

Southern Light Newsletter

Winter 2020



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Merry Meet!

We are the family team of Southern Light Newsletter

Welcome to our pilot edition, we hope you like it!

We are a pagan family, living in the beautiful island state of Tasmania, Australia. We've always enjoyed reading pagan and family resources, but noticed most resources for pagans are northern hemisphere-focused. And while there are a few great resources around for those like us in the southern hemisphere, we realised there was still a space for more.

Our aim is to create content aimed at pagans and pagan families of all ages. We will do our best to convert dates to line up with the southern hemisphere (where appropriate) so that you don't have to. We welcome contributions from the community, and if we do our job right we'll be creating a newsletter that we ourselves would appreciate reading.

For those who don't want/can't afford to pay for the seasonal newsletter, some of the articles will be making their way to our blog section

(**southernlightnewsletter.com/blog**). We'll also be posting other content in our blog that won't exist in the newsletter, so make sure to keep up with both!

If you want to give us some feedback, contribute to the newsletter or just get in contact generally we would love to hear from you. Either contact us through the website at

southernlightnewsletter.com/contact or send us an email at

team@southernlightnewsletter.com

Happy reading,

The Holly and The Ivy



For information on how to get future newsletters and support us please see details on the last page.

Up & Coming

Pagan Holidays for the Season

Here is a brief list of holidays for the season with dates for the southern hemisphere. Please let us know if there is a pagan festival you celebrate in the southern hemisphere that is not on here.

*

June 20-July 1

Yuletide in Norse traditions. Mother's night is the first night of the 12 nights of Yuletide which ends with Yule night. Some heathens chose to dedicate the remainder of the nights to certain deities and others just the general merry making.

*

June 21-22

The winter solstice, known as Yule among those that celebrate the Wheel of the Year but celebrated by many a name depending on what path you follow.

*

July 31

Disabolt, also known as charming on the plow in Norse traditions

*

August 1-2

Imbolc on the Wheel of the Year, it is a fertility festival commonly associated with an end to the coldest part of winter and the coming of spring.

Exact date 2020 is August 7th

*

August 2

Barri, a fertility festival celebrated in Norse traditions.



The Astar

An in-depth look at a single correspondence for the season



Pine

One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter.

- Henry David Thoreau -

The quintessential evergreen, pine is closely linked with the festive season and the cold months of the year. While here in the southern hemisphere, unlike our friends in the far north, evergreens are hardly rare. Yet of the pine, there is still a special pull for many of us. Their foliage is both soft and sharp and their heady fragrance has a spellbinding quality.

Some history

The word “Pine” can get confusing in its usage, given it can be used to refer to the Pinaceae family of over 220 plant species, or the Pinus genus within that, with half as many species. The common thread, however, is that there are a wide variety of different pines, scattered across the globe and often surviving in conditions that would kill other trees – from semi-arid deserts to some of the coldest environments to be found.

The pine tree features in many different folk tales throughout the world to various extents, from Japan, to Scandinavia, to Scotland. However, it didn’t come to be widely regarded, used, and fully decorated as a “Christmas tree” in the manner many of us think of (i.e. a full tree the size of an adult, adorned with both edible and pretty decorations), until the early to mid 1800s. That said, it had similar uses (e.g as waist-height trees, partially decorated, or unadorned but arranged with other evergreen plants) in various parts of the world’s Christmas celebrations for at least a few centuries before then – waxing and waning in their use, depending on the Christian views (of the time and place) on celebrations that may be seen as related to pagan practices.

Evergreens in a general sense have been used in pagan winter solstice celebrations for much longer. From the ancient Roman Saturnalia, to the ancient Egyptians, wreaths and other decorations utilising evergreen plants have been used throughout history. Indeed, this connection seems to sit well with humans throughout time and place. Between the coldest, darkest time of the year, and the evergreen plants, ever vibrant and full of life, spurning the cool dark days and proving that the year can begin anew regardless of the harsh conditions.

Magical properties

Element: Primarily fire, secondarily earth, masculine

Properties: Immortality, eternity, fertility, protection, cleansing, healing

The pine is associated to various extents with many different gods and goddesses. The gods of war Mars (ancient Rome) and Tyr (viking/germanic), the god of wine, agriculture, and fertility Bacchus (ancient Rome, for his fragrant pole of pine), and the goddesses of the hunt Diana (ancient Rome, crowned with a chaplet of pine) and Mielikki (Finnish), are just a few.

Pine is often used in spells and altars to bring about good health and prosperity, and to protect against bad energy and illness. In it's most basic form, this may simply be by hanging a small branch of pine over your doorway (inviting good energy and spirits inside), above an altar, or in your bedroom (with this being for protection against illness). Burning of pine needles and pine cones may help to cleanse the area and create an aura of protection.

Some consider pine trees to represent fertility, or happiness in romantic partnerships, due to the fact that some pine trees have their needles occurring in sets of two per fascicle. That is, each of the pine needles shares the same short twig with one other needle. Be aware, however, that this depends on the variety of pine tree – some varieties have up to five needles per fascicle. Take this into account, if this is important to your spellwork – you may want to specifically find a Scotch, Jack, Black, or Red Pine if this is the aspect of the pine tree you're focusing on, as each of these has two needles per fascicle.

Indeed, you could take this aspect of paired pine needles a step further in your spellwork. Perhaps you'd like to find needles from a pine tree with three or more needles per fascicle if your spell is relating to a polygamous relationship or group of friends. Alternatively, maybe see if you can find needles from the Single-Leaf Pinyon (*Pinus Monophylla*), the only pine tree with just one needle per fascicle, if you're creating a spell focusing on your own personal growth outside of other relationships. That particular pine is native to North America, but you may get lucky.

Pines native to Australia and New Zealand?

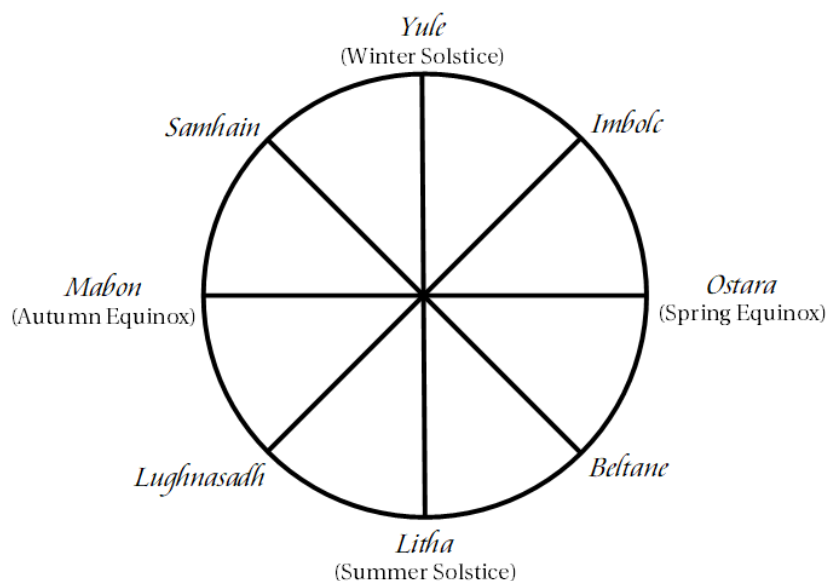
In Australia, we may be familiar with trees such as the Bunya Pine (*Araucaria Bidwillii*) and Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria Heterophylla*). But despite the word "Pine" in their names, while our various native conifers are part of the higher level Conifer division of plants, they're not within the Pinaceae family, but are within the neighbouring families of plants instead. Thus, they are not actually pine trees.

The story for New Zealand is similar. While New Zealand does have native trees that fall under the division of Conifers such as the New Zealand Kauri (*Agathis Australis*) and Kahikatea/White Pine (*Dacrycarpus Dacrydioides*), these are part of the neighbouring families of plants as well, not part of the Pinaceae family.



The Playroom

Something for the young ones



The Wheel of the Year

The Wheel of the Year is celebrated by many pagans globally and some of the holidays on the wheel are celebrated by many more. The idea of the Wheel as it is thought of nowadays dates back only to the 1950's! However it is based on pagan holidays that were known and thought to be ancient. Indeed, we know that the solstices were observed at least thousands of years ago.

If the cycle of seasons is a circle, it is divided into four by astronomical events. These are the oldest days of solar importance in the life of planet Earth, even when there was no life on earth these days existed.

First there are the two solstices – the winter solstice is the shortest day and longest night, and summer solstice is the longest day and shortest night.

Then there are the two dates where day and night are equal - we call these the spring and autumn equinox.

Also known as “the quarter days”, these days (tied to our seasons) are the result of Earth’s spin being tilted (leaning over) by 23 degrees. This tilt means that when the northern hemisphere – the top half of Earth – is in summer, it’s because that hemisphere is tilted towards the Sun, getting more sunlight and longer days. The top half being tilted *towards* the sun also means the southern hemisphere – the bottom half, where we live – is in winter, as it’s tilted *away* from the Sun, getting less sunlight and shorter days. Likewise, when it’s summer for us, it’s winter for the northern hemisphere.

So, we have the circle of the year broken up into quarters by astronomical events known as the quarter days. There are four other days of importance on the wheel of the year that are known as

“the cross quarter days”, and they break the circle up into eight roughly equal parts. The cross quarter days are high points of energy during the season. If the winter solstice (Yule) is the start of winter, then Imbolc is the coldest part of winter. After the start of summer at the summer solstice (Litha), Lughnasadh is the hottest part of summer. And so on. While the cross quarter days are not as old as the quarter days they are frequently considered of greater importance, especially if you live from the land as these are major events in the agricultural/farming year.

Now we have a circle of the year broken into roughly eight equal pieces that are usually about 6 weeks apart. It is easy to see a wheel in this imagery, and this is how the name “The Wheel of the Year” came to be. Some think the start of the wheel of the year is Samhain, and others think it is Yule. As it is winter now though we shall be starting with the winter solstice.

Winter Solstice (Yule)



The winter solstice is the time of the shortest day and the longest night. Many of what people associate with Christmas, people also associate with the winter solstice. Bringing evergreen boughs or tress into the house, exchanging gifts, wassailing, carolling, to name a few. This time is thought by many as the start of winter, where the sun is reborn. The sun continues to grow in strength and the days continue to get longer, right up until the summer solstice.

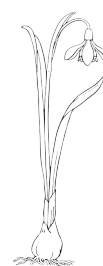
Imbolc



Winter’s cross quarter day, Imbolc is usually the end of the coldest time of the year and signals that a changes will soon be coming and spring is on the way. Imbolc is associated with candles, indoor fires (in fire places), cooking, and fertility for the coming spring. Brigid is a goddess that is usually associated with this time, however other goddess’ of hearth, home, kitchen, and life can also be part of Imbolc festivities.

Spring Equinox (Ostara)

Here the sun has grown in strength so that the day time is now equal to the night time and spring has begun! A very happy time of year, many of the things associated with the Easter holiday are also associated with the spring equinox. The beginning of new life, eggs, hares, early spring flowers, and baby animals of all sorts. This time of the year is a time of everything waking up after winter and being born. A wonderful relief after the confines of winter, we can start to open up and out again like a flower. This is also the time to start planting seeds (indoors or outside).



Beltane

The high point of spring, Beltane is a time of flowers in full bloom, animals growing up, bonfires, celebration, planting and the great rite. In the northern hemisphere Beltane is also known as May Day, and in either hemisphere its the time to dance the



maypole. This is a ribbon dance performed around a pole the ribbons are attached to. Through the dancing, the pole is wrapped in the ribbons, and then unwound by dancing the other way. At this time of the year the veil between this world and the other world (that of the Fae and the ancestors, gods and goddesses) is often thinner, so keep an eye out for them dancing around the bonfires with you, or moving in the garden or trees.



Summer Solstice (Litha)

Here the sun has reached its full strength and we have the longest day of the year. From here the sun's strength will reduce and wane, until the winter solstice when it is to be reborn. For now though, summer is here! Long days, holidays, warmth and the land all abuzz with life and promise. Campfires, bonfires, dancing, eating the fresh early fruits, fertility, and protection are all part of the summer solstice.



Lughnasadh

This is the first harvest festival and the height of the warm long summer. Around the time of Lughnasadh kids return to school and the energy around us starts to draw slowly inward and down as we acknowledge that from here autumn is coming and the summer starting to fade with the shortening days. The earth is starting to give us her bounty in summer fruits, grains and vegetables. This festival is associated with the Celtic god Lugh, who gives his name to this time of year. It is also associated with fire, feasting, and with the green man, in the guise of John Barleycorn, who is cut down and gives us food over the coming dark period.



Autumn Equinox (Mabon)

At the Autumn equinox we once again have equal day and night, but from here the sun's strength continues to give way to the dark, bringing longer nights. The two equinoxes are a balance in not only light and dark but also life and death, for as the spring equinox is the time of new life, the autumn equinox is the time for things coming to the end of their life. Plants are being harvested in the second harvest of the year, stone fruits and early autumn vegetables, grains of many kinds and mushrooms are starting to poke their heads up. The Earth's energy continues to move downward as darkness overtakes light.



Samhain

Samhain is the final harvest. The harvest of late autumn fruits and vegetables and traditionally animals as well. This is thought by many pagans as the time of the death of the old year and the beginning of the new. At this time of year (as with Beltane) the veil is thin, and the Fae leave our world for the summer land. Our ancestors are easier to reach now, and have been known to walk among us on Samhain eve. Much of the decor of Halloween is associated with Samhain, along with some of the customs too. As much as Samhain is a time of feasting and fires, it is mostly a time for remembering those who have passed on, whether we knew them or not. In this sense, the time of the dying year is a time of respect and love.

The Deck

For Teens and Others just Getting Started

Name That Theism

From Monotheism to Pantheism... Where do you fit?

I've recently discovered I'm best described as an eclectic pantheist pagan. Most people reading this newsletter may already be fully aware of the meanings behind the first and third word there. Many, I imagine, would have an idea behind what that middle word, "pantheist", means as well. But from those who have a beginning of understanding of that middle word, to those who grasp its full meaning but may appreciate a different viewpoint, to those who may be wondering if it means worship of Spanish bread, this article is for all of you.

Why this topic?

I've never been one to care about words that may usually be dismissed away as merely labels, labels that may be used to attempt to pin you down into a mould. I suppose I still don't grant these words any specific power over individuals – to prevent them changing and adapting, growing into new versions of themselves. However, having recently discovered the aforementioned string of three words that best describes my own personal beliefs, there's something undeniable about them that feels "right" to me. Perhaps, in sharing what I've found and researched, someone reading this will find some comfort in discovering the word (or words) that suits them too.

Monotheism vs Duotheism vs Polytheism

Monotheism is the belief in one God or Goddess. For many people in modernised, westernised societies, this is the most familiar form of religious belief.

Duotheism is instead the belief in specifically two divine beings. Often, though not always, these divine beings are a male God and female Goddess.

Polytheism is the belief in multiple divine beings – many separate gods and goddesses, all with their own personalities, each their own wills, each with their own *raison d'être* (reason for being).



The key point to note about all of these beliefs is that they are all more often than not represented by one or many "personal" gods or goddesses. That term – "personal" god/goddess – means that they are perceived as having a form, whether as a human, an animal, a plant, or some mix of these. They may be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, or all of the above, but you can (for example) imagine yourself sitting down to join them for a meal.

Pantheism and Panentheism

Pantheism is in stark contrast to mono/duo/polytheism. Pantheism is instead the view that everything is divine. You, me, animals, plant life, planets, stars, everything in between and the innumerable complicated interactions therein. Put another way, if there is a divine being, it is the universe itself, including everything it contains. Divinity is in everything, and we are all of us divine.

In one of its forms, pantheism is a belief system which also frequently appeals to scientific minds, thanks to this idea that the universe and all it contains *itself* may be considered divine. The universe's immensely vast chaotic ways that simultaneously follow order and laws – those that are understood, those that are yet to be known, and those that may never be truly grasped by the human mind – is easy to be seen as divine in and of itself when viewed in this light.



Panentheism (note the extra “en”) is similar, though with a subtle yet key difference. It is the view that the universe, reality itself, is contained within or otherwise inextricably linked to a higher, divine being. The very existence of this being is what brought forth the universe as we know it. It is the view that the divinity of this God or Goddess or other divine force permeates everything throughout the universe – it can be felt, and perhaps occasionally seen, by those such as us who live within it – however in panentheism, importantly, this does not make us *equal* to this divine being that contains or created our physical reality.

Crossover Between Radically Different Theisms

It may be hard to see at first, but there can be a large amount of crossover between these different core beliefs.

For one example, Christianity is primarily a monotheistic religion – there is the one and only one God. Our physical reality – the universe itself – was created by His will. From here however, depending on the exact Christian thought you follow, it may be easy to find yourself in the territory of panentheism.

God is separate – a higher form of divine being. We may feel His love, but we are not God. Where we live is His Creation. If He were to stop supporting Creation with his divine energy, Creation would cease to exist. Creation is not necessarily a part of Him, yet it is intrinsically linked to Him, with His life-giving and necessary energy permeating everything and everyone. This is a clear form of panentheism – one of many.

How Do I Decide?

The question here may become: If the walls between all these concepts are simultaneously both hard and fast, and soft and squishy, how do I decide which word to use for myself? Let's look at a few examples first.

I have a close friend whose beliefs at first glance would seem polytheistic. They observe many different gods and goddesses, particularly focusing their practices around the Celtic and (to a slightly lesser extent) Norse pantheons. When working with their deities, my friend may pick a

different god or goddess they work with each time, depending on what they're aiming to achieve/ what they're working towards. However, when asked, my friend would actually respond that they are duotheistic, as they personally view all the varied gods and goddesses as different aspects of the complicated primary female Goddess (the Triple Goddess) and changeable male God (the Horned God).

I have a different friend who is purely polytheistic. They connect and converse with the various Gods and Goddesses of their particular pantheon, and even have personable relationships with some of them.

For myself, at first glance I may also sound polytheistic. I talk about/refer to each of the gods or goddesses from any pantheon as if I believe in all of them, because I do. However, I refer to myself not as polytheistic, but as pantheistic. For me, I view everything – including non-sentient objects – as connected, and all as part of a greater divinity that is a part of all of us just as much as we are all a part of the greater divinity.

So then, whence come this apparent belief in these varied individual personal gods and goddesses? Let us for a second consider an intricately cut gemstone. By looking at each individual face of the gem, I see something new, and may gain something different from it compared to the last face I studied. Each of these gem faces is certainly as real as any of the others, and as real as anything else. However, in the end, I am still studying the same gemstone. Likewise for the varied divine beings. I view them all as real, and all worth studying to gain something different from them. I've even had interactions with some of them. Ultimately however, through my study and interactions with each one, I feel I gain a little more closeness to the underlying divinity that is a part of everyone and everything.

Funnily enough, that example of the intricate gemstone was originally an example used by the first friend I mentioned when explaining their beliefs to me – the friend who may at first glance seem polytheistic but feels that duotheism is much more closely aligned to their core beliefs. The fact that I was able to take the same starting point (seeming polytheistic), the same example (the intricate gemstone), but with a slight change in wording end up with a very different result (duotheism vs pantheism), is itself an excellent example in how much this depends on personal beliefs and feelings.

So then, how do you decide? It may take some introspection, maybe even some hard questions about what, at a base level, do you truly believe in. But ultimately, the answer comes down to: Whatever feels the most right for you.

The Lounge

For the adults and parents in the room.

Christmas or Yule

When and how? Just one, or both?

In the northern hemisphere, the question of celebrating Christmas or Yule may be a bit easier when it comes to non-pagan friends and family. There's some technical questions to answer, and the dates don't quite line up exactly, but if you're trying to be a bit more private about the affair then the dates are at least close enough for fudging the numbers a little.



In the southern hemisphere, things aren't so easy to move around. For our fabulous bottom half of the globe, Yule is just about as far apart from Christmas in the year as you can get. Discussions with friends and family can get a little strange when having to, for the first time, get other people's heads around the fact that the date for Yule is tied to the winter solstice, not just a date in December. Here, the decision to celebrate one or the other can potentially lead to hard-to-reconcile questions and emotions around logistics, work, time, and sometimes disappointment. How do you figure it all out?

Can't I just celebrate Yule in December anyway?

There are several answers to this question, all of them quite personal around your beliefs, and hence all of them are potentially valid.

If you're celebrating Yule because you're just getting started on your pagan journey, or you've decided you don't want to rock the boat with friends and family by "celebrating Christmas at the wrong time of year", or even if calling Christmas "Yule" just feels more pagan for you, then absolutely, go for it. Take this opportunity to explore the traditions of the yuletide celebrations in the more conventional time of the calendar year to do so.

However, if you're trying to follow the cycle of the year – observing the equinoxes and solstices, and maybe the other sabbats too – then it may get a bit harder to justify observing Yule a half-year after the winter solstice, let alone the fact that it's around the same time as Litha/the summer solstice.

Yule – a time to break from work

One of the hallmarks of the traditional Yule time is that, being in Winter, there wasn't much work to do outside at the time. Sure there's still some work, but for the most part it's a great time

of year to be able to sit indoors with friends and family, make hot chocolates to drink, share stories in front of the fire/heater, and generally be merry.

The southern hemisphere Christmas-time, on the other hand, is a time of year of more intensive management – watering, feeding, keeping track of supplies, etc. All of this is extra tricky if you're off-grid or otherwise trying to be self-sufficient with growing your own food or materials. The long story short is that summer is, when you really think about it, generally a poor time to be having your extended, potentially weeks-long rest.

It's actually thanks to this particular argument being a matter of practicality that this became the spearhead of our plea with friends and family to understand when we first started primarily celebrating Yule instead of Christmas. For the most part, this argument helped, but we needed more than just this to help our families get comfortable with the idea.

Celebrating Christmas



You may have friends or family that place a great deal of importance onto the day, for religious, sentimental, or other reasons. So you may be feeling immense pressure to “keep the Christmas spirit up” come mid-late December. Perhaps you or your family just enjoy the modern Christmas traditions regardless of wanting to embrace your pagan beliefs. It needs to be said that there's nothing inherently wrong with indulging in a bit of Christmas, particularly if it brings you joy or makes it easier to manage your social contracts.

If you're open to it (and have the time-off to spare during the year), one idea is to “celebrate” both Yule and Christmas at their respective times of the year. Christmas may simply be an easy to co-ordinate family get-together, and when seen in this light – where you just want to take a few days to see your family, especially if you don't believe they'll do the same for you over Yule – it may be easy to reconcile “celebrating Christmas” as merely enjoying catching up with your family with no particular religious or spiritual feelings attached.

Make time over Yule to see friends and family

If you're going to be celebrating only Yule instead of Christmas, one of the best ways you can help potential feelings of unease from your family and friends is by genuinely committing. The most obvious way to do this is by seeing if you can take time off work around Yule and travelling to see friends and family, if that's what you used to do for Christmas.

This is what we've been aiming to do for ourselves. For example, when we really got down to discussing it with my own mum (who doesn't hold any particular religious significance or feeling about Christmas), the main reason she enjoys Christmas is because it's a time when all of her kids (and her kid's respective partners and/or families) get together and just get to hang out for at least a week. Once we all agreed that we'd help with organisation so that this could still happen (just at a different time of year), she couldn't care less about the reasoning behind our change, as

long as that reliable time together as a family stuck. Note that this means we have to be flexible from time to time: This year we were going to be interstate for three weeks – for a festival for three days of that time, and to see everyone and have Yule together for the rest of it. Thanks to COVID-19, we’re currently in negotiations with our families of when and how to see each other instead – most likely later in the year, possibly even over the Christmas/December period.

This may get harder for people whose families hold a special significance for the Christmas time of year, but take the time to talk with your family and see what it is they really care about. You may get lucky, and even if you don’t you may still be able to come to some other compromise that works for everyone.

A discussion of kid’s gifts

Another potential hiccup in the change is that, if you have kids, they may care about all their friends getting gifts in December when they’re not. Discussions around the importance of “material things” being put aside for now, we have the Litha Fairy show up overnight. Litha, being the summer solstice, is relatively close to Christmas (if a little earlier), and the Litha Fairy has a penchant for delivering very simple handmade gifts. For example, last Litha, our eldest (five years old at the time) got a beautiful home-made ribbon stick for her to twirl around and play with outside.

We’ve found this idea works well. She’s not “missing out” from Christmas-time gifts, and it’s in a “pagan-appropriate” manner in the sense that we work it into our other Litha celebrations. Obviously, if you like this general idea but not the Litha Fairy part, you can alter it to fit your own particular beliefs.

There are also several ways to handle the idea of Santa. As far as we’re concerned, Santa delivers his presents for you at Christmas if that’s what your family primarily celebrates, or at Yule if that’s what you primarily celebrate instead. Santa doesn’t mind much either way – breaking it up through the year means he has that many less people he has to get to on that busy December night.

The decision of whether you want to include Santa at all in your own Yule celebrations is one we’ll have to leave to each family’s parents. You could also consider swapping him out for Odin, given Odin’s highly likely influence on the character who would eventually come to be known as Santa (a topic for another time).

As always, it comes down to you and your family

The decision may be easy if you have people in your own family who want to celebrate both holidays. Likewise, it may be easy if everyone in your family only wants to celebrate Yule. Even if it may cause some consternation with your extended family and friends, just keep working with them in an open and friendly fashion to help them see your point of view, and I’m sure you’ll be able to come into a great arrangement.

Even better with a change like this, is the fact that you get to come up with new family traditions, specific and unique to your own family’s beliefs. Years down the track, this will likely be the point that sticks with you, giving you warm thoughts through the cold winter nights.

The Kitchen

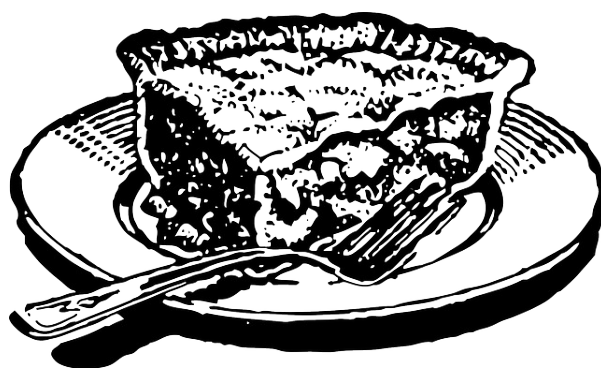
Recipes for the season

Yuletide Pork Pie

This is a favourite savory dish in our house that we only ever make around the winter solstice. It works well as a family pie or made into smaller single serves. This is our version, however the original can be found at recipesforapagansoul.weebly.com

Ingredients

- *1kg pork diced into small bite sized pieces
- *375ml of water
- *1 cup finely chopped onion
- *1 tsp. ground black pepper
- *2 bay leaves
- *1 tsp. dried winter savory (2 tsp. fresh)
- *1/2 tsp. dried rosemary (1tsp. fresh)
- *1/2 tsp. grated nutmeg
- *1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- *Salt and pepper, to taste
- *1/2 cup rolled oats
- *Pastry for two double crust, 24cm. pies
- *1 egg, beaten with 1 tsp. water, for glaze



Method

1. Toss salt, pepper and oil together in a bowl and place in a large pre-heated sauce pan, seal the meat on a high heat.
2. Add water and bring to the boil
3. Add onion, bay leaves, winter savory, rosemary, nutmeg and cinnamon, cover and reduce to a simmer for 1 hour 15 minutes. Stir frequently to avoid sticking adding more water if the mix dries out.
4. At the end of cooking time add rolled oats and cook, stirring constantly, for a couple of minutes. Remove bay leaves and cool.
5. When lukewarm pre-heat the oven to 220 C, line two 24cm pie dishes with pastry and divide the filling between the dishes.
6. Brush the outer edge of the pastry with the beaten egg, place top crusts on the pies and press gently around the edge. Trim the pastry, crimp the edges and cut some steam vents in the top, brush with beaten egg and place in the oven.
7. Cook at 220C for 15 minutes then reduce oven to 180C and bake for a further 25 minutes, or until the crust is golden.
8. Remove from oven and let cool for 15 minutes or so then serve

Enjoy!

Braided Bread

Freshly baked bread is always wonderful but it's scent is particularly inciting in winter. This braided bread is great for sharing (easy to pull apart) and savory. It uses rosemary for seasonal correspondence however you could always change that out for cinnamon and dried fruit if you want something on the sweeter side.

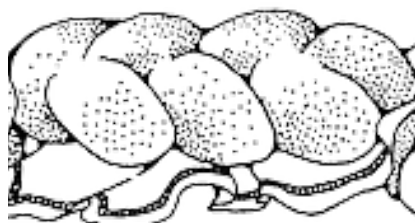
Ingredients

- *1 1/2 tablespoon of dried rosemary (or 2 tablespoons fresh)
- *2 1/4 teaspoon of active, dry yeast
- *1 teaspoon salt
- *1 1/4 cup water
- *1/2 tablespoon olive oil
- *3 cup flour, all-purpose
- *1 egg white and tablespoon of water

Method

1. In a bowl mix rosemary, yeast, salt, water, and olive oil.
2. Add 2 cups of flour and mix in. Add more flour if needed, you want the dough to be soft but sticky.
3. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for approximately 8 minutes.
4. grease a bowl with more olive oil and put dough in it, flipping it to ensure both sides are greased.
5. Cover with a warm damp tea towel and let the dough rise for 1 hour in a warm room.
6. Punch down dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for a further 5 minutes.
7. Divide dough into 3 equal parts and let rest for 10 minutes.
8. Grease a tray or baking paper and roll each part into 45cm ropes. Transfer to tray, pinch together ropes at the top and braid, pinching together the dough at the bottom. Tuck ends under and let rise in a warm room until doubled in size.
9. Pre-heat the oven to 230 C. Lightly beat the egg white and water and brush onto loaf. Bake for 30 minutes or until browned and hollow when tapped.
10. Let cool before consuming or it becomes gummy.

Enjoy!



Mull It!

Mulling drinks can be dated back to the Roman conquest in the 2nd century AD. Spices from across the Roman empire were used to flavour local drinks as they were warmed, and the practice stuck. Cider, mead, and wine are always nice, but during a cold winter night a mulled version of these goes down a treat. Below is a short overview on the flavouring and heating of mulled drinks, play with it and create your own family favourite.

Base

The most commonly mulled drinks are red wine, cloudy apple cider, and still honey mead. You could also try mulling other alcoholic drinks (why not) or for non-alcoholic versions try fresh apple juice as a base (cloudy if you can), or a grape juice.

Flavours

When picking flavours to go with the base drink the main thing to remember is you want to complement the flavours in the drink, not overwhelm them, so taste as you go! To avoid needing to strain the drink put all the spices in a cheesecloth bag.

The classic flavours in mulled drinks are fresh ginger root, cinnamon and clove however many other spices and citrus fruits have been used though to make amazing flavours, such as:

*Orange

*Nutmeg

*Cardamom

*Lemon

*Allspice

*Black Pepper

*Vanilla

*Star Anise

*Pomegranate

You can also try adding another alcohol to the mix if you want it to have a bit of extra kick. Its common in Sweden to add a shot of brandy to a glass of mulled mead. You could also try adding in a dash of vodka, rum or whisky depending on your base and your own palate.

Heating

Feel free to experiment with heating your drink! The principle idea is that you warm the drink and the spices/citrus together slowly and over a period of time without allowing it to come to the boil. You can do this on the stove top in a saucepan (remember, don't boil). You can do it in a slow cooker, this takes a while but it's great for a party as you can make a lot at once and keep it warm. You could also go the "old fashioned" Scandinavian route and have a large pot of drink and spices, heat an iron poker in the fire and then pop the poker straight into the drink.

Example Recipe

A bottle of cider (approx 750ml)

A couple of fresh orange slices

A few thin slices of fresh ginger

3-4 whole cloves

1 cinnamon stick

A couple of pinches of grated nutmeg

Pour the cider into a slow cooker, we have a small slow cooker that works for this.

Add orange slices and a cheesecloth bag containing the spices.

Put on lid and cook on low for 2-4 hours

Switch to warm, take out spice bag and serve.

Enjoy!

The Session Room

Here you'll find song, story and poem

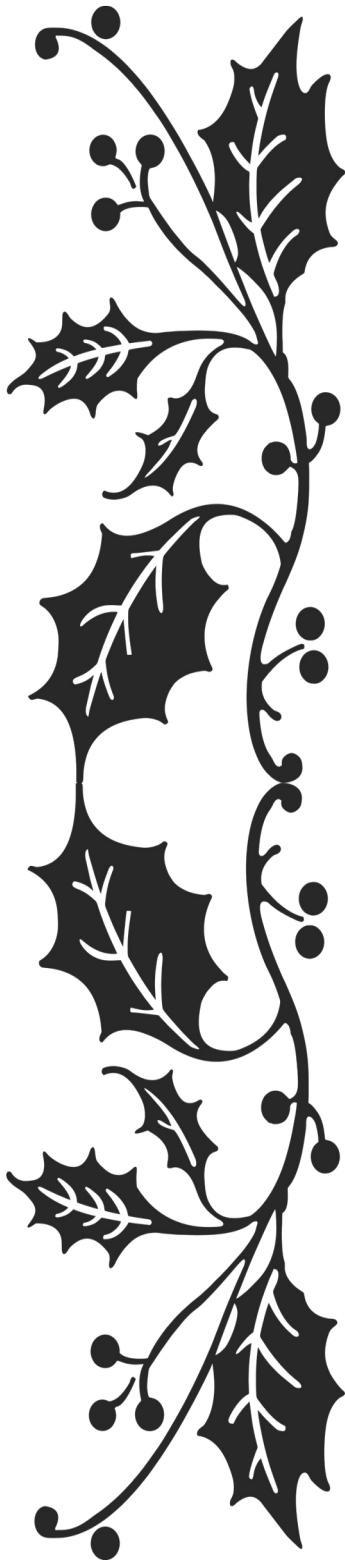
Deck the Halls

A Traditional Welsh Carol

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la;
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la;
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

See the blazing yule before us,
Fa la la la la, la la la la;
Strike the harp and join the chorus,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Follow me in merry measure,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la;
While I tell of Yuletide treasure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la, la la la la;
Hail the New Year, lads and lasses
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Sing we joyous, all together,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la;
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.



Solstice Evergreen

Words and music Adrienne K Piggott, Nick Carter,
and Spiral Dance
www.spiraldance.com.au

It came as a scene from an old picture postcard
of Victorian ladies with skates on their feet
of ponds frozen over and boughs hung with ice tips
and through frosty panes watched the snow and the
sleet
and the smoke ventured out from the soot blackened
chimneys
and shimmered beneath an icy cold moon
but inside an evergreen stands in the corner
with a bright blazing fire to keep out the gloom

Chorus

There's holly and ivy and white mistleberry
the sun is in hiding his face he can't show
so fill up your glasses so we can be merry
and rosy red cheeks by the fire light glow

Under the street lights they'll gather together
their shivering voices will ring out with song
to sing in the Yule regardless of weather
and brighten the darkness all the night long
and the mummers perform their plays from the ages
in comes King George a man of courage bold
while out in the orchard we'll go wassailing
and sup on spiced cider to keep out the cold

Chorus

The holly and oak king are now changing places
And Jack Frost is wearing his new winter vest
While out in the wood pile old Jack Green is sleeping
To awaken in spring from his long dreamy rest
So on this Yule tide we'll gather together
Beneath the sign of the ancient god's horns
As the new year beckons through cold misty weather
We'll raise a toast as the sun is reborn

Chorus

Ode to Brigid



Keeper of the sacred flame
Your hair a flowing mane

Your cloak the green of coming spring
In your path the fertile time you bring

A spell of words you weave so well
Into our dreams for us to tell

Your forge a source of reddish light
To the air this winter's night

- The Holly

Winter morning walks

On a winter's morning,
I walk my dog.
We stroll on through,
The hushed cool fog.

The fog starts lifting,
Up to the sky,
And I am gifted,
with warming light.

For I am enthralled,
By the harmony,
Provided to me,
Walking through the trees.

When normally now,
The Sun is right up,
"It's still in bed",
I say to my pup.

But in Winter's domain,
With a sky so clear,
The air is still chilled,
My breath hangs in the air.

The mix of yellow light,
A sky so blue,
Gum trees still green,
And a chill to my boots.

The land is kissed,
By vivid gold rays,
When finally the sun,
Rises to say, "G'day".

So between warming rays,
And the deep blue above,
And the chill of now,
I can only feel love.

Winter's contradiction,
A sunny, clear, but crisp sky,
I love it so deeply,
It warms me inside.

- The Ivy.



The Table

Seasonal craft activities for the family

Oven Dried Orange Slices

Fairly simple to make these are great for hanging on the yule tree or as a part of decorative garlands, they smell good and look fantastic.

You will need:

- *Oranges
- *Sharp knife and chopping board
- *Tea towel

To make:

- *Pre-heat oven to 100 C.
- *Cut oranges into thin slices (less than 1cm thick), the thinner they are the quicker they will dry.
- *Blot excess juice from the slices with the tea towel
- *Place directly onto the oven rack, they will dry quicker.
- *Turn frequently.
- *2-3 hours later (depending on thickness) take them out and leave to cool, they may still be a little sticky but that is normal.

Using a needle thread scrap yarn or string or ribbon through the slices on tie in a loop.
Now hang on the tree and enjoy!

Making a Kitchen Garland



You will need:

- *Oven Dried Orange Slices
- *Cinnamon Sticks
- *Pine cones or small pine branch

*Anything else you may want to use in your garland

- *Yarn/string
- *Thick needle

Figure out where you want to hang the garland, windows are good places as are mantles, stair rails and anywhere the garland can be an easy focal point. Once you know where you

want to hang it cut the string to be slightly longer to allow for

tying loops at the ends and the desired curve of the garland.

To make:

- *Thread the needle with the yarn and put the needle into the pith of the orange slice from the front and then do the same from the back on the other side of the orange slice.
- * Slide the slice to the far end
- * Push the needle through the cinnamon stick and slide along next to the orange, leave the amount of gap you desire.
- *Repeat with orange slices and other items you want on your garland, including thin softwood branches.
- *With pine cones wrap yarn around the open gap just below where it was once attached to the tree, this will secure it and hide the yarn.



Once at the end of your string tie loops at each end, ensure you are happy with the spacing and hang in desired location.



Hang in a window or over a mantle, it smells good and the light behind it looks fantastic!

3D Paper Snow Flakes

These are just amazing, the idea and the template we used to many of our snowflakes are from snowdayblog.com created by Vin, a graphic designer. You can purchase the files from there if your interested.

What you need:

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| *Card stock template
(purchased or your own creation). | *Ruler |
| *Paper for the snow flakes | *Craft knife |
| *Bone folder or butter knife | *Cutting mat |
| | *Paper glue |

To make:

1. Cut out the card stock template, using different sizes and shapes adds the effect of depth but it isn't necessary.

2. Trace onto your chosen paper, a thicker paper is better for longevity of the piece, we used 120gsm. (In the spirit of now wasting the tree from which the paper we purchased came from we traced different sizes, shapes and arrangements onto each A4 piece so we could use for further creating later on, more on that later)

3. Cut out the snowflakes.

Now the fun part

4. Group the snowflakes into 2's and 3's of the same size and style.

5. With the bone folder or back of a butter knife draw a straight line (with a ruler) in the positions marked by the red line in picture 2.

6. Fold along these creases and then press flat again.

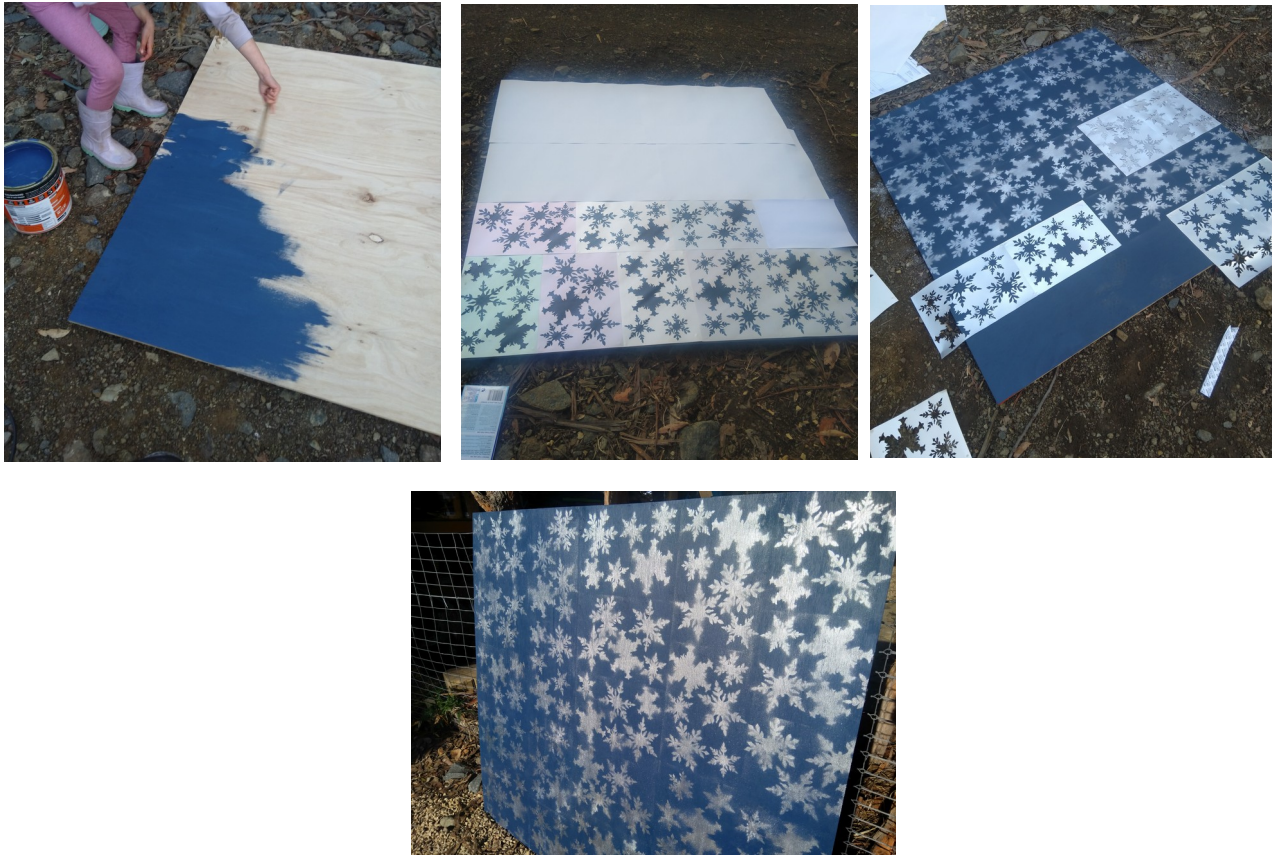
glue the middle sections together, lining up holes for thread if you have them and allow to dry

7. Fold the sections of the snowflakes out to desired shape and hang.



Homemade Snow Flake Stencils

Here we are using the left over A4 paper from the snowflakes (see above). You can use them as stencils for wrapping paper or a table cloth, or even to decorate a wall. We used them on left over ply we had painted as a backdrop behind our yule tree.



A Note on Future Newsletters and Supporting Us

Felt like getting access to our newsletter? Maybe wanted to show us additional support as well?

Southern Light Newsletter is run entirely in the spare time of its creators, but we hope it can become a focus in our lives. So we decided that it would be primarily run through Patreon.

It's important to point out that some of our lowest membership tiers are all that's required to get the digital or print version of our newsletter sent your way, but going with Patreon also allows us to offer you many other rewards for wanting to support us. Which we like, as if someone wants to support us by sending some of their hard-earned cash our way, we feel obliged to say thanks!

Our Patreon page can be found here: patreon.com/SouthernLightNewsletter
Spread the word. As always, we're also easily reachable through our Contact page if you want to talk about anything else with us.

Much love and blessed be,
The Holly and The Ivy