



The North East Ohio Witches' Network Magazine

Yule - 2007

Welcome to the introductory issue of NEOWitches.Net Magazine. We hope you enjoy its contents and that you find it to be stimulating and informative.

This periodic newsletter is scheduled to be published after each of the major neopagan holidays (quarters and cross-quarters) and will contain articles themes around the next upcoming holiday. You will find many wonderful and useful things within its pages, including; recipes, book reviews, area event listings, local shop advertisements, rituals for celebrating the Sabbat, articles on magickal theory and philosophy, and much more.

You will find that this newsletter is only one stage of a multifaceted project designed to strengthen and enlighten our magickal community. Other facets of the project can be found on-line at www.NEOWitches.Net. They include things like:

- An on-line Community Forum (<http://community.neowitches.net/forum>)
- Community Photo Sharing
- An on-line community driven wiki-book of shadows

- Extensive area event listings
- NEOWitches.Net sponsored events and gatherings
- and more programs are being added as the project grows

Some of these other facets of the NEOWitches.Net project are being launched in conjunction with this newsletter and are available for use now. Others will be unfolding over the next few months. We are very excited about this new project and we hope you will join us.

Marx Stead

-Editor

Visit **The NEOWitches.Net
Community Forum.**

<http://community.neowitches.net/forum>

On-line NOW!

The *NEOWitches.Net Magazine* is currently accepting submissions for articles for future issues. If you would like to contribute to this publication, please send your submission to ...

Editor@neowitches.net

A History of Yule.

By Toni Anne

Yule is one of the Lesser Sabbats. It is the time of the Winter Solstice, December 21-22, the shortest day and longest night of the year. My grandfather used to call it "The longest Night in the World." The Goddess has now given birth to the God as the Sun King. Candles and bonfires are lit to welcome this rebirth of the sun. Yule also symbolizes the end of the reign of the Holly King and the beginning of the reign of the Oak King, who will rule until the Summer Solstice.

This is the season of setting new goals and beginnings and leaving old habits and regrets behind. The Christian tradition of using this date near the winter solstice (approximately) was made by Pope Julius I in the fourth century because it coincided with the ancient pagan festivals. It was much easier to combine the birth of Christ, or the "son", with the joyous old pagan celebrations to welcome the rebirth of the sun.

Nordic people celebrated Yule with much feasting, drinking and merrymaking. Wassailing the trees originated with Nordic peoples to encourage an abundant orchard in the coming year. The Romans celebrated Saturnalia to honor the god Saturn, who also had agricultural significance involving fertility. It is easy to see why this week long party was filled with great lust and debauchery. Many so-called "Christmas" parties are associated with



these wild revels. The Romans also "bathed" in gold coins at this time to encourage wealth and prosperity for the new year.

The ancient Celts of the British Isles celebrated Yule as well. Little is known about these ancient Druidic practices and customs, except that according to the writings of Julius Caesar, the Druid priests sacrificed a sacred white bull and gathered mistletoe on the winter solstice.

The practice of decorating the Christmas tree has its origins in the Old Religion. The bringing of an evergreen tree into the house as part of the pagan Yule celebration would be so that the wood spirits would have a warm place to reside during the coldest winter months. Then through the family's hospitality, there were hopes of receiving the blessings of nature to keep the family warm, making the food last, the animals fertile, and enticing spring to return early. Tree decorations incorporated bells and chimes that would be hung from the branches and would ring if these beneficial tree spirits were present. Garlands of seeds and berries served as food for them.

The lighting of the Yule log encourages the sun to return as well as honoring the presence of the newly reborn Oak King and the farewell to the Holly King. This log may be of oak or pine, but never of elder as this is the wood of the goddess. Visualize the sun shining within it and bringing the life-giving rays of warmer days to come. Keep a small piece of the log for use in lighting next year's log. This piece is kept near the hearth all year to protect the home. If you are not fortunate enough to have a fireplace, select a log and decorate it with pine and red candles.

A Simple Solitary or Family Yule Rite.

By Toni Anne

If you have a free standing altar or table, light the Yule log (using a piece of last year's log, if you have it) and place it in the center of the room or hold red and green or gold candles.

The adults say:

The Wheel has turned once more, and the earth has gone to sleep.

The leaves are gone, the crops have returned to the ground.

On this darkest of nights we celebrate the light.

For tomorrow the sun will return, continuing his journey, as he has in the beginning and will do so until the end of days.

*Welcome back, warmth
Welcome back, light
Welcome back, life*

Move deosil around the Yule log to make a complete circle.

Let the children now say:

*Shadows go away, darkness is no more,
As the light of the sun comes back to us.*

*Warm the earth.
Warm the ground.
Warm the sky.
Warm our hearts.
Come back, sun.*

Have each person give thanks to the old year for its blessings and their hopes and prayers for what they wish for in the new year. Again, walk deosil to welcome the sun to return and end the rite. It is done.



Holiday Recipes

Cut-Out Sugar Cookies

This recipe is over 150 years old and was given to my mother by my German neighbor Nettie, who got it from her great-grandmother. -Toni Anne

- 1lb butter (no substitute) softened**
- 1 cup white sugar**
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed**
- 3 eggs**
- 1 tsp baking powder**
- 1/2 tsp baking soda**
- 1/2 tsp salt**
- 1 tsp vanilla**
- 5-6 cups of all-purpose flour**

Cream the butter and sugars together until quite mixed. Add the eggs one at a time to blend well. Add the salt, baking powder and soda, vanilla and mix well. Add the flour, one cup at a time until the dough is no longer sticky. Divide the dough into three parts and wrap each and chill at least six hours or better still, overnight in the refrigerator. Do NOT skip this step or the dough will be too soft to roll out.

(continued)

After chilling, remove the dough and let stand for an hour. Roll out the dough to ¼ inch thick on a floured board and use your holiday cookie cutters. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet and depending upon the size of the cookie, bake in a pre-heated 350 degree oven for 7 to 10 minutes. Cool, then ice and decorate with different symbols of prosperity, luck and protection for the coming year. Makes 8-9 dozen, depending upon the sizes of your cookie cutters.

Gingerbread Men and Women

1 cup of brown sugar, packed
1 cup dark molasses
¾ cup of shortening (I use butter flavored Crisco)
¼ cup of butter or margarine
½ tsp baking soda
4 cups flour
2 eggs
2 tsp cinnamon
¾ tsp cloves
¼ tsp allspice
4 tsp ginger

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix together all the ingredients, except the flour. Add the flour slowly, one cup at a time, until all the flour is added. The dough should be slightly stiff. If it seems too dry add a teaspoon or so of water, if the dough is sticky, add a little more flour. Roll the dough out on a floured board to about ¼ inch thick. Use your little people cookie cutters and place on a lightly greased cookie pan. Bake approximately 10 minutes, then cool on a wire rack. Use a pastry tube to decorate with frosting. Use your imagination to incorporate symbols of runes or protection onto your little men and women.

Wassail

Wassail is a spiced apple punch to which alcohol can be added if desired. In ancient Celtic tradition, apples represent the human soul and were the symbol of immortality. Apples were also the food offered to departed spirits to infuse them with life energy. At Yule, as much as at Samhain, ghosts and spirits were said to walk the earth. Everyone knows about Christmas ghosts and the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and the Ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. Telling ghost stories around the fire is a long standing tradition in Britain.

Wassail is from an old Anglo-Saxon word "wes hal", which means good health. To drink a toast of wassail meant to wish good health to family and friends. The following recipe makes one large punch bowl.

1 ½ cups of pure water
½ cup of heavy cream
6 fully baked apples
5 egg whites
1 ½ cups of granulated sugar
½ tsp nutmeg
2 tsp allspice
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp ginger
8 whole cloves
1 quart apple cider

For alcoholic wassail add:

1 quart ale
1 cup sherry
1 cup Irish whiskey

Bring the water and cream to a slow boil and remove from heat. Beat the egg whites well until soft peaks form. Thoroughly mix in all the

remaining ingredients except the alcohol. Allow the mixture to cool slightly so that the heat will not crack your punch bowl. If using a pottery or metal punch bowl, the cooling is not necessary. Blend in your alcohol just prior to serving and enjoy. Be sure to reserve the last serving to pour on the base of the oldest tree on your property to honor the house's guardian and bring prosperity. Especially if it is an old apple tree.

Wassailing the Trees

In Great Britain it is customary to wassail the oldest apple tree in the orchard on Twelfth Night (either January 6th or old Twelfth Night on January 17th) to ward off evil spirits and beseech the trees to produce a fine harvest of apples the following spring.

The oldest tree is named Apple Tree Man, and is the guardian of all the trees in the orchard. There are many traditions connected with this rite, including shooting through the branches to ward off evil spirits, and pouring apple cider through the roots.

Toast soaked in apple cider is placed in the branches for the Robins, who embody the spirit of the apple trees. Celebrants drink warm cider and sing traditional Wassail songs.



**Book of
Shadows**
1100 Clarendon SW
Canton, OH 44710
330-456-8368



Any Witch Way
210 East Cuyahoga Falls Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44310
330-434-9263

Traditional Herbs of the Season

by Toni Anne

A simple but very suitable Yule incense is made from two parts frankincense, two parts pine, one part cedar and one part crushed and dried juniper berries. Grind and mix together and smolder on a charcoal block. This incense smokes a great deal, but is wonderful for clearing and blessing your dwelling or consecrating your magickal tools.

Holly -

Ilex aquifolium, also known as Bat's Wings, is ruled by Mars and the element is fire. It is used for its magickal protective and divinatory powers. When planted near the home, it guards against lightning strikes. A holly wand or staff prevents hexes and enchantments. A long standing tradition states that holly must never be brought into the house prior to the Winter Solstice or misfortune will befall the household.

It protects against threatening wild animals and legend states that if a branch of holly is thrown towards them, the animal will become calm and harmless.

The pointed leaf holly is carried by men for potency and virility and the smooth leaves are carried by women for fertility and good fortune. At midnight, gather nine holly leaves in silence. Put them in a clean white cloth, tie it in nine knots and place under your pillow for a powerful dream charm.

Mistletoe -

Viscum album, also known as Druid's Herb and Golden Bough, is ruled by the Sun and the element of Air. Long known as one of the main sacred herbs revered by the Druids, especially when found growing on ancient oak trees, this mysterious plant has many divine and magical properties. Among them are healing, fertility, protection against lightening, opening of locks, and preventing evil fairies from spiriting away children and putting changelings in their place. It is an herb that symbolizes rebirth and renewal.

A long standing tradition is that an unmarried person who kisses beneath mistletoe is assured fertility and promotes long lasting love when they get married. Mistletoe hung in the bedroom gives restful sleep and brings pleasant dreams.

Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that prefers to grow on old oaks and according to Druidic tradition must only be harvested under certain conditions. It is only gathered during the Summer or Winter Solstices or when the moon is six days old. In a solemn ceremony it is to be cut with one stroke of a golden sickle and caught in a white cloth. Never under any circumstances is the herb to touch the ground. To do so invites dire portents and misfortune to the community. The carefully gathered sacred herb is then kept to use in sacred rites.

Frankincense -

Boswellia carterri is also referred to in ancient texts as Olibanum. It is ruled by the Sun and under the element of Fire. It honors all solar deities. Among its many properties it is used in protection, blessing and exorcism rituals. It aids in meditation, produces prophetic visions, helps in attaining higher spirituality and removes all negativity by raising vibrations, thereby making it invaluable for temples and sacred places of worship.

This resin has been prized as highly as gold in many civilizations, and was so greatly esteemed that it was used as a gift for kings and royalty. As one of the primary ingredients in sacred incenses of the world, it is used during solar rituals for success and the power of regeneration.

Burn frankincense at dawn of the Winter Solstice for it welcomes the return of the sun and brings prosperity and good fortune. By passing your ritual tools through the smoke, it purifies and consecrates them.

Pine -

Pinus spp. is a masculine tree that is ruled by Mars and also Pluto. It is under the element of Air. The properties of pine are numerous. Healing, fertility, protection, exorcism, money, prosperity, long life, reversing evil, happiness and joy, among them. It also makes an excellent base for incense, this tree is sacred to many people worldwide.

Pine has long been used to cleanse an area of negative energies and return dark forces to their source. Legend says that Poseidon used pine pitch to seal the planks in his boat, so in honor of him, pine has long been used by sailors and fishermen for safety on the water.

When burned as an incense during the dark winter months, it purifies and cleanses the house and promotes feelings of security and well-being. Being a wood of contentment, happiness and joy, it is excellent for harmony, friendship and household spells. Pine is also used for money and prosperity spells and can be used for divination. In Buddhist and Shinto practices, pine branches are hung over doorways for protection and to keep away illness and depression.

Bayberry -

Myrica ceriteria is ruled by both Mercury and Saturn under the elements of Air and the Earth. A traditional saying goes, "Bayberry candles burned to the socket bring luck to the home and gold to the pocket." Bayberry berries have a lovely fragrance and are very waxy. By boiling them in water, then cooling it, the wax floats to the surface and is then skimmed off and used to make wonderfully scented magickal prosperity candles. Carry the bark or berries to bring money or by sticking a leaf in your wallet or purse to attract money and prevent loss or theft.

Cedar -

Cedras libani is ruled by the Sun and also Venus under the element of Fire. Cedar is used in purification, money, protection, and anti-lightening spells. It repels evil and promotes a feeling of security and well-being. Its incense is purifying and protects against bad dreams. It also enhances psychic powers and aids in all forms of divination, especially when combined with juniper.

As with bayberry, keep a piece of cedar in your wallet or purse to attract more money. The power and strength of cedar makes it a true prosperity wood. Because of its

association with Venus, it has properties of beauty, majesty and strength. It is used in oils and incenses for love, feminine beauty, queenly attributes, power, quiet confidence and serenity. It bestows the "gift of repose." Because of its strength, cedar also gives the ability to overcome periods of trial or hardships. Altars of cedar are not only fragrant but have both attributes of the masculine and feminine energies.

Juniper -

Juniperus comunis is also known as gin berry, as its distinct fragrance and taste is the main flavoring in the making of gin. Juniper is used in love and lust spells. It repels evil and is used for health and to promote convalescence. The fact it is used for purification also benefits the sickroom.

As one of the earliest incenses in Europe, it was employed for protection and against theft. The berry filled branches hung over doorways repel evil forces, and are frequently used in exorcism rites. Kept in the home it guards against ghosts and poltergeist attacks. Juniper is a powerful hex breaker. When added to alcohol and love potions, it increases potency and virility. The berries are also carried to attract love.



North East Ohio Community Events

12-07-07 Druid Blessing Rite 8pm
ADF Blessing rite. Worship and magick.
 Stone Creed Grove ADF - (216) 965-0840
 Euclid (call for directions)

12-08-07 Open Drum Circle 7pm
Sue with Primal Rhythm will be facilitating. Extra drums on hand. Light snacks and beverages provided
 Any Witch Way - (330) 434-9263
 210 E. Cuyahoga Falls Ave. Akron

12-08-07 Psychic Fair 12pm-5pm
There will be several readers using various forms of divination all at reasonable rates.
 Spirit Apothecary - (440) 439-HERB
 664 Broadway Ave. Bedford

12-08-07 Yule Party 1pm-7pm
jewelry by angel kim - tarot readings by mai maidennatr products by mai - crystal readings by arthur - the reiki team - sweets by pasty chef erin
 Goddess Blessed - (216) 221-8755
 15729 Madison ave. Lakewood

12-15-07 Psychic Fair 11am-5pm
Fundraiser to benefit Vikki and Shaggi. Gifts for Yule will also be accepted for the grandchildren. Light snacks and beverages will be provided.
 Any Witch Way - (330) 434-9263
 210 E. Cuyahoga Falls Ave. Akron

12-15-07 Yule Party 6pm
Bring a covered dish. Anonymous gift exchange.
 Any Witch Way - (330) 434-9263
 210 E. Cuyahoga Falls Ave. Akron

12-07-07 Druid Yule 2pm
Norse Solstice rite. Pot luck. Gift exchange. Yule singing and drumming.
 Stone Creed Grove ADF - (216) 965-0840
 West Shore Unitarian - 20401 Hilliard Blvd, Rocky River

12-22-07 Yule Party 6pm
Deep Fried Turkey and asking everyone to bring a dish to share. \$10 gift exchange. Entertainment by Sue Balaschak & Lady Lindora. Drum circle.
 Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911
 34510 Lakeshore Blvd. Eastlake

12-31-07 Absinthe Speakeasy 9pm
"Persian Nights". Costume Dress Required! Gourmet Menu. \$50 pre-registration and \$60 at the door.
 Spirit Apothecary - (440) 439-HERB
 664 Broadway Ave. Bedford

*To list a Special Event on this page, please email the details to **Editor@neowitches.net** Listing is a free community service.*

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