapted from her book, *Soapmaking 101-the Science of Saponification*. At this time of rest after the harvest, there is nothing more luxurious than the gift of homemade soap.

Fun Stuff

Harvest Soap

It takes at least two weeks before you have soap ready to use. You can either start a few weeks before Mabon, or use this time of harvest and preparation to begin crafting Yule gifts.

You will need:

- enamel or stainless steel pot (never use aluminum)
- a scale to measure your ingredients (in ounces)
- one wide-mouth glass measuring cup or pitcher
- a couple of wooden or stainless spoons
- bowl or jar for weighing lye
- candy or quick-read thermometer
- well-fitting rubber gloves
- safety goggles
- two old towels
- a bottle of vinegar as a precaution: neutralizes lye if it gets on your skin
- plastic wrap
- a mold: glass or plastic container, shoe box lined with heavy plastic, or a wooden mold

Ingredients:

- 16 oz. vegetable shortening
- 8 oz. coconut oil
- 12 oz. olive oil
- 14 oz. cold water in a glass measuring cup
- 5 oz. sodium hydroxide (Red Devil Lye- available at the grocer's)
- ½ oz. essential or fragrance oil, such as lemongrass, cedar, patchouli
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

2 Tbsp wheat germ
1 Tbsp dried orange peel

1. Allow 1-1 ½ hours to make a batch of soap. This recipe will produce one 36 oz. batch and the number of bars depends on the size and shape you make.
2. Prepare your mold by either greasing the glass dish or plastic container or lining the box with heavy plastic, being sure all the seams are well covered to prevent leaks. Always sit your filled mold inside a larger container just in case you do have a little seepage.
3. Use every precaution when working with lye. Use safety goggles and rubber gloves from the time you start until you finish cleaning up your work area. Always keep lye out of reach of children and pets.
4. Gently pour and stir the lye into the cold water until completely dissolved. Set aside in a safe place to cool down to about 100°F. Check it often because temperature inside your kitchen will determine how quickly it cools. If your kitchen is fairly warm, or you need to speed things up, you can place the container in a cold water bath (fill your sink with about 1 inch of cold water and sit the container of lye water in it to cool quicker).
5. Over a very low heat, melt the vegetable shortening and coconut oil together. When both are melted, remove from heat and add olive oil. Check the temperature of the oil now and keep a watch on it because both the oil and lye water must be at 100°F. You may use the cold water bath method for the oils too.

Fun Stuff

6. When both oils and lye water is 98-105°F, pour the lye water in a steady slow stream into the oils, stirring constantly and consistently in a circular, then S-shaped motion. Alternate between the two motions. This causes saponification.
7. Continue stirring - noting the changes in the mixture. It will eventually become thicker and creamier. Continue stirring until it reaches the consistency of pudding. This will take 30 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes.
8. Remove ½ cup of the soap mixture. Stir the fragrance, cinnamon, orange peel, and wheat germ into the removed portion. Stir gently until the ingredients are well mixed.
9. Mix this well, back into the soap. Pour soap into the prepared mold. Cover with plastic wrap, allowing the wrap to touch the surface of the soap.
10. Sit the covered mold onto one of the old towels. Wrap the towel over and around the mold. Repeat with the second towel. Sit inside larger box in a warm place for 18-24 hours. Do not disturb mold during this time and be sure that all surfaces are protected in case of a leak.
11. Uncover the mold and score the soap. The next day, wearing rubber gloves, turn it out and cut into scored bars or cut it like brownies and lift it out. You may also choose to make soap balls.
12. Set aside on waxed paper to dry and cure for at least 2 weeks. Stack bars in an open brick pattern during this time.
13. And Susan reminds us to wrap individual soaps in brown paper, waxed paper, harvest colored/patterned fabric and tie with jute or raffia. Decorate

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

packages with an acorn, leaf or other seasonal symbol. Don't forget your "Made especially for you by _____" tag!

¹Llewellyn, February 2001.

²much of this activity is printed as it first appeared in the Fall 2000 issue of *Circle* magazine, issue 77, pp. 32.

³adapted from Brown, *Bubbles, Rainbows, & Worms*, pp. 45.

⁴Morrison, *The Craft*, pp. 176.

⁵Dahlem's Handcrafted Soaps, 1-877-818-SOAP/Email
jsdahlem@bellsouth.net



Equinox Science

Equinox is a Latin word meaning equal night. These dates, the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes, are so named because they are the only two days of the year when the northern and southern hemispheres of the Earth receive the same amount of sunlight. This is because the Earth is tilted in a special way. Rather than being tilted toward or away from the sun, we are at a right angle to an imaginary Earth-Sun line and the sun is directly overhead at the equator. Therefore, the days and nights are the same length.

From the Autumn Equinox on, nights will be longer than days for people in the northern hemisphere until we reach the Spring Equinox. On the Autumn Equinox, the sun rises at the South Pole for the first time in six months. The sun also rises exactly in the East and sets exactly in the West (depending on your location),.

This is represented in the symbol of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids. The Awen (pronounced *ab-oo-en*), meaning divine inspiration, is depicted as three rays

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

emanating from three points of light and enclosed in three concentric circles. The three points of light are representative of the Triple Deities of Celtic spirituality. They are also the three positions where the sun rises at the equinoxes and the solstices. This is known as the Triad of Sunrises and may be found as three stones outside the gateway to many of the old stone circles.

Our ancient ancestors were no different from us in that they perceived their world according to what they knew. Many folk customs and myths developed from an early approximation of scientific method. Through these tales, we see that ancient peoples were far from “primitive.” They were extremely observant, more so than many modern people, and had some truly advanced understandings of the workings of the world and the universe.

Weather Folklore

With that in mind, here are some fairly common autumn weather-related folk beliefs. Many of these have their basis in some surprisingly solid scientific observations and some do not. However, it is true that animals tend to be very sensitive to environmental changes. Behavioral changes, such as the frequency of birdcalls or cricket chirps, can indicate changes in temperature or air pressure. Oncoming storms are often preceded by the closing of some flowers as well as increased feeding among some species of fish, snakes, and rabbits.

- * a long, hot summer indicates a windy autumn
- * a windy autumn precedes a mild winter
- * The first frost in autumn will be exactly six months after the first thunderstorm of the spring.

Equinox Science

It will be a long and hard winter if:

- * woolly bear caterpillars are more black than brown.
- * squirrels gather and bury their nuts early
- * trees produce an abundance of nuts.
- * the leaves fall late
- * apple skins are tough
- * cornhusks are thick
- * onion skins are thick
- * birds migrate early
- * fruit trees bloom in the fall
- * the breastbone of a fresh-cooked turkey is dark purple

Equinox or autumn science manifests in four main fields, those of ecology, astrology, astronomy, and archaeoastronomy. Each of these fields is interrelated, like everything else in our multiverse. But because they are distinct fields within themselves, I offer them as separate subsections here. Think of them as additional elements that can teach us about the worlds we live in and can add to our spiritual and magickal experiences.

Autumn Ecology

There is more to the science of the season than we can learn from the ancient and predominantly sky-focused fields. What about the special beauty that autumn brings to the land? Astronomy can tell us much about the slanting of the sun's rays lending that distinctive glow to the light of this time of year. But what causes the trees, plants, and grasses to turn such fantastic colors?

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Magickal Colors

It is truly wonderful to realize that the energies of the harvest and the end of the food-producing season are not only manifested on the land and in the skies, but on much smaller levels as well. During the spring and summer, the leaves of plants and stalks of grasses function to produce food for the rest of the plant. This food production occurs in the cells that contain chlorophyll, the pigment that gives these types of plants their green color.

But these plants also contain other pigments, including those that give carrots their orange color. These are not usually visible to us during the spring and summer because of the abundance of chlorophyll. But with the cooler temperatures and shortening of daylight, the chlorophyll breaks down. Food production stops and the green color fades away. The plant has harvested all it can from the production season. Autumn allows other pigments to emerge and other chemical changes to occur, bringing forth the yellows, oranges, reds, and even deep purples of the season.

The brilliance of the colors produced by the Mabon season is regulated by Mother Earth and Father Sky. Temperatures, light, and water all combine to influence the beauty and length of the season of color. Drought conditions will decrease the intensity of leaf color. Early frost will decrease the brilliant reds and can result in leaves turning brown almost overnight. Colder temperatures that are still above freezing favor the production of those gorgeous reds in maples.

Maples are well known for their vibrant red leaves but they can also exhibit yellow and orange, sometimes all on the same tree. This is due to a pigment called anthocyanin that is produced by the conversion of excess sugars.

Equinox Science

The amount of daylight and the coldness of autumn nights affect the production of this pigment and, as a result, determines the fall colors of these trees. The production of maple products, including syrup, sugar, and cream, is big business these days and draws tourists from all over the world to New England and eastern Canada. It is believed that Native Americans were the first people to use maple sap in these ways. Maple products were important to early settlers as well.

Along the eastern coast of the United States, Sweetgum leaves are often mistaken for Maple. In the autumn, they can produce a variety of colored leaves, from yellow to red. You can distinguish them from Maples by the presence of small ball-shaped fruit in the fall. Sweetgum, also known as redgum and starleafgum, is a hardwood in the Witch Hazel family. It is fast growing tree that often moves in to logged areas and old fields.

Flowering Dogwoods were some of our favorite trees in New England, though the Dogwood species is not limited to that region. In fact, Dogwood is the state tree of Virginia and the state flower of North Carolina and Virginia. . In the Welsh tale of Cad Goddeu (Battle of the Trees), written by Taliesin, dogwood is called powerful. The colors of these leaves are also determined by the production of anthocyanin and the amount of excess sugar. Dogwoods turn red to maroon in autumn.

Also in the anthocyanin family are the ash and oak, both ogham trees as well. Both species can erupt into yellow, bronze, maroon, and red leaves in autumn. Their divinatory meanings were described in the Magickal Mabon chapter.

Yggdrasil, the World Tree of the Norse myths, is believed by many to be an ash tree. The Norse god Odin hung himself for nine days and nine nights on this tree. At

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

the end of that time, he was gifted with the mysteries of the runes. Ash is considered to be a Noble tree under Irish law. In Cad Goddeu, Ash “performed excellently before monarchs.” Gwydion is said to be the Ash-God, victorious over the Alder-God.

Oaks are commonly associated with druids. Many scholars agree that the word druid is probably derived from one of the ancient words for oak. In Cad Goddeu, Oak was swift and mighty. Heaven and earth trembled before this tree. Oak is a chieftain tree in Irish law. It has been associated with the Greek god Zeus, the Norse Thor, and the Celtic Dagda.

In the southwest, two poplar species are quite common and can be characteristic of the area. Cottonwoods are found even in the desert, wherever there is water. Aspens are trees of the western mountains. Both trees tend to have yellow leaves although some species of aspen can be tinged with red. Aspen is considered to be a peasant tree under Irish law and cottonwood is the traditional wood used by pueblo peoples along the Rio Grande for making drums.

Elms are common throughout the world and have been part of several historical events. Boston’s Liberty Elm was the center of many American revolutionary rallies. William Penn signed a peace treaty with the Delaware Indians under a huge elm. The peace lasted for a century. When the elm was eventually blown over by a storm, it was 280 years old. These trees sport bright yellow leaves in the fall. Sadly, many of them have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease.

Birch is first in the list of ogham trees. Birch is also a peasant tree under Irish law. My Saami ancestors used birch twigs to confer vital energy. This is seen also in the Celtic use of the birch rod to change energy. This tree also

Equinox Science

shows up in Cad Goddeu, where they are described as sprouting tips offering unchangeable energy. These trees also provide spectacular yellow color in autumn.

Many people flock to Washington, D.C. in the spring to see the cherry trees blossom. But cherry trees also provide intense reds, oranges, and golds to the autumn foliage displays. The fruit provides an important food source for many forms of wildlife and the syrup is often used as a medicinal base, especially in children's medicines.

Autumn Travels

So how about migration? How do the birds and butterflies know when and where to migrate? The truth is that no one knows for sure. There are plenty of theories as to why and how migration takes place, but these are just theories. It is generally accepted that seasonal changes in prey base and other food sources, along with changing light and temperatures, catalyze the movement of birds and butterflies. The cyclic disappearance of birds was a mystery to our ancient ancestors. In some cultures, they were believed to travel to other worlds. Some people thought they hibernated in groups on the moon or at the bottoms of lakes.

Less than one-quarter of bird species migrate but those that do may travel anywhere from 250 to 2000 miles in search of warmer weather and better food. Amazingly enough, recent studies have shown that migrating birds use landmarks, sun and star positions, and even the earth's magnetic field for navigation as they migrate. Like bears, squirrels, and other animals, birds prepare for the winter by eating and gaining weight.

Birds are not the only animals that migrate. Earlier, I described the migration of butterflies and moths. Sadly,

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

migration can present unique dangers and many migratory species are now in danger due to degradation or elimination of habitat, pesticide use, changes in land use, and hunting.

Certain species of reptiles, most notably sea turtles, also have seasonal migrations. Even the timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), found only in eastern North America, migrates between breeding areas and winter dens. In fact, timber rattlesnakes use the same winter dens each year and it is believed that some dens may have been in use for hundreds, even thousands, of years.

While deer and some other mammals go on altitudinal migrations (like a few bird species) in which they simply move from the tops of mountains to the bottom and back again, only four types of mammals actually do the big migrations: cetaceans (whales and porpoises), bats, pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), and large hoofed mammals such as caribou and reindeer. Reindeer nomads, like many of the Saami people, organize their lives and activities around this migration, in effect becoming migratory peoples as a result. The regularity of some of these migrations, for example that of Atlantic whales, has made it very easy for hunters to dramatically reduce populations.

Food is not easy to come by once harvest season has passed, especially if you are hibernating or migrating. Those extra pounds that some of us work hard to keep off are the fuel an animal's body needs to help them survive the autumn, winter, and early spring. Although their systems are particularly efficient, it is vital that they gain as much weight as possible.

It is obvious that even on a biological level, all things are interrelated. The cooperation and relationships among All of Life join together on many levels, from the celestial to the agricultural to the molecular, to create the

Equinox Science

glory and bounty of the Harvest Season. As you read through the remainder of this chapter, keep in mind that all of these fields are truly parts of the great whole. Each contributes to our understanding and experience of the seasons of our lives and Mother Earth. Consider how each field can add to your spiritual growth or to your enjoyment of the season.

Astrology

In modern astrology, the equinox marks the entrance of the sun into the zodiacal sign of Libra. This is interesting in that Libra is symbolized by the weighing scales and is recognized as a sign of balance. Libra energy allows us to consider all sides of an issue and to view experiences from several perspectives. Librans tend to be diplomatic and fair, but these energies can also lead people with signs in Libra to be indecisive and insincere. It is important for these individuals to find a healthy balance and maintain their personal integrity in all things. Of course, that is the goal and challenge for all of us, no matter what our astrological charts say.

It is said that the ancient Egyptians only weighed their harvests during a full moon in Libra. This corresponds to the Harvest Moon described earlier in this book. Many astrologers feel that Libra is the time when we reap whatever we sowed in past lives and from those times in this lifetime when major planets were in the sign of Aries, the first sign of the zodiac. The placements of Libra in our own charts indicates what areas of our lives need to come into balance or where there has been imbalance in the past. Libra also represents the need to enter into balanced relationships.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

The planet Venus rules both the sign of Libra and the sign of Taurus. Taurus brings to mind all the luxurious, material joys of this season. We have reaped our harvest and now the Taurean side of us is going to fully enjoy it. The homes and yards of people with key planets in Taurus often reflect their desire for beauty and harmony. That part of each of us appreciates tending the garden for winter, decorating, and indulging in the foods and drinks of the season. As ruler of the sign of Libra, Venus represents the types of people and relationships that we attract and enjoy.

Venus energy brings in beauty, love, harmony, and cooperation. These are all attributes of the Mabon season. Venus is equally well known as the Roman goddess of love and beauty. What is not often recognized is her role as a vegetation goddess. Venus was honored as the patroness of gardens and vineyards. In this way, the planet that rules this time from the heavens is one and the same as our Earth Mother, whose bountiful harvest we honor in our rites. Once more, we find balance as the Goddess reminds us that She is a part of both Earth and Sky.

Libra rules the seventh house of the astrological chart. This house governs our relationships to other people: our group or partnership awareness and how we relate to others, particularly cooperative relationships such as marriage or business partnerships. When we come together as families and communities in the harvest season, we are celebrating the best of our relationships. We reap the bounty gained from cooperative efforts of planting, tending, and harvesting. It is important to honor these efforts we share with our fellow humans. It is equally important to give thanks for the blessings we receive from a right relationship with the Earth.

The seventh house creates an interesting dynamic with the first house, which is opposite it on the astrological

Equinox Science

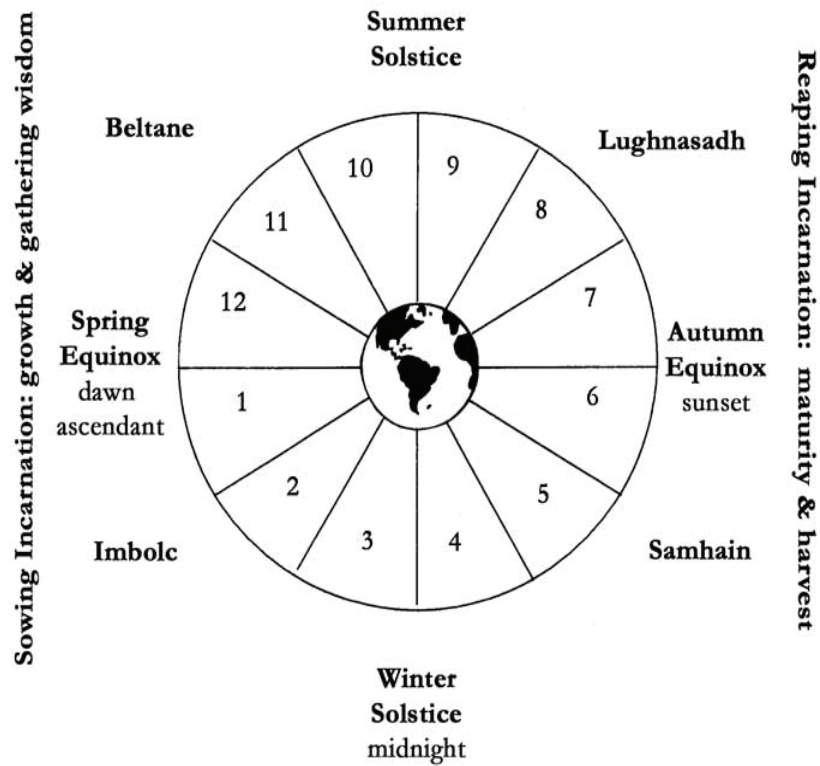
wheel. In affairs of the seventh house, we are relating to others while in the first house we develop self-awareness and learn to relate to ourselves. Both are important elements at this time of reflection, community, and the beginning of the dark half of the year. As we celebrate the harvest and give freely to others, so do we begin to move inward in our meditations and thoughts. We need to work with the energies of both houses to achieve true balance and wisdom.

The circle of the zodiac can be likened to the Wheel of the Year, the circle of the day, and even to the cycles of life.

Using the astrological wheel (see next page) as our basic format, we can illustrate using one circle. This looks a bit different from the way many modern druids conceive of the circle, as described by Ross Nichols to Philip Carr-Gomm¹ but it works the same way and is more applicable for our purposes here.

Beginning at the horizon on the left side. This is the ascendant. It represents the East direction, the Spring Equinox, and early morning around dawn. In astrology, you would need to be born between four and six in the morning in the northern hemisphere for your sun to fall in the first house. The first house is just below horizon on this side, opposite the seventh house of the Autumn Equinox. It is the natural house of Aries and Mars and here we see the dynamic again between this house and the seventh house of Libra and Venus. The entire eastern side of the chart is seen as the side that reflects a sowing incarnation. In the druid tradition, we see this as the time of birth to adulthood. It is the time when we develop the self and receive information and wisdom.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving



Equinox Science

Moving up to noon, the south, and midsummer at the top of the chart, we pass through Beltane as spring turns to summer. The upper hemisphere of the astrological chart is the daylight sector. This is the time of expression and vitality. As we continue on, we reach Lughnasadh before stopping at the other side of the horizon at the Autumn Equinox. Now we are at the west, just at sunset and the beginning of autumn. You can see the equinoxes lie on the east-west horizon where the sun sets and rises at these dates. The other cardinal directions hold the solstices.

The west side of the chart indicates a reaping incarnation. This is the harvest season on a microcosmic level as well as on a macrocosmic one. This is the time of maturity in our life cycle. For most people, children are grown and out on their own. We are given to reflection and preparation for retirement and old age.

From the time of Mabon, we move through Samhuinn, a time of old age and often death, to Yule at midnight, the point of conception and inspiration. On our way back around to the Spring Equinox, we move through early childhood at Imbolc.

Astronomy

From a purely astronomical viewpoint, the equinox is simply the date that the geometric center of the sun crosses the equator as it appears to travel southward. We all know that the sun does not actually alter its place in our solar system. It is the Earth that moves. It rotates on its axis, giving us day and night, while it revolves around the sun. Most spinning objects, like our Earth, have something called angular momentum. This is what makes our axis, the north-south pole, point in the same direction all the

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

time. Because of this momentum, we have our seasons, the times when our axis is pointed either away from or toward the sun.

If you have ever played with a top or a gyroscope, you know that it tends to wobble a bit even though its axis points in the same general direction. The Earth is no different from these spinning objects and, as we are tilted on our axis, the Earth wobbles. This wobbling, combined with the tilt of our axis, changes the way the sun appears in the heavens. In the summer, the sun appears to be higher in our skies than it does in the winter. Over a period of time, the sun appears to move southward. The point at which it is directly overhead at the equator is the equinox.

The Earth's wobble also creates a phenomenon called precession, which leads to the variation in exact dates of the equinoxes from year to year. Because of the precession that is caused by our wobble, both our view of the heavens and our pole star gradually change over thousands of years. This is important in understanding many of the ancient observatories. Many of these sites are set up to observe the equinox in the constellation it was in during the time of construction. These sites may be aligned to a different pole star as well, depending on when they were created.

Ancient astronomers conceived of the heavens as a sphere surrounding our Earth. Today we still use this concept and base the celestial sphere on our own latitudes and longitudes. By extending these lines out into space, we create a spherical map of the heavens. Parallel lines extended out from the Earth's equator create the celestial equator. As the sun appears to move throughout the heavens, its apparent path is known as the ecliptic and it crosses that celestial equator twice. This crossing occurs at the equinoxes. At the Autumn Equinox, the sun has been in the

Equinox Science

northern section of the celestial sphere and appears to be moving south.

Those ancient astronomers also separated the ecliptic (the apparent path of the sun) into twelve sections containing one constellation each. This is also called the zodiac belt because these constellations are the basis for our zodiac signs. Each section corresponds to one house on the astrological chart wheel. The precession of the equinoxes causes us to slowly move backward through the zodiac at a rate of one zodiacal constellation every 2160 years, completing the full cycle in almost 26,000 years. In ancient times when this system was devised, the Spring Equinox was set in the constellation of Aries. It is now almost in the constellation of Leo.

At local noon along the equator, the sun is directly overhead and a straight vertical object will cast no shadow at the equator. The hours of day and night are of equal duration at the equinox. In truth, days are slightly longer than nights until after the date of the Autumn Equinox in the northern hemisphere. This occurs closer to October 15. Similarly, the date of equal day and equal night actually occurs before the Spring Equinox, around February 25. This is reversed in the southern hemisphere, where people are celebrating the beginning of spring on this date.

We measure sunrise and sunset according to the visibility of the top edge of the sun rather than the middle. It is also true that because Earth has an atmosphere, refraction causes the sun to appear higher in the sky than it would on the moon, which has no atmosphere. While almanacs are normally adjusted to account for this refraction, newspapers are not. So if you look up the times for these in the newspaper, it will appear that day is still a bit longer than night, even when that is not really the case.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

In spite of these technicalities, we honor this as the point of balance before moving into the dark half of the year. For most of us, this is a largely symbolic experience, although our days are clearly shorter in the winter. But people living near the North Pole are truly entering the dark times with months of no sunlight at all. Those scientists that live at the South Pole will not see sunset for another six months. Imagine what it would be like to be entering this extreme at each equinox!

Libra, the Scales, is a southern constellation near the hand of the Virgo constellation. It is an almost boxlike arrangement of stars that contains the class G dwarf star, *Librae*. *Librae* is not visible to the naked eye for most of us but may be seen just south of the star figure of *Libra*, by using binoculars. The brightest star in the *Libra* constellation is a double star known as *Zubenegenubi* or *Kiffa Australis*.

Ancient astronomers once believed the evening and morning stars to be two separate stars. We now know that both are actually the planet Venus, often called the Jewel of the Sky. It is the second planet from the sun and the sixth largest in our solar system. It has the most circular orbit of any planet in our solar system. Its orbit and rotations is so unusually synchronized that Venus always shows the same side to the Earth when they are at their closest points.

When seen through a telescope, this planetary jewel shows phases, similar to those exhibited by our moon. The Full occurs when Venus is on the far side of the sun from us. The Crescent phase is the most brilliant and the largest because it is the closest to Earth.

Venus, named after the goddess of love and beauty, is sometimes called the sister planet of our Earth because it is of a similar size, mass, and density. The similarities end there however. The planet Venus rotates very slowly from

Equinox Science

east to west, meaning that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. Venus has a heavy atmosphere mainly comprised of carbon dioxide and no water vapor with clouds composed of sulfuric acid droplets. The greenhouse effect on the planet's surface results in extremely high temperatures, hotter even than Mercury. It is said that Venus/Aphrodite married Vulcan/Hephaestus. Apparently, She likes the heat!

Archeoastronomy

At its most basic, archeoastronomy is the study of how ancient peoples understood the heavens. Archeoastronomers explore sacred sites around the world to uncover the secrets they hold about our ancestors and their cosmologies. These scientists are educated in astronomy and archeology. They often study anthropology and mythology as well. Many find that their research leads them to stray from the mainstream and delve into geomancy, astrology, and ancient religions.

Archeoastronomers have found ancient sites across the world that they believe served to permit the people to learn about and align their lives with the changing heavens. Sites exist that allow for the calculation of constellation locations, lunar phases, even the positions of other planets. Many of these sites are aligned with solar and/or lunar positions on the solstices and equinoxes, including Stonehenge, cities of the Maya, Inca, and Toltecs, as well as the mysterious ruins at Poverty Point, Louisiana in the United States. From these sites, we learn that our ancestors had complex astronomical and, in some cases, mathematical knowledge. We also gain a recognition of the importance these solar events held for ancient peoples.

Ancient Equinox Observatories

Mexico

The ancient Mayans built their temples and other ceremonial structures in alignment with the four cardinal directions. At the Mayan pyramid in Chichen Itza on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, equinox sunrise and sunset lights up the northern stairway, making it appear to be a snake, sliding up and down the pyramid.

Peru

To the Inca, the seasons were opposite those in the northern hemisphere. Their two major celebrations took place on the spring equinox and winter solstice: the autumn equinox and summer solstice for those of us in the northern hemisphere. To determine the dates for these festivals, they used tall stone columns that had been erected in the center of a stone circle in front of the Temple of the Sun in what is now Cuzco. A line was drawn east to west across the stone circle, allowing the equinox to be determined by the position of morning shadows along the line and the length of midday shadows.

Macchu Picchu may be one of the best known ancient sites and it is certainly one of the most breathtaking, set as it is at 8000 feet above sea level in the midst of striking mountains and jungle. This is another site created of huge stone blocks with such precision that modern scientists do not know for sure how it was done. Ancient structures here are designed to measure the precession of the equinoxes.

The United States

In New Mexico, in the American Southwest, the Anasazi built the Sun Dagger at Chaco Canyon. The effect is created by a specially aligned hole between some boulders that allows sunlight into the inner chamber. On the equinox at local noon, sunlight makes a dagger shape on a spiral on the far wall.

Also at Chaco Canyon, Casa Rinconada is one of six kivas, or ceremonial structures, usually subterranean. This particular kiva is precisely aligned to the solstices and equinoxes. While it is unknown whether or not the kiva was built to observe or calculate these events, the sun enters the chamber on these dates and illuminates specific niches in the walls.

Another North American site, identified only as INY-272, also uses snake symbolism. In this case, the light of the rising sun on the equinox morning creates a snake shape, another of the common symbols of this season. The snake grows toward an egg shape. The snake prevails over a fissure in the rock and eventually consumes the egg.

Southeast of Lone Pine, California is another ancient equinox observatory known as the Swansea petroglyph site. This name is interesting in that King Philip's War began as the direct result of the murder of a Wampanoag near the English settlement at Swansea, a continent away from this site. On the equinoxes and the summer solstice, shafts of light and shadow fall in the center of several groups of concentric circles that have been pecked into the wall. This site is unique in that it contains a separate set of circles that serve to alert the early astronomers of the impending equinox. The morning before the equinox itself, a pointed shadow passes through these circles.

Ireland

In the lush Boyne Valley, there remain some of the most remarkable megalithic sites in Europe. The entire complex is designed to measure time and many sites are aligned with specific astronomical events. Although Newgrange is aligned with the mid-winter sunrise, there are twelve stones surrounding Newgrange that point to solstice and equinox sunsets as well as to two other important observatories, Knowth and Dowth. Subterranean passages at Knowth are aligned to the sunset and sunrise points of the equinoxes.

In the Bricklieve Mountains, we find the Carrowkeel Cairn complex in County Sligo. The Carrowkeel site uses certain stars in addition to the position of the sun to determine the points for the equinoxes, solstices, and lunar events.

The Carnbane complex is in the Loughcrew Mountains of County Meath, about twenty-six miles northwest of Newgrange, and is comprised of over fifty mounds. Inside Cairn T, the largest of the chambered passage graves at Carnbane East, the equinox sunrise allows in a shaft of light that creates a circle on the back wall of the chamber. Inside the circle is the petroglyph of a flower with eight petals, reminiscent of the Wheel of the Year and its eight seasonal festivals.

England

The Salisbury plains of southern England contain what is arguably the most famous of the megalithic astronomical observatories: Stonehenge. While most archeologists have agreed that Stonehenge was used in a religious capacity for ancient peoples, it was not until the mid-1960s that astronomer Gerald Hawkins reported his findings that

Equinox Science

the complex was likely used to predict the solstices and equinoxes, as well as a variety of other astronomical events. Stonehenge also allows for the measurement the precession of the equinoxes.

Israel

In the central Golan area of Israel, there is a megalithic circle reminiscent of Stonehenge. The Rogem Hiri (Rujm al-Hiri in Arabic) is believed to be another astronomical observatory, aligned to solar events. To early Israelites, this circle seemed to be a leftover from the races of giants they believed lived on the Bashan plateau before they arrived.

Rogem Hiri consists of four concentric circles of basalt fieldstones surrounding a central cairn leading into a burial chamber, another symbol of this season. The structure has been theorized to be an astronomical complex, a religious site, even the tomb of King Og of the Bashan, the last of the race of giants that preceded the Israelites.

New Zealand

On New Zealand's North Island, there existed a building known as the Crosshouse of Miringa te Kakara. Unfortunately, this building burned down in 1983. While its origins are unknown, it is theorized that followers of the Maori Hau Hau religion either built it or restored it. The Hau Hau were careful never to change anything and only replaced what needed repair if it could be precisely copied. Some scholars believe that the Crosshouse was a universal microcosm, encoding measurements of lunar and solar distances as well as the precession of the equinoxes.

Solar Markers

Petroglyphs can be found throughout the world. They are a form of ancient rock art that was created by carving or pecking the substrate, as opposed to painting the surface in pictographs. Many petroglyphs have been found that interact with the light of the sun, particularly on days such as solstices and equinoxes. A large number of these types of petroglyphs, and some pictographs, have been located throughout the southwestern United States.

Often these markers are discovered purely by accident. Someone happens to be in the right place when the sun, or less frequently the moon, crosses the petroglyph and the meaning becomes apparent. This is not limited to a sunrise or sunset occurrence. In fact, many of these glyphs mark times on or around local noon. Often these glyphs are circular or spiral. Spiral forms are often used to indicate ascent and descent, for example they may be combined with other glyphs to mark trails. But in many southwestern solar calendars, spiral shapes are used to denote the ascent and descent of the sun on certain dates.²

¹Carr-Gomm, *The Elements of the Druid Tradition*, pp. 66-79.

²Cunkle and Jacquemain. *Stone Magic of the Ancients*. pp, 164.

Autumn Equinox Season Calendar

This is a day-by-day outline of holidays from around the world. I chose to begin about two weeks before the equinox and end two weeks after for a month-long calendar. It will give you an idea of what people in other parts of the world are celebrating. It should also provide a starting place for any further exploration and education you might choose to pursue. Please keep in mind that many of these are moveable feasts or are based on a lunar month system so the dates will not be accurate for all years.

September 8

In Russia, this is believed to be the birthday of the harvest goddess, *Berehynia*. This is also the Baha'i Feast of Izzat.

September 9

In the United States, this is Grandparent's Day. It is a secular holiday that is not popularly observed. However, the idea is to set aside a special day to honor our grandparents.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

September 12

For those of us in the United States, this may be National Pet Memorial Day, held each year on the second Sunday of September.

This is Saint Ailbe's Day. He is the Patron of Wolves, one of the symbols of the Mabon season. He was also a disciple of St. Patrick.

This is the beginning of the New Year for followers of the Coptic Church. This is a holiday in Ethiopia, although the Ethiopians no longer refer to themselves by the Coptic name, having differences with the Egyptian Coptics. It is an unofficial holiday for Coptic peoples in Egypt.

According to the Fasli calendar of the Zoroastrians, this is the beginning of Paitishahem, the feast of bringing in the harvest.

The Most Holy Name of Mary is honored on this date, in memory of a victory in her name over the Turks in 1683.

This is also the changeable first day of the Chinese Harvest Moon Festival, also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Japanese Otsukimi. This celebration is a holiday in Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea and Taiwan.

September 13

In Lesbos, Greece, the finding of the True Cross used to crucify Jesus is celebrated on this date. In the year 326 C. E., the mother of Constantine went to Jerusalem and found the three crosses, the nails used in the crucifixion, and a title that had been attached to the cross of Jesus buried under a temple to Venus. This Christian empress later came to be known as St. Helen.

This is the second day of the Chinese Harvest Moon Festival. In Hong Kong, this is the Monkey God Festival.

Autumn Equinox Season Calendar

Another full moon festival takes place on this date in Sri Lanka. This Binara Poya Day, one of the Full Moon Days in Sri Lanka. Since this is based on the phases of the moon, the date is changeable.

The Romans held the Banquet of Venus on this date, in honor of her origins as a goddess of gardens and vegetation.

In ancient Greece, this was the first day of the Eleusinian Mysteries, also known as The Day of Assembly when the procession from Athens to Eleusis took place.

September 14

This is the third day of the Chinese Harvest Moon Festival and the second day of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In Greece, this was the day when initiates bathed in the sea before donning fresh, clean clothing for the Mysteries.

The ancient Greeks honored Artemis Agrotera, Artemis of the Field, on the fifth day of Boedromion, with a sacrifice and a feast.

This is also The Day of the Holy Nut in England. Hazel nuts that are collected on this day have intensified magickal properties. The English also celebrate Holy Rood Day on this date, in memory of the rescue of the True Cross by Emperor Heraclius of Constantinople when it was stolen by the King of Persia in 614.

September 15

This is a popular date for Central American Independence Days. These are celebrated in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras. In Mexico, this is the first annual independence celebration called

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Noche del Grito, or Night of the Shout of Freedom. This Shout is said to have been made at midnight on the 15th.

The Japanese celebrate Keirou-no-hi, or Respect for the Aged Day, on this date. In Slovakia, the people honor the Christian Mary, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. Her seven sorrows are the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of her son Jesus in the temple, meeting Jesus carrying the cross, the Crucifixion, receiving his dead body, and his burial/the closing of his tomb.

This was supposedly the time when pigs were sacrificed during the Eleusinian Mysteries. Some sources suggest that altars were built around trees and offerings of barley were made on this date as well.

September 16

Mexico celebrates its independence for the second time today, on its Independence Day. This is also celebrated in Papua New Guinea.

On the Malaysian island of Borneo, in Sabah, this date is Malaysia Day, when the Federation of Malaysia was formed. The birthday of the Governor, Yang Di Pertua Negeri, is another official holiday on this date.

This is St. Ninian's Day in honor of a British Bishop that was very popular in Scotland. His shrine at Whithorn and his cave nearby at the seashore remains popular sites for pilgrims.

This is the fourth day of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It was said to include a procession honoring Demeter.

September 17

This is the fifth day of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is believed that matrons carried baskets filled with sacred

Autumn Equinox Season Calendar

objects and symbols of the season on a torchlit march in symbolic search for Kore/Persephone.

September 18

Chile celebrates its Independence Day on this date. This is also St. Sophia's Day (some sources say this should be celebrated on September 30).

Rosh Hashanah can begin on this date, depending on the lunar Jewish calendar. This first day of the Hebrew New Year is also known as Judgment Day and the start of the Seven Days of Awe, days of repentance.

When the equinox occurs on the 21st, this is the beginning of the Buddhist Higan-e, the Ceremony to Reach Enlightenment.

On this night of the Eleusinian Mysteries, one last procession crosses two bridges. At the first, they encounter the character of Baubo, an old woman who is said to have attempted to cheer up Demeter in her search. At the second, they are challenged before entering the Initiation Hall.

September 19

Independence Day is honored on this day in St. Kitts and Nevis with festivals and celebrations throughout the entire week.

In Colombia, this moveable holiday is Dia del Amor y la Amistad, kind of like the American St. Valentine's Day. On this day, Colombians celebrate love and friendship.

The Greeks celebrate the birth of Hippocrates on this date. The Eleusinian Mysteries entered into a day of games and races today.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

September 20

The Second Initiation of the Eleusinian Mysteries is believed to have taken place in caves.

September 21

Another group of Independence Days occur on this date in Armenia, Belize, and Malta.

The birth of Muhammad, Prophet and Founder of Islam is often celebrated on this date. However, various sources give the date of his birth as the twentieth of April or August. His name can appear as Mohammed or Mahomet. Muslims observe Mulid al-Nabi today.

This is the day of the Orthodox Christian Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This feast is believed to originated with the Cult of the Mother of God in the sixth century. It is largely an Eastern Orthodox festival and is not found in all Western Christian calendars. In those Western calendars that do include this feast, it is normally celebrated on the eighth of September.

This is one of the most common dates for the Autumn Equinox. This is when celebrations such as Mabon, Alban Elfed, and the Japanese Shuubun-no-hi take place. Navratri, the Durga Puja, can also begin on this date.

In the Eleusinian Mysteries, this is believed to have been a day of water-pouring rituals.

September 22

Here we find another Independence Day in Bulgaria. This is also the anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic in the western African nation of Mali.

Autumn Equinox Season Calendar

September 23

This was the target date for Pagan Pride celebrations in the year 2000. If celebrations cannot take place on the target date for any given year, it is requested that they occur sometime during the last two weeks of September or the first week of October.

September 24

In many Spanish-speaking countries, Our Lady of Las Mercedes (Our Lady of Mercy) is honored today. She is also known as Our Lady of Ransom and her celebration on this date commemorates the founding of Order of Our Lady of Mercy in Barcelona, Spain.

For many people, this is Obatala's Day, in honor of one of the most important of the Yoruban deities: the Orisha of peace, harmony, and justice. Obatala was syncretized with Our Lady of Las Mercedes in Santeria. He is a creator god and the first Orisha to come into being. Some paths see Obatala as female or as androgenous.

In South Korea, this is Ch'usok or the Harvest Moon Festival.

September 25

Rwandans celebrate Kamarampaka Day. This festival commemorates the end of the monarchy in this African nation. In Obwalden, Switzerland, this is St. Nicholas Day.

This is also the date of the death of a Welsh Saint, Cadoc, who founded the Church of the Stags, another Mabon season symbol.

The ancient Greeks honored the Nymphs along with Gaia, Hermes, and the River God on this date.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

September 26

The Mid-Autumn Day celebrated on this date takes place in Scotland. It is generally considered to be the beginning of the rut, mating season for deer.

September 27

St. Vincent de Paul's Day is celebrated in Madagascar. This is the anniversary of his death in Paris in 1660. After having been captured by Turkish pirates and sold as a slave, he devoted himself to improving conditions in prisons, establishing hospitals, and serving the poor.

On the Sunday before Michaelmas in the Hebrides, wild carrots are gathered in a very ritualistic fashion by women and girls during the festival called Gathering St. Michael's Carrots. After being tied into bunches with three red threads, they are given to guests on Michaelmas Day.

Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, begins at sundown on this date when Rosh Hashanah occurs on September 18. The Baha'i celebrate the Feast of Masayyat on this date.

September 28

The Finding of the True Cross by St. Helen is celebrated on this date in Ethiopia.

This is Michaelmas Eve. In parts of Scotland, preparations for Michaelmas Day include the slaughter of a perfect male lamb, and the baking of Michaelmas cakes. In parts of England, grain is scattered for wild birds and great bonfires are lit.

Autumn Equinox Season Calendar

September 29

This is Michaelmas or St. Michael's Day. It is the feast day of St. Michael and the angels.

Since Michael was syncretized with the Yoruban Elegba in Santeria tradition, this day is sacred to him as well. Elegba is the divine messenger that is called upon first and last for any working with the Orisha. He is the deity of the crossroads, also called Eshu Elegbara

October 1

Here we find a pair of Independence Days, one in Cyprus and the other, lasting for two days, in Tuvalu. Tuvalu was formerly known as the Ellice Islands, a group of nine coral atolls in the South Pacific.

This is the second day of Rosh Hashanah. Also, in Singapore, this is Children's Day, celebrating grade school children. Children in public elementary schools may get the day off and it is often celebrated with gifts the night before.

Jashan-e Mihragan, the Zoroastrian Festival of Mihragan, falls on this date according to the Fasli calendar.

October 2

Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi was born on this date in 1869. It is a national holiday in India.

This is the date for the Jewish festival of Sukkot in the year 2001.

October 4

This is the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Animals. His respect and caring for animals is honored across national and religious borders.

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

October 5

On this date in 1989, the fourteenth Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

October 8

This is a national holiday in the United States, known as Columbus Day, in honor of the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus. In recent years, many people have rejected this holiday for two reasons. The first is that Columbus did not “discover” the “New World.” The other reason is because of the effects that colonization had on the native peoples of these lands.

October 9

Leif Erikson Day is celebrated on this date in the United States. The date was proclaimed by former President George Bush in 1991.

Wildlife Resources

If you find an injured or orphaned animal, contact a local wildlife rehabilitator as soon as possible. They should be listed under Wildlife in the Yellow Pages. Veterinarians are likely to have contact information on hand. Other resources are your state's Department of Game and Fish, Division of Natural Resources, or Division of Wildlife. The following national resources should help you find rehabilitators in your area.

International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council

<http://www.iwrc-online.org/>

IWRC

4437 Central Place, Suite B-4

Suisun City, California 94585-1633

707-864-1761 Fax 707-864-3106

National Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association (NWRA)

<http://www.nwrawildlife.org>

14 North 7th Avenue

St. Cloud, Minnesota 56303-4766

Phone

(320) 259-4086/Email nwra@nwrawildlife.org

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Information Directory

<http://umn.edu/~devo0028>

Internet only

How You Can Help

If you really must pick up a wild animal, be extremely careful when handling it. Keep it in a closed cardboard box that allows in air and does not get too cold or too hot. Keep it in an area that is as quiet as possible and do not feed it. Do not use any physical means to care for injuries. The best thing you can do is send loving, calming, healing energy and pray for it.

Write down when and where you found it, why you picked it up, and your contact information. Some times the rehabilitator needs additional information. Often we just like to let people know what happens to the animal they try to save.

If you find a baby animal, the first thing to do is determine if the animal is truly orphaned. It is normal for adults to leave babies while they search for food. Baby birds will be left in a nest; baby mammals may be left hiding in some grass or bushes. These animals are not abandoned and it is best to leave them alone. Watch from a distance if you are afraid the parents cannot return because in most cases, they will not return if you are there. Keep in mind that the parents may be away for several hours.

There is still an old myth going around that parents will abandon babies if humans touch them. This is simply not true in the vast majority of cases. If you find a downed nest with eggs or young, try to replace it. Chances are good that the parents will return to care for their young. If you find an uninjured chick that cannot fly back to its nest, do

Wildlife Resources

your best to replace it in the nest. Watch the nest from a distance and if the parents do not return within a few hours, contact a rehabilitator.

Young animals rely on their parents to varying degrees, often for a year or more after birth. The fact that you see a fledgling trying out its wings on its own or a young mammal wandering around does not mean it has been abandoned. Taking this animal home is not likely to be the best thing for it unless you know the parents are captured, injured, or dead. In fact, your interference can mean a death sentence in some situations.

Even though it is illegal for non-permitted people to keep wild animals, each year many well-meaning humans take in animals that they believe they can help. Often they will release these animals; sometimes they keep them as pets. The intent behind most of these actions is admirable. However, factors such as improper diet, lack of proper exercise, inability to evade predators, and habituation or imprinting can result in an animal's death once it has been released.

I picked up a small falcon once from a residence in a city. The bird had been kept as a pet in the house. He had brittle feathers that were not coming in correctly. He did not have sufficient room to fly enough to build up his muscles and was very weak. I got him just in time, before bone disease set in from the lack of certain minerals in his diet. Had these people simply released the bird, he would not have survived. I urge you to consider this when making the decision to take it on yourself or call a rehabilitator. This little guy was lucky. I have had others that were not so fortunate.

Mabon Links

There are many websites that offer rites, symbolism, and personal musings on the Mabon festival. I apologize to all those whose sites did not make it onto this list because each one is wonderful and informative. These are sites, usually with more than one page, that offer something a bit different the majority I have seen. I also did not include those that can be accessed another listed site.

Autumn

<http://www.geocities.com:0080/Athens/Forum/9800/autumn.html>

Joyous Mabon

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/4885/mabon.html>

Mything Links: Autumn Greetings, Customs, and Lore

<http://www.mythinglinks.org/autumnequinox2000.html>

StormWing's Mabon Lore Page

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2007/mabon_lore.html

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

Fall Foliage

New England Foliage Central: Your Autumn in New England Headquarters

<http://gonewengland.about.com/library/blfoliagecentral.htm>

Leafpeepers.com: Fall Foliage Reports and Autumn Leaves

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

Mythology

Egyptian Mythology

http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/egyptian_mythology.htm

Inanna's Descent

<http://www.mindspring.com/~mysticgryphon/descent.htm>

Mike Nichols' Harvest Home

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Index

A

Abbots Bromley, 76, 259
acorn, 84, 98, 101, 213, 218
Adon, 53, 60
Adonis, 53, 60, 91, 259
Akkadian, 59
Alban Elfed (Elued), 11, 42, 100, 111-112, 114, 134, 246
altar, 69, 71, 92, 98, 101, 105, 109, 114, 118-121, 123, 130-131, 164, 173, 190-191, 244
America, 2, 11, 13-14, 17, 32, 40-41, 73-75, 77, 79, 82, 84, 90-92, 98, 146, 189, 198, 223-224, 226, 237, 243, 245, 257, 260, 263, 266, 268
amulet, 64, 162-165
ancient, 9, 13, 25, 27-28, 30, 32, 38, 41-44, 48, 50, 54, 57-58, 62, 64, 66-67, 74-75, 77-81, 84, 90, 93-94, 130, 178, 180, 191, 198, 201, 220-221, 224-225, 227, 232, 233-238, 240, 243, 247, 260-262, 268
Aphrodite, 52-53, 56, 60, 235, 263
apple, 1, 11-12, 23, 25, 37, 50, 84-86, 98, 100-101, 105, 107-109, 136-138, 150-152, 154, 156-159, 179, 191-193, 202, 213-214, 221, 262
Arawn, 67, 79
archangel, 39, 56
Asatru, 41, 159
Ashtoreth, 61, 91, 148
Astarte, 60-61, 89
aster, 86
augury 177-178, 203
Awen, 219

B

Babylonian, 59, 84
Bacchus, 27-28, 52, 88-89, 93, 154
Barleycorn, 44, 47, 122, 135-136

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

benzoin, 86, 98
Berry, 149, 156
bird, 56, 73-74, 76-77, 82, 172, 174-177, 201, 207-208, 220-221, 225-226, 248,
252-253, 267
blackberry, 154-157
blackbird, 75-76
blessing, 16, 21, 24, 31, 36-37, 42, 87, 90, 99, 109-111, 113, 115, 117-118, 120,
122-125, 131, 133, 138-139, 143, 154-155, 161, 163, 167, 172-173, 176,
184-186, 193, 202, 228
bottle, 158, 161-162, 204-205, 215
Buddhist, 32-33, 245, 267
Burial, 80, 94, 165, 213, 239, 244
butterfly, 82-83

C

Carnbane, 238
Carrowkeel, 238
Casa Rinconada, 237
cedar, 86, 98-99, 118, 164, 170, 215
Celt, 42, 64-65, 79, 190
Chaco Canyon, 237
chamomile, 87
Chichen Itza, 236
chile, 12, 25, 70, 139-141, 144-146, 189, 196-199, 245
China, 30-31, 267
Cernunnos, 65-66, 76, 80-81, 103, 105, 107-108, 129, 145-147, 153-154, 191,
193-194, 196, 209
Ceridwen, 68
color, 11-12, 14, 25, 69, 70-71, 74, 83, 98, 101, 114, 119, 153, 159, 166-167,
183, 189, 192-195, 201-204, 221, 222-223, 225
corn, 18, 26-27, 44, 50, 56, 87, 98, 137-138
cornucopia, 11, 14, 93-94, 121, 123, 138, 174, 193
Culhwch, 64, 72, 75-77, 79

D

Dagda, 67, 79, 224
Demeter, 28-29, 48-50, 55, 68, 79, 81, 90-91, 93, 129, 143, 154, 244-245
Dionysus, 11, 27-29, 52-53, 55, 66-67, 81, 88-89, 93-94, 129, 154, 261-262
dreamcatcher, 166
druid, 42-43, 65, 68, 76, 78, 88, 95, 109-110, 134, 219, 224, 229, 240, 260,
262, 265
Dumuzi, 57, 59, 129, 154, 156
Durga, 33-34, 61, 246, 264, 267

Index

E

eagle, 77-78, 81, 102, 130
ecology, 221, 260, 265
Egg of Protection, 163
Elemental Prosperity Weaving, 170
Eleusinian, 28-29, 46, 50, 68, 243-246, 261
England, 15-16, 19-20, 39, 85, 238, 243, 248, 260, 265
Equinozio di Autunno, 11, 38

F

Fays, 83-84
fertility, 14, 37, 47, 49, 56-58, 60-61, 63-65, 76, 81-82, 87-88, 90, 92-93, 97,
115-116
foliage, 25, 225, 256
frankincense, 87, 89, 99, 164
Freyja, 41, 63, 115, 159, 263, 266
Freyr, 41, 63, 116, 263

G

Gaul, 65
Give-Away, 121, 123, 185-186
Gnomes, 83
gourd, 23, 88, 94, 98, 101, 201, 207-208
grape, 11-12, 25, 27-28, 35, 41, 51-52, 70, 88, 137-138, 144, 154, 156, 191,
193, 201-202
Great Britain, 39
Greek, 27, 29, 48-50, 52-53, 60, 81, 83, 93-94, 224, 243, 245, 247
Green Man, 48, 66-68, 81, 259
Gulons, 83

H

Hades, 28, 48-49, 53, 90
harvest, 11, 13-14, 16, 19, 25, 27, 30, 32, 35, 38-44, 47-49, 56, 59, 63-64, 66,
69, 77, 81-82, 84, 87-88, 90, 99, 101, 104-106, 111-117, 125-129, 131-
132, 137-138, 143, 148, 154, 156, 172-173, 190-191, 193, 198, 200, 210,
214-215, 217, 222, 226-229, 231, 241-243, 247, 256, 264, 267
Harvest Home, 16, 40, 256
Harvest Moon, 30, 32, 227, 242-243, 247, 267
Hathor, 54, 88, 91
hazel, 23, 78, 88, 179, 223, 243
Higan-e, 32-33, 35, 245, 260
Hindu, 33, 61-62
Home Protection Amulet, 163
hops, 88

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

I

Inanna, 57-60, 63, 129, 256
Inca, 25-27, 235-236, 261
incense, 33, 86, 90, 98-100, 125, 163, 169
India, 33, 62, 249
Ireland, 178, 238
Ishtar, 59-61, 63, 93
Isis, 55, 129
Israel, 35, 239, 265, 268
Italy, 38
ivy, 44, 66, 89, 179, 196, 198

J

Japan, 31-32, 242, 244, 246, 259, 264
Jewish, 35-37, 143, 184, 245, 248-249, 265
Jimainos, 84

K

Keirou-no hi, 244
Knowth, 78, 238
Kore, 48-50, 245

L

leaves, 25, 66, 70, 83, 98, 101, 125, 127, 156, 173-174, 189-190, 196, 198,
200, 203, 213, 221-224, 256
Letting Go, 184
Libra, 51
Lugh, 40, 180, 210, 227-229, 234, 264

M

Macchu Picchu, 236
Magickal Habitats, 174
mask, 181, 210, 211
Massasoit, 16, 18, 20, 266
Mexico, 82, 84, 101, 236, 243-244
Michael, 39-40, 56-57, 248-249, 262
Michaelmas, 39, 86, 248-249, 265
migratory/migration, 73, 82, 142, 173, 177, 203, 221, 225-226
Mihragan, 34, 62, 249
Min, 56, 93
Mithra, 34, 62, 262
Mitra, see Mithra
myrrh, 99

Index

N

Navratri, 33, 61, 246
Newgrange, 78, 238
New Zealand, 239, 268
Nine Nights, see Navratri
North America, 14, 77, 79, 84, 90, 92, 226, 237, 260
Norse, 41, 63, 85, 114, 159, 178, 223-224, 261
nut, 1, 31, 38, 78, 88-89, 98, 137-138, 148, 152-153, 193, 214, 221, 243

O

ogham, 85, 88-90, 93, 169, 178-179, 203, 223-224
Olwen, 64-65, 76
Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, 43, 134, 219
Osiris, 55-56, 66-67, 89, 93, 129
Otsukimi, 32, 242
owl, 77

P

Pagan Pride Project, 45, 124, 134, 263, 266
Persephone, 28-29, 48-51, 53, 56, 68, 90, 94, 143, 245
Persia, 62, 243
Peru, 26, 236, 263
petroglyph, 75, 237-238, 240
Phoenician, 60-61
pig, 28, 50, 67, 79-80, 244
Pilgrim, 14-19, 40, 244, 263, 268
pine, 47, 89-90, 98-101, 137, 179, 196-197, 200, 213, 237
Plymouth, 14-16, 19-21, 41
pomegranate, 37, 49, 90, 98, 137-138, 143-144
Pomona, 50-51, 88, 154, 266
prosperity, 24, 37, 39, 71, 86-87, 89, 93, 161, 168-172
Prosperity Candle, 168
Prosperity Spell, 86-87, 89, 171
protection, 24, 26, 41, 63, 72, 76, 87-88, 90-93, 102, 108, 110, 113, 115, 117, 119, 122, 124, 161-165, 167, 173, 175-176, 179, 183
Protection Amulet, 162-163
Protection Bottle, 161-162
pumpkin, 70, 90-91, 141, 147-148, 201

Q

Qabalah, 68, 262

R

Ranuta, 56, 81

Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving

rattle, 88, 94, 118, 201-202
Rogem Hiri, 239, 268
rose, 70, 85, 91
Rosh Hashanah, 36-38, 90, 143, 184, 245, 248-249, 267
rue, 91

S

saffron, 91, 148
sage, 91, 98-99, 145, 163
salmon, 64-65, 78-79, 88, 142-143, 159
Scrying, 88, 161, 183
Shadow Meditation, 182
Siduri, 60
Sif, 41, 63, 97, 116
Situa Raymi, 25, 26
snake, 50, 56, 66-67, 81-82, 220, 226, 236-237
Solar Disks for the Birds, 174
Solomon's Seal, 267
spell, 50, 86-89, 91-92, 170-171
Spirit Ally, 77, 166
Squanto, 16, 18
stag, 39, 76-77, 247
Stonehenge, 235, 238-239, 267
stones, 71-72, 94, 136, 162, 202, 213, 220, 238-239
Sukkot, 35-36, 249
Sumerian, 57-58, 256
sun, 23, 26-27, 49, 54, 60, 62, 77, 92, 95, 109-111, 138, 146, 173-174, 180-181, 191, 193-194, 198-199, 202, 204, 208-212, 219-221, 225, 227, 229, 231-238, 240
sunflower, 92, 95

T

Tammuz, 59-60, 154
thistle, 92
Thor, 41, 63-64, 97, 115-117, 224
tobacco, 92, 174, 191, 196-197

U

United States, 14, 25, 70, 144, 149, 191, 223, 237, 240-242, 250

V

Vaishnava, 184
Venus, 51-52, 57-58, 86-89, 228-229, 234-235, 242-243, 269
Vertumnus, 51, 266

Index

vine, 23, 27-28, 51-52, 59, 70, 93, 179, 191, 196, 200
Vulture, 73-75, 268

W

Wapwait, 56, 87
weather, 205-207, 220, 225
wheat, 42, 44, 55-56, 93, 98, 128, 191, 196, 216-217
Wheel of the Year, 83, 95, 229, 238, 260
Wild Hunt, 41, 67, 76, 114
wildlife, 45, 173-176, 207, 225, 251-252, 260-261
Winter Nights, 41, 159, 266, 268
wolf, 39, 80-81

Y

yarrow, 93
Yom Kippur, 37-38, 248

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