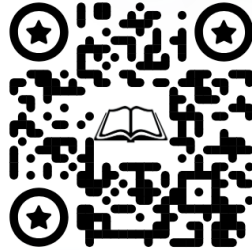


*May you find a path that fills your heart,
and sanctuary wherever you go.*



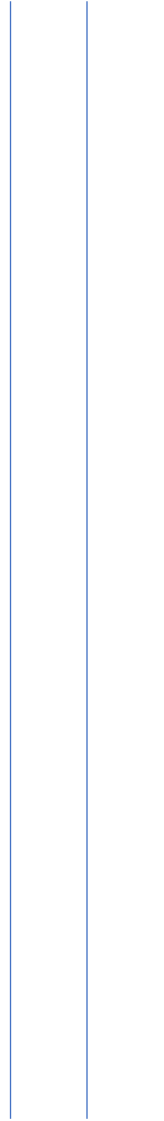
Bright Blessings, and Safe Travels!

Lughnasadh
Lughnasadh

Lughnasadh



By Ryan Robinson



May this bread be blessed,
 That all who eat be blessed and be whole.
 That they have health of body
 That they gain strength of spirit
 That they be protected against sickness
 And against the snares of their enemies.

May the salt of this bread abjure from them harm,
 May the milk of this bread bring to them health,
 May the eggs of this bread bring to them fortune,
 May the yeast of this bread help them ever rise again,
 And the wheat keep them ever nourished.

Hear me, oh Bragi, and grant me thy tongue.
 Hear me, Kvasir, and grant me thy blessings.

Hear me, oh muses, Calliope, Thalia
 Erato and Polyhymnia,
 Whisper softly in my ear.
 Grant me skill,
 and grant me craft,
 That my words may be pleasing
 To gods and men.

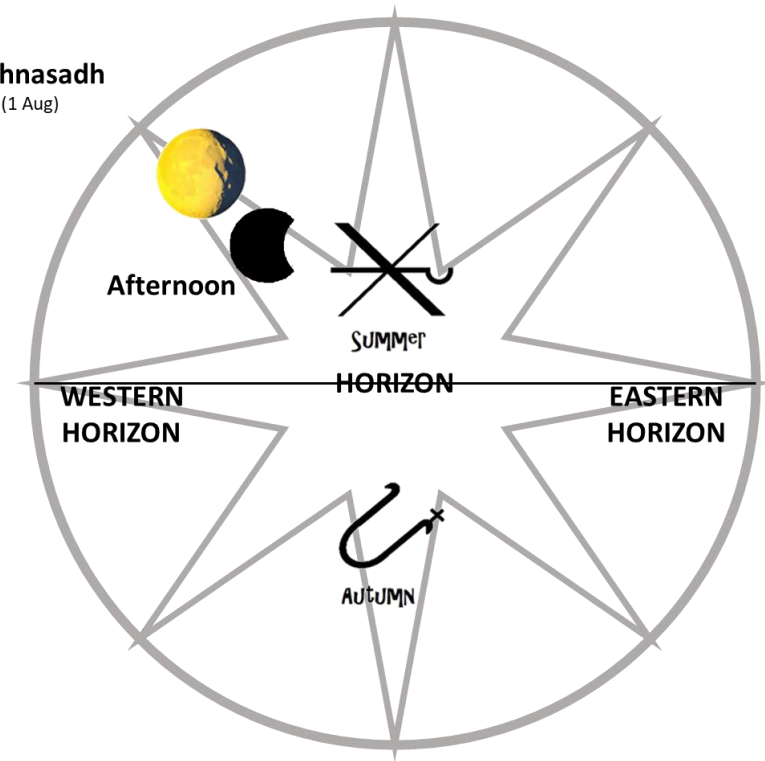
Kvasir,
 Kvasir.
 Where have you gone?
 Did you bring
 the poets song?
 Kvasir,
 Kvasir.
 Riddle for me;
 What have they in store,
 the weaving sisters three?
 Kvasir,
 Kvasir.
 Where will you go?
 You with the wisdom
 Beyond what mortals can know.

Hear me,
 Oh wind in the golden wheat.
 Hear me,
 Oh flame in the sun.
 Hear me,
 Nourishing soil under my feet.
 Hear me,
 Rain that makes the rivers to run.

You've granted spring planting
 and growth of the summer too.
 Soon you shall bring autumn's call.
 But before you bring in the winter,
 We ask time to harvest and gather it all.

Golden fields of grain shimmer,
 Nature's gifts abound,
 And bounty unfolds.
 Grown and gathered by
 our skills and talents
 And nature's gifts embraced.
 Under a shining moon,
 Bread freshly baked, warm,
 Feasts shared with love,
 Nourish our souls.
 As grateful hearts rejoice,
 Inspiration flows.

Lughnasadh (1 Aug)



Lughnasadh – Adulthood, wheat, ripening, reaping, life, and wealth.

First of the three harvest festivals, Lughnasadh comes in the highest heat of the year. The celebration originates in the time for the first gathering of wheat and other ripe fruits. This marks the beginning of the rewards for the labors of the year. While the full bounty of the year is still to come, it is a time when worries of hunger and cold seem distant.

It is a celebration of the fullness and richness of life, splendor crowned in the gold of ripe grains and fresh bread. It is the first burst of the richness to come.

What is Lughnasadh?

In the high heat of the year living things move into adulthood. Crops ripen, animals and people develop, and life flourishes. This is the season of first fruits. As the springtime comes with the breaking of the harsh winter season, the heat of high summer comes with the rush of harvests beginning. For a few months there would be hard work, but worry about food was at its lowest.

Harvesting grain before Lughnasadh was considered bad luck. Spring and summer offered other sources of food. While this allowed people to rely less on food stored away, those stores were still important. Needing to harvest before Lughnasadh meant that the previous year's grain didn't last as long as needed. Worse, it meant that the grain being harvested may not have fully ripened and could reduce the harvest.

As this first harvest is reaped for some crops, another may be planted. This summer planting is the hope of a second harvest before the winter comes. The focus of this transition is grain – wheat, corn, and rice being some of the most common. These second plantings help feed the community through the winter, but must take into account the soil and vary the demands placed on it.

For those who have gone abroad traveling, trading, and even raiding, the season is at its height. The heat beating down in all but the coolest climates making even the worst-tended roads and tracks passable. But, even as the heat rises, the days are already growing noticeably shorter. The steps that lead over far horizons must turn home soon to be back before winter, and must travel in haste to help with the heavier autumn harvests.

As grain is gathered it's divided into several parts. Unless some stores remain, a portion of it starts going into bread and being eaten. Another part is stored, to be drawn upon until the next harvest. The best of it is separated and stored carefully, to be used as seeds for next year.

In the never-ending cycle of life, looking ahead to the spring births for lambs, calves, and other livestock also means that this is the time to begin breeding for the next year.

Astronomical Cross Quarters

The Wheel of the Year was designed by the early practitioners of modern Pagan traditions as a unifying calendar. The Wheel as we know it was created by the late 1950s when the Wiccan Bricket Wood coven led by Gerald Gardner and the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids led by Ross Nichols united their calendars. Before this, the Wiccan calendar had been focused on the four Solstices and Equinoxes, while the Druid calendar focused on “cross quarters.”

Quarter-cross days are traditionally associated with the transition of the month. (February 2 Imbolc, May 1 Beltane, August 1 Lughnasadh, October 31 Samhain.) This placement is based on Christian and secular observances that have survived into the modern day.

Practitioners that are more interested in astronomical or astrological significance may adjust these dates, bringing them to the midpoints between the Solstices and Equinoxes.

Ostara (Vernal Equinox) – Sun at 0° Aries *approximately March 21st*

Beltane – Sun at 15° Taurus *approximately May 5th*

Litha (Summer Solstice) – Sun at 0° Cancer *approximately June 21st*

Lughnasadh – Sun at 15° Leo *approximately August 7th*

Mabon (Autumn Equinox) – Sun at 0° Libra *approximately September 21st*

Samhain – Sun at 15° Scorpio *approximately November 7th*

Yule (Winter Solstice) – Sun at 0° Capricorn *approximately December 21st*

Imbolc – Sun at 15° Aquarius *approximately February 3rd*

Thermastice

The Druid tradition marks the start of the seasons with the four fire holidays. This place the solstices and equinoxes as “midseason.”

Meteorologically, the seasons start at the solstices and equinoxes. The physics of solar heating creates a phenomenon called “seasonal lag” where a season’s weather is delayed by 4-8 weeks.

This means each season is reaching the height of weather for that season about time for the fire festival. Thus, Imbolc and Lughnasadh will be the coldest and hottest holidays. The term for this is thermastice.

Much like Litha and Yule are referred to as solstices because they are the extremes of the solar light, these thermastices are roughly the extremes of temperature for the year. Because there are so many other variables that determine the exact temperature, the day of Imbolc or Lughnasadh may not be the precise hottest or coldest day. However, the average temperature for the year is most likely to reach its extreme around these times.



Litha and Lughnasadh

Elemental fire is at its height in the arc from the solstice to Lughnasadh, from the longest day to the hottest. The dog days of summer are the furnace in which we are forged. With the end of adolescence comes the beginning of adulthood. The growth granted and demanded of the human body by our biology slows and then ceases as we enter a moment of quiescence and stability. The fruits we reap for the harvest festivals that start with Lughnasadh are the culmination of the seasons before. The choices we make in this transition are critical in setting the tone for the years to come.

Litha – Adolescence, light, power, leisure, and conflict.

Lughnasadh and Mabon

Lughnasadh begins the harvest season, as we reap, pick, and gather the first ripening of what has been planted and grown for the year. There may be time in these waning days for another planting, but when light and dark reaches its balance point at Mabon the harvest will reach its height. Lughnasadh is the first blush of the season of riches, but Mabon is its fulfillment. A time of labor bringing opulence of bounty. This is a season of thanksgiving and community. When families and friends come together to celebrate the strength of one being the strength of all and gather harvests in preparation for the coming season of darkness.

Mabon – Maturity, fullness, completion, plenty, gratitude, gathering, harvest, family, and community.

Lughnasadh and Imbolc

Lughnasadh is the beginning of the harvest season. The glorious and golden time of health, fullness, and celebration. Imbolc is the lean season, with cold, hungry dreams of the harvest before and hope for harvests to come. These times exist in tension with one another. The fear of the looming night to come drives the work of summer and hope for the day to come brings hope in the twilight of winter.

Imbolc – Longing, hope, intention, and preparation.



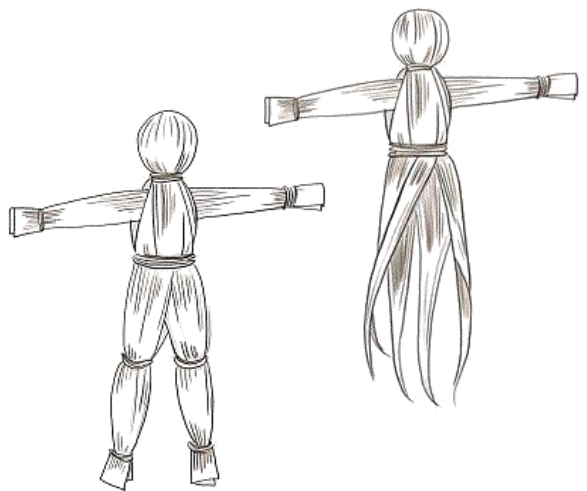
Decorating for Lughnasadh

Lughnasadh is celebrated with the yellows and golds of wild grass, wheat, corn, fresh bread, honey, and the wealth found in the first burst of the riches to come. A scattering of purple for flowers and blueberries give a celebratory splash of royal color amidst the gilded blaze.

With the beginning of harvest the tools of the season are often found at hand. Scythes, sickles, and reaping hooks all have their place of honor in this holiday.

With the gathering of grains comes fiber arts from parts of the gathered harvest. The making of corn husk dolls, straw dolls, and Welsh boarder fans each have their own particular significance.

Because the baking of bread and brewing of beer abound in this season, both the tools and results of these crafts are often found about.



Many Skilled

One of Lugh's titles is "the many skilled" for all the talents and crafts which he studied to become an expert. Few things are more fitting for the Sabbat that arrives just before students return to school.

Religion and spirituality center around seeking connection with the divine. This connection can come in many forms. The large umbrella of Paganism specifically embraces both the many forms and the even greater number of paths to reach those different forms. Individual traditions focus on different paths and different forms, and studying a path is about learning the skills that path offers towards reaching that connection.

One particular form of seeking connection with the divine is through "ecstatic experience." The word "ecstasy" originally comes from Ancient Greek, meaning 'outside of oneself.' In classical Greek literature, it refers to the removal of the mind or body from its normal function. It is described as a subjective experience of total involvement of the subject with an object of their awareness. There are many ways that people seek to reach this altered state.

While the term "altered state" is typically used to describe chemical alterations (drugs and alcohol), there are healthier methods. The most commonly discussed technique is through meditation. While most people think of this as sitting cross-legged and emptying your mind, there are many types of meditation. One path includes using what's referred to as a "runner's high." In this case, it is possible to experience this sensation through intense exertion combined with focus. Another way is through repetitive manual activity like whittling, knitting, or some other type of craft to find mental focus and spiritual clarity. Another term used to describe these forms is "flow state."

Lugh

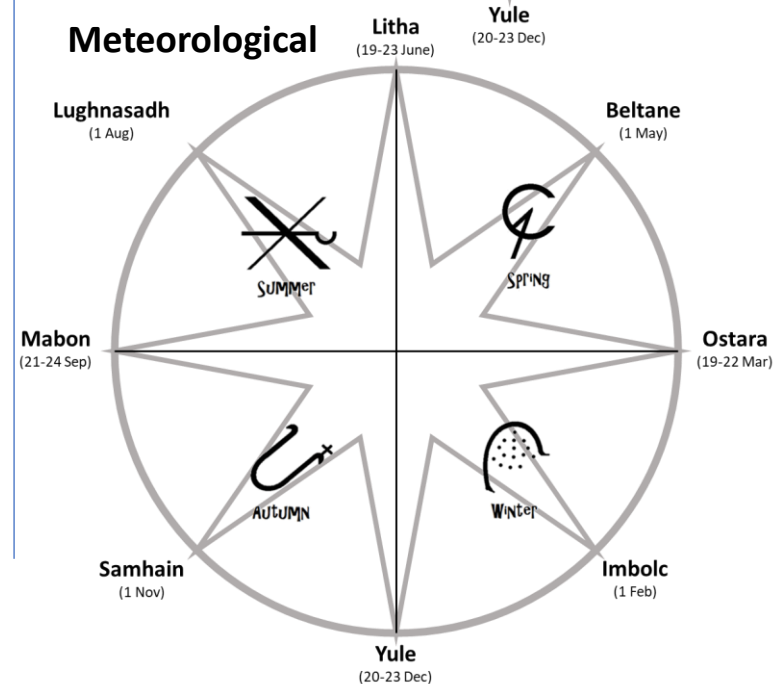
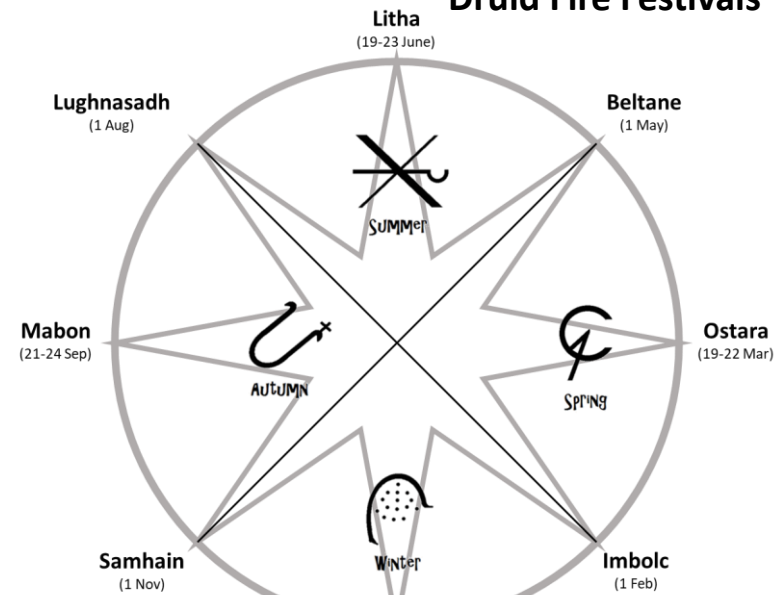
The holiday of Lughnasadh is named for the Celtic god Lugh, and in Irish Gaelic, the name means “Commemoration of Lugh.” This god is a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann; a group of supernatural beings also called the fair folk and related to the fae of Celtic lore.

Lugh, also called Lug, is portrayed as a warrior, a king, a master craftsman, and a savior. He corresponds to the pan-Celtic god Lugus, the Welsh Lleu Llaw Gyffes, and the Romans equated him to Mercury. Many parallels have been drawn between the person and stories of Lugh and those of both Loki and the Grey Wanderer aspect of Odin.

As a master craftsman and artisan, he is associated with skill and mastery in many arts and crafts. He was said to be a talented warrior, and also a poet, a blacksmith, sorcerer, crafter, and much more. In this aspect, he is celebrated by both learning new skills and honing skills to mastery.

Lugh also holds a role as king, where he has associations with aspects of rightful kingship, including not only rulership and leadership but oaths, truth, and the law.

The folklorist Máire MacNeill wrote that the rituals for the Festival of Lughnasadh centered around the theme of two gods struggling over the harvest. In the most common tradition, one god – usually called Crom Dubh – guards the grain of the season as his treasure. The other god – Lugh – must seize the grain for mankind. Sometimes, the grain was represented by a woman called Eithne. MacNeill says that the themes of Lugh struggling to bring grain to the people are a repetition of themes in earlier Irish mythology. One particular tale is that of Lugh defeating his grandfather – Balor, king of the Fomorians. In this case, the older king seems to represent blight, drought, and the scorching summer sun.



Celebrations for Lughnasadh

Perhaps the best known celebration of this holiday is the one for which Lammas was named. The “loaf mass” is for the first baked bread made from the first grain harvested in the season. These already special loaves are then blessed, broken into four pieces, and those pieces placed in each of the four corners of a barn to protect the grain. This has been celebrated as a Catholic ceremony for centuries. However, there are clear Pagan traditions of offering the first part of your labor and harvest to the spirits and the land for ongoing blessings.

As part of Lughnasadh celebrations, the ancient Celts would walk up mountains to gather berries and other foods. At the top they held events similar to the ancient Olympic games. These included horse racing, weapons contests, and athletic competitions. Each of these represented one of Lugh’s many skills. These events were called Óenach Tailten or Áenach Tailten, in modern times spelled Aonach Tailteann; which translates to the Tailteann Games.

According to folklorist Máire MacNeill’s writings in *The Festival of Lughnasa*, the holiday included, “A solemn cutting of the first of the corn of which an offering would be made to the deity by bringing it up to a high place and burying it; a meal of the new food and of bilberries [sometimes called European blueberries] of which everyone must partake; a sacrifice of a sacred bull,” and more.

Working on skills is one of the great traditions of the season. If you are a beginner who has been practicing a skill, the first fruits may be starting to show. If there’s something new you’ve been meaning to try, Lugh of the many skills is known for blessing those who seek to improve themselves. Whether you are interested in a craft, an athletic event like a foot race, or an intellectual pursuits like chess, this holiday is a time to celebrate all forms of skill and competition.

What’s in a Name?

The name of this holiday is one of the most apparently challenging among the Wheel of the Year. Lughnasadh means “honoring of Lugh.” However, that does little to help us pronounce the name. Further, various spellings arise that confuse the issue, including both Lughnasa and Lunasa. Lunasa is the most useful of these; it is close enough in pronunciation for most people. (Try Loo-nah-sah.)

Because of the issues with knowing how to say (and spell) all the extra consonants in Lughnasadh, many Pagans continue to use the name Lammas. This is a contraction of the Catholic Loaf Mass, though this celebration is often assumed to be an appropriation of earlier folk and Pagan traditions.

The wide issues with spelling and saying the name of this holiday has led to many jokes about it in the Pagan community. One is to confuse it with those camel-like, social herd animals from South America. Llamas rather than Lammas.

While Llamas have a variety of uses as domesticated livestock, including as pack animals and producing soft wool, they have little or nothing to do with the holiday aside from amusement. However, this is enough to occasionally get these beloved animals loosely and humorously adopted into celebrations.

Llamas are important beings in the mythology of the Aymara (Indigenous people in the Andes and Altiplano regions of South America). The Heavenly Llama is said to drink water from the ocean and returns the water as rain when it urinates. According to this mythology, llamas come from the water springs and lagoons and will return to them at the end of time.



Adulthood

The definitions of adulthood vary wildly over the course of time and place. Many of the most basic definitions of adulthood involved little more than the onset of the ability to have children or to physically appear to be an adult in height and size.

With the development of society, the period when these physical changes are created by puberty has become known as adolescence. Generally starting between 10 and 13 years of age, this period of growth and exploration is recognized as transitional between childhood and adulthood. With aspects of both and unique challenges and traits of its own. In the Wheel of the Year, adolescence is characterized as that bright time of the year, focusing on Litha as the summer solstice.

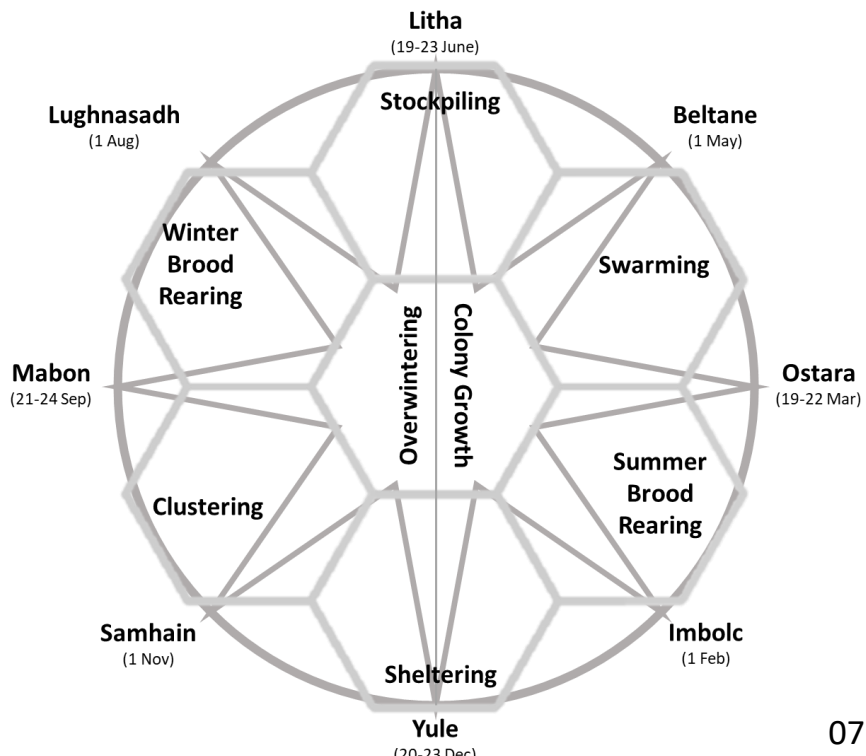
Adolescence is typically expected to end somewhere between 18 and 21 years of age. At this point, an individual has reached the point of physical maturity, though their personality is often still developing and they are establishing the course for their life. The human brain continues to develop until the individual reaches about 30 years of age. This is still a time of firsts, discovery, and learning, but the constant wonder of newness that fills childhood and even adolescence starts to slow. Those discoveries and firsts are the results of what has come before; skills and traits developed and nurtured starting to bear first fruits and grains on which we live our lives. Young adulthood is part of what the Wheel of the Year characterizes as the brighter half, but at Lunasa the days are getting shorter and harvest time is beginning.

At about 30 years old the human brain goes through a process where the speed at which new connections are made decreases and unused neural connections fall away. In many ways, we become who we most are and will be in terms of our thoughts and personality. Learning should never stop, but the way we approach things becomes much harder to change once we reach this point of maturity. We harvest what we have planted and grown, using the tools we have wrought. As we come to Mabon in the Wheel of the Year light and dark reaches its balance point, and the harvest is at its height. Mabon is an age of riches; the power of summer is fading towards the wisdom of age but, like so many things, at the equinox they sit in balance.

If you have set an intention earlier in the year and have been working with it through the seasons, now is the time to begin to reflect on how you have grown and what this work is bringing to you. Take some time to write down the ways your seeds planted at Imbolc have begun to become ripe and abundant.

While Litha is the high points of bee activity and swarming, it takes time for them to turn that rich nectar into honey. As with many harvests, the first flow becomes available around Lughnasadh and the full richness will continue into the Autumn season.

For many, the abundance of wheat and honey begins a season of brewing. The combination of skill-at-craft with these seasonal materials make this a time particularly suited to the activity.



Other Celebrations

In ancient Rome, Pomona's day of celebration was celebrated on August 13th. She was a popular minor Roman goddess of fruit & orchards, often known as the goddess of apples.

Many modern Egyptians celebrate Wafaa Al Nil or "Fidelity of the Nile" during August to observe the flooding of the Nile River. Part of this time is the Wag Festival which dates back to the Old Kingdom. (2572 – 2130 BC) This festival is dedicated to the death of Osiris, and is an observation for honoring the dead and their journey to the afterlife. In ancient times the dates shifted annually to match the flooding of the Nile River. It was eventually set during Thout, the first month on the Egyptian Coptic calendar.

The National Eisteddfod is an eight day event in Wales held during the first week of August every year. The Eisteddfod is a series of competitions that serve to showcase music, dance, visual arts, literature, and original performances celebrating the Welsh culture and language. The history of the Eisteddfod can be traced back to 1176, with the modern incarnation continuing since 1861.

In Cumbria and other parts of north-west England, Rush-bearings are observed on the Saturday closest to the 5th August. In the Middle Ages rushes were used as floor-covering. Many villages held a special summer ceremony when the rushes were harvested. In some villages, they made rush sculptures called bearings, and carried them in a procession.

In parts of Scotland the second Friday of August is the Burry Man's Parade. There is no record of the origins and purpose of this ritual, its practice has been continuous in the area since before written records. A local man is covered in burrs from a burdock plant before being paraded around the town. It's thought the parade was to frighten and ward off evil spirits.

Universal & International Infinity is held on the 8th day of the 8th month (8 August). This date was chosen for the similarity between the number 8 and the infinity sign. It is dedicated to celebrating and promoting Philosophy and Philosophizing for the ordinary person.

Seed Grain

We rarely think about it, but when we eat grains what we are consuming are the plant's seeds. Wheat, rice, and even kernels of corn are all potentially the next generation of plants. Those who cultivate grains would, therefore, set aside a stock of their harvest as "seed grain." Farmers would sift through the grains and find the best quality seeds they could and reserve them for planting.

This seed grain is a tiny supply that is kept as safe as possible. It is separated from the grain that is eaten, protected from dampness that could bring mold, and secured from places where pests could get after it. It is checked and inspected, worried over, and prayed over.

As food grows scarce in the heart of winter, the seed grain becomes a temptation. A source of rich food that could soften hunger for a night, or a few days. But the cost is eating hope for the next year. Reducing or destroying a harvest before it can even be planted. Sometime after Ostara the seed grain is brought out and given to the softened ground. A meal given away in hunger, in the expectation that it will come back manyfold. But, first, that hope must be tended through the winter like a candle through the dark hours of night.

While this golden holiday can make it seem like wealth is unending, especially in the modern age of abundance beyond season, this is also the moment to take stock and set aside the seed grain for the next year. In the joy and wonder of the abundant present is the only time we can afford to make those sacrifices our future selves will need and set aside a portion of our current wealth. It can be easy in these heady days to live for the moment, but what are you putting away and investing for a rainy day?

First Fruits

The idea of “first fruits” can be difficult to relate to. Few of us grow our own food. In many parts of the world, food is widely available regardless of season.

In the modern age most associate August with the start of school, return to work, and end of summer vacations. But each of these are things that can bring first fruits. Anything set aside as a symbol of progress can be viewed as an offering of first fruits. While on a vacation, ensuring that you find something suitable and giving it as an offering when you return can be a way of setting aside first fruits. Ensuring that you’ve done your summer reading before a new term at school starts is another example.

A common method of offering first fruits is to set aside the first part of any meal you make. Another is to ensure that some portion of crafts you make are offered. In many modern religions the idea of first fruits is what underpins tithing and offerings; the plates full of money that are passed around churches. As Pagans we can support our religious community, other communities we are part of, wildlife and nature preservation, or many other non-profit organizations. Even paying taxes can be viewed as a way of providing a portion of your fruits to the larger society; a community you are part of.

People often think of offerings of first fruits as always going to the gods. It is important to remember as Pagans that we often find the divine closer to home. Giving a meal to a stranger could be a gift to the Wanderer and giving a meal to a friend going through hard times is an offering to the community.

Remember that giving fruits is about stewardship and sustainability. The gods help those who help themselves, and it is up to us to set aside a portion of those first fruits for the future. That may be saving for a rainy day or as seed grain for another season.

The Jewish observance of Tisha B’Av commemorates a series of tragedies including the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem.

Ferragosto is an Italian holiday. The name is a contraction of the Latin *feriae augusti*: literally, “Augustus’s holiday.” Celebrated on the 15th of August, it was proclaimed by Augustus (the first Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar’s nephew and heir). The *feriae augusti* were originally a full month of continuous celebration, but was later reduced to a single day. Romans feasted and honored diverse gods and goddesses, particularly those associated with the harvest and the changing of seasons. Because of its status as public holiday during which many social strictures relaxed, Ferragosto also became associated with “female” matters (fertility, maternity, and children) because Roman women were able to use the time to worship the goddesses relevant to their own interests.

One of the important ceremonies among the people of the American Southeastern Woodlands was the Green Corn Ceremony or *puskita* (often called “Busk” in English). The Indian nations of the Southeastern United States – Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Timucua, and others – would use this as an expression of gratitude for a successful corn (maize) crop, their single most important food. Among the Creek, the Green Corn Ceremony was held between July-August and was linked to when the first corn crop became edible and the ripening of the second crop. The ceremony lasted between 4 and 8 days and was a time to rekindle a sense of the sacredness of life and community. Old fires were put out, the villages were cleaned, worn pottery was broken, and many spiritual activities undertaken.

Moon Day, sometimes called National Moon Day, is celebrated on July 20. This commemorates the day in 1969 humans first walked on the lunar surface.

The Blessing of Grain

At the beginning of the 21st century, we don't often realize how much food is simply available. The end of the 20th century was a season of harvest. While places in the world continue to be impacted by horrific starvation, they are most frequently the result of catastrophes. Sometimes these are natural catastrophes; floods, fire, and drought. Far more often, they are human catastrophes; war, greed, and cruelty.

This abundance exists because of a staple fact of our diet we often ignore and dismiss – grain. Grains are small, hard, dry “fruit.” Because of these features grains can be stored, measured, and transported more readily than most other kinds of food. Thus, the development of grain agriculture allowed excess food to be produced. This change would lead humans from hunter-gatherer lifestyles to permanent settlements and farming.

While the domestication and cultivation of grain occurred worldwide, the varieties of grain from place to place had a significant impact on the cultures in those parts of the world. From the prevalence of rice throughout Asian history to the dominance of wheat throughout Europe to the impact of corn (maize) on North America. Ultimately, this feature of our life which seems tiny and we so frequently forget has been the pivot on which much of history has turned.

Our ability to cultivate and increase the production of grain continues to have a major impact on our global civilization. In the middle of the 20th century, there was enormous concern about the human population outstripping the ability of the world to produce enough food. A scientist by the name of Norman Borlaug is credited with staving off starvation in much of the world by breeding new types of grains. Among his many accomplishments, he was credited with Mexico becoming a net exporter of wheat by 1963 and nearly doubling wheat yields in Pakistan and India between 1965 and 1970. His efforts have been credited with preventing as many as a billion deaths due to

starvation and resulted in multiple honors, including the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal.

Every sandwich, tortilla, bowl of breakfast cereal, or other seemingly trivial food you eat is a connection between you and the history and future of humanity's civilization.

At least 105,000 years ago wild grains were collected and eaten. About 12,000 years ago people in at least 11 different places around the world began using agriculture independently. The earliest evidence of small-scale cultivation of edible grasses is from around 21,000 BCE, and by around 9500 BC, a group of eight “Neolithic founder crops” – including types of wheat, barley, peas, lentils, chickpeas, and flax – were being cultivated in parts of what is now the Middle-East. Maize was cultivated in the Americas no later than 7000 BCE. Rice was independently domesticated in both China (by 6200 BCE), West Africa (by 1000 BCE), and numerous other places throughout history.

The two main types of commercial grain crops are cereals and legumes. Cereals are the more familiar of the two types, and include rice, wheat, rye, oats, barley, millet, and maize (corn). Well-known legumes include beans, soybeans, chickpeas, peanuts, lentils, lupins, mesquite, carob, tamarind, alfalfa, and clover. These two types of grains complement one another in both nutrition and impact on soil. There are other types of grains, including pseudo-cereals like amaranth, red amaranth, love-lies-bleeding, Prince-of-Wales-feather, quinoa, and buckwheat.

