***September Midnight***

*Lyric night of the lingering Indian summer,*

*Shadowy fields that are scentless but full of singing,*

*Never a bird, but the passionless chant of insects,*

*Ceaseless, insistent.*

*The grasshopper’s horn, and far-off, high in the maples,*

*The wheel of a locust leisurely grinding the silence*

*Under a moon waning and worn, broken,*

*Tired with summer.*

*Let me remember you, voices of little insects,*

*Weeds in the moonlight, fields that are tangled with asters,*

*Let me remember, soon will the winter be on us,*

*Snow-hushed and heavy.*

*Over my soul murmur your mute benediction,*

*While I gaze, O fields that rest after harvest,*

*As those who part look long in the eyes they lean to,*

*Lest they forget them.*

*- Sara Teasdale*

**Circle Ten: Mabon**

These days, I awaken to a chill coming in through my window screen. Those nights of sleeping atop my bedding have ended again. Instead, I nestle deep, pushing the snooze button on my alarm more times than I likely should, longing to stay snuggled in the warmth of my little nest for as long as I possibly can.

The days are still warm, and the Sun shines brightly, though with less intensity. I know the light is waning, and in another season, will be nearly extinct. For now, Sun and Moon share equal time in our sky. It’s Libra season. Balance is the message, and the key, moving forward.

So, I make the most of this time: cutting back bushes; mowing the lawn; pulling out the skeletal remains of plants which bore so much beauty not too long ago. Pausing to feel the warmth on my face, and the cool breezes offered up - breezes which help to loosen the newly painted leaves from their branches.

I’ve been gluttonous in recent weeks, relishing in the abundance of the harvest season. I know the time has come to reign things in again. Time to get back on track with all the good practices that will sustain me, and help me to thrive in the months to come. The child in me is still wishing for even one more summer day… but I remind her, it’s time to go back to school. Time to continue with the work we all came here to do.

Mabon always feels like a crossroads to me. I even picture The Hanged Man of the tarot: the wheel has stopped momentarily, just long enough to choose which way it will spin. To keep moving forward, I know there are things I must let go of: relationships which have fulfilled their purpose; projects which could not come to fruition; bad habits keeping me from wholeness.

There will be much to grieve. I know the drill. It’s all part of the process.

‘Tis the season, after all, of remembrance and mourning. The Ancestors are everywhere, doing their part to open those portals for our shared communion. I find their presence comforting, knowing they are so near, offering their compassion, condolence, and love. I make a special altar for them, feasting them, and reflecting on our treasured memories.

I whisper prayers to the winds for an Indian Summer, even as I pull out the crockpot and my down comforter. Every time I look outside and still see green, I offer heartfelt thanks. There are marigolds blooming, and tomatoes continue to ripen on the vine. I know it’s all coming down to the wire, and I appreciate every last bit of it. No one could ever say Autumn lacks an ounce of beauty. Even in the chaos of endings and new beginnings, the heart of this season beats strong.

**An Introduction…**

We arrive at our second equinox of the year, when the day and night are of equal length. The Sun and Moon are in balance, as are the darkness and light they offer.

The first equinox of the year was Ostara, symbolizing the onset of Spring, and the time of Mother Earth’s fertility. Mabon, as the counterpoint to Ostara, thus heralds Autumn, and the season of decay and death. Ostara promises to bring the light, while Mabon leads us into the darkness of the closing of the year.

This cosmic phenomenon has long been portrayed in many myths throughout time: of Persephone and Demeter; Inanna and Erishkigal; and The God of Darkness winning the battle over the God of Light.

In the pagan version of the Wheel of the Year, this is the time when the Goddess, now in Her Crone aspect, cradles Her dying lover in Her arms. Mabon is the child who was born at Yule and as the God of the Sun. He grew into an energetic toddler at Imbolc. The forests were his playground for the sprightly youth with golden hair at Ostara. At Beltane we see him matured and with his new bride. During the growing season he has sent the warm winds from the South, glowing with all his might, to help the crops grow. He is a man in his prime at Litha, and, at Lammas (Lughnasadh), a leader, provider and a teacher of His people. Now in Autumn, winter is not far behind, and Mabon is a man of advancing years, still strong in intellect, but caged in a weakening body and dying like the harvested plants of the earth. The sacrifices of Lammas were successful and the bounty has come. While we thank him for all this hard work we realize he is returning home to the Otherworld, a wonderful and enchanted faerie place, so that he may be reborn at Yule to help us once again.

You’ll note that in each of these mythologies, there are themes of grief and loss. We see this evident in the world around us, as plants wither, leaves fall from trees, and the abundant animal life diminishes. It is for this reason that the season ahead contains many traditions celebrating our Ancestors, and the dead. We know that loss is always a part of life, and every cycle comes to a close in order to birth new beginnings. As such, it is an important part of the human experience to honor our grief.

The main theme of this sabbat is one of balance. In order to create more balance in our lives, we turn inwards for reflection, acknowledging that which must be released or cut away, and that which must be called in. We clean and organize our environments - both internal and external - ridding ourselves of clutter, stocking up on what will nourish us in the months to come. Utilizing the energies of this season, we may connect more deeply with our true paths, in deep communion with our spirits, and the Spirit from which we all came, and to whom we will all one day return.

**The Myth of Mabon**

As a deity, Mabon, is referred to as a Welsh sun god. Like many other solar deities, he was renowned as a hunter and represented youth, vitality, love and sex. He was said to be the son of the Madron (Modron) – whose name is said to mean “mother,” and is in her own right often associated with the maternal aspect of the triple goddess. He was said to have been taken and held captive in the Underworld, and upon his release, had not aged.

It wasn’t until the resurgence of Neopaganism and modern day Wicca that ‘Mabon’ was used as the name of the equinox celebration. The wheel of the year turns, the harvest is gathered, and the sun god, whose life is represented in the corn, is harvested and sacrificed. He returns to the underworld to be reborn in the spring. We can see this cycle of divine birth-life-death-rebirth retold in other religions and cultures - from Persephone’s return to the underworld, to the resurrection of Jesus. Here is the myth of Mabon:

Welsh Mythology tells us the story of Mabon ap Modron or the "the Great Son of the Great Mother.” Mabon was born of Modron at the beginning of time. Three nights after His birth, He was stolen from his mother.

The story of Mabon's return begins with a man called Culhwch (KESH-lookh). Culhwch had a curse laid upon him that he should take no bride other than Olwen, daughter of Ysbaddaden (iss-pa-THAW-then), the Giant Chieftain.

No man had ever gone to the giant's fort and escaped alive, for Ysbaddaden knew that he would meet his death upon the day his daughter wed. He set 39 impossible tasks for each would-be suitor, if he was able to survive the initial meeting of Ysbaddaden. If the suitor were able to complete each task, he would then have to bring the head of the Great Boar, Tyrch Trwth (terkh trooth). For between the ears of this boar lay a brush, comb and razor, the items which must be used to prepare Ysbaddaden for his daughter's wedding.

Culhwch accepted each challenge and confidently vowed to complete each quest victoriously. He was accompanied by his cousin, the great King Arthur of Legend, and Arthur's Companions. They set out to find Mabon, for he was the key to their success. They wandered the earth searching for the Oldest Animals, and asked them if they could remember what happened to Mabon.

The Blackbird of Cilgwri (kil-GOOR-ee) was the first of the Oldest Animals that Culhwch and his Companions found. The Blackbird told them "I have been here a long time. When I first came here, there was a smith's anvil, and I was a young bird. No work was done on that anvil except for when my beak lay upon it in the evening, and today there is not even a nut of it that has not been worn away. But in all that time, I have not heard of Mabon, son of Modron.” And since they came with King Arthur himself, the Blackbird directed them to go to the next of the Oldest Animals, the Stag of Rhedynfre (reh-DEN-vray).

The Stag was equally unable to help them on their quest and told them, "I have been here a long time. When I first came here, there was only one small antler point on each side of my head, and there were no trees here except for a single oak sapling. That grew into an oak of a hundred branches, and the oak fell and wore away and today there is nothing left of it but a red stump. But in all that time, I have heard nothing of Mabon, son of Modron." And he directed them to the next Oldest Animal.

The Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd (coom COWL-id) was next and said to the Companions, "I have been here a long time. When I first came here, I was a young bird, and this whole valley was an ancient forest. People came and cut down all the trees. In time, a new forest grew up, and then new people came and cut it down, and this now is the third wood. And look at me! My wings are worn to mere stumps, I am so old. And in all that time, I have heard nothing of Mabon, son of Modron." And the Owl told them to seek out the Eagle of Gwernabwy (gwer-NAH-bwee), the oldest of them all.

Upon finding the Eagle he told them "I have been here a long time. When I first came here, I had a stone so tall and high, that from its top I could peck at the stars, and now it is worn away so small that your hand could cover it. And in all that time, I have heard nothing of Mabon, son of Modron."

Discouraged, the Companions prepared to leave, but the Eagle of Gwernabwy stopped them saying: "Once I flew as far as Llyn Llyw (shlin shloo) seeking food. I saw a huge silver fish swimming in the lake. I tried to catch him, thinking he would make a tasty dinner, but he pulled me under and I barely escaped with my life. I gathered all my kin to seek vengeance, but he sent messengers of peace. He came and asked my help in removing tridents that had been thrown at him. I pulled fifty out with my talons, and we became friends. Perhaps he might know of Mabon."

The found the Salmon of Lyn Llyw, who told them, "This is what I know: every high tide I go up the river to Caer Loyw, and there I hear the sounds of such suffering that never in my life heard such distress before."

The salmon then took two of the Companions on his shoulders to the wall of Caer Loyw, where he had heard someone grieving since his earliest days. When the Companions heard the lamenting voice, they asked who it was that grieved so deeply. It was amazingly Mabon Himself, painfully imprisoned with no hope of escape. Culhwch and his Companions battled for the release of Mabon and won his freedom. As a token of his gratitude, Mabon joined Culhwch and helped him to win the hand of the lovely Olwen.

**Ancient Mythologies - Inanna and Ereshkigal**

In Mesopotamian mythology, Ereshkigal (“great lady under earth”) was the goddess of Irkalla, the land of the dead or underworld. Sometimes her name is given as Irkalla, similar to the way the name Hades was used in Greek mythology for both the underworld and its ruler. It was said that she had been stolen away by Kur and taken to the underworld, where she was made queen unwillingly.

The goddess Ishtar refers to Ereshkigal as her older sister in the Sumerian hymn “The Descent of Inanna” (which was also in later Babylonian myth, also called “The Descent of Ishtar”). Inanna/Ishtar’s trip and return to the underworld is the most familiar of the myths concerning Ereshkigal.

Ereshkigal, just like Hel in the Norse mythology, was the only one who could pass judgment and give laws in her kingdom. The main temple dedicated to her was located in Kutha.

Hel is a being who presides over a realm of the same name, where she receives a portion of the dead. In Babylonian mythology, Irkalla (also Ir-Kalla, Irkalia) is the underworld from which there is no return. It is also called Arali, Kigal, Gizal, and the lower world. Irkalla is ruled by the goddess Ereshkigal and her consort, the death god Nergal.

Irkalla was originally another name for Ereshkigal, who ruled the underworld alone until Nergal was sent to the underworld and seduced Ereshkigal (in Babylonian mythology).

Hades (from Ancient Greek Hāidēs; Doric Aidas) was the ancient Greek god of the underworld. Eventually, the god’s name came to designate the abode of the dead. In Greek mythology, Hades is the oldest male child of Cronus and Rhea considering the order of birth from the mother, or the youngest, considering the regurgitation by the father. Aita (also spelled Eita in Etruscan inscriptions) is the name of the Etruscan equivalent to the Greek Hades, the divine ruler of the underworld.

The aedes was the dwelling place of a god. It was thus a structure that housed the deity’s image, distinguished from the templum or sacred district. Aedes is one of several Latin words that can be translated as “shrine” or “temple”. For instance, the Temple of Vesta, as it is called in English, was in Latin an aedes. See also the diminutive aedicula, a small shrine.

The term “Hades” in Christian theology (and in New Testament Greek) is parallel to Hebrew sheol (“grave, dirt-pit”), and refers to the abode of the dead. The Christian concept of hell is more akin to and communicated by the Greek concept of Tartarus, a deep, gloomy part of Hades used as a dungeon of torment and suffering.

Ereshkigal is the sister and counterpart of Inanna/Ishtar, the symbol of nature during the non-productive season of the year. Ereshkigal was also a queen that many gods and goddesses looked up to in the underworld.

She is known chiefly through two myths, believed to symbolize the changing of the seasons, but perhaps also intended to illustrate certain doctrines which date back to the Mesopotamia period. According to the doctrine of two kingdoms, the dominions of the two sisters are sharply differentiated, as one is of this world and one of the world of the dead.

One of these myths is Inanna’s descent to the netherworld and her reception by her sister who presides over it:

*The Descent of Inanna begins with the following lines, “From the great heaven she set her mind on the great below. From the great heaven the goddess set her mind on the great below. From the great heaven Inana set her mind on the great below. My mistress abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld. Inana abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld.” One explanation for Inanna’s interest in the Underworld is that she hopes to extend her power into that realm, whose queen is her sister, Ereshkigal.*

*When she arrives at the gates of the Underworld, Inanna informs the gatekeeper, Neti, that she has come to witness the funeral rites of Gugalanna, the Bull of Heaven, who is also Ereshkigal’s husband. When Ereshkigal receives this news, she is not at all pleased, and orders that the seven gates of the Underworld be bolted against her sister. Inanna is only allowed to pass one gate at a time, and before each gate, she is required to remove a piece of her royal garment.*

*By the time Inanna reaches the throne room of Ereshkigal, she had been stripped naked, and was powerless. Ereshkigal overpowered her sister, who was “turned into a corpse” and “hung on a hook”. Prior to entering the Underworld, Inanna had instructed her servant Ninshubur on how to come to her aid should she fail to return at the expected time. Thus, Ninshubur went to the god Enki, Inanna’s father, for help. Whilst Inanna was successfully revived by the servants sent by her father, she is unable to leave the Underworld as easily as she entered it.*

*A substitute had to be found, and Enki’s servants tried to take several of Inanna’s followers, though the goddess stopped them from doing so, as they were all mourning for her supposed death. In the end, Inanna encounters Dumuzi, her husband, who is clearly not in mourning, as he was “clothed in a magnificent garment and seated magnificently on a throne”. This infuriated Inanna, who ordered him to be seized.*

*Dumuzi prays to Utu, the sun god, to save him, and is transformed into a snake. Nevertheless, he is captured in his attempt to escape, and is brought to the Underworld. Geshtinanna, Dumuzi’s sister, volunteers to be her brother’s substitute, and in the end, it was decided that Dumuzi and his sister would each spend half the year in the Underworld. Like the Greek myth of Persephone and Demeter, this event is used to explain the changing of the seasons.*

**Demeter and Persephone**

The myth of Demeter and Persephone is commonly thought to symbolize the changing seasons of the year. The story tells of the deep connection between a mother and her daughter, as well as a young woman’s fading innocence and coming of age. It’s a tale of love, relationships, family bonds, loss, grief, and a renewal of hope.

As the legend goes, Hades rarely ventured out of the underworld. But, the few times he did, he encountered Persephone. She was the alluring daughter of Zeus and Demeter. From the moment he first set his eyes on her, he was drawn to her and instantly fell in love. So, Hades went to his brother Zeus to consult him. Zeus had previously promised Hades one of his daughters in marriage. And when Hades told him that he wanted to marry Persephone, Zeus obliged.

He knew, however, that Persephone’s mother Demeter would never allow her daughter to marry the dark god of the underworld. Hades was heartbroken that he would never be able to have Persephone as his wife. So, the two brothers hatched a plan that would see him marry the woman he desperately loved.

The next morning, Demeter and her daughter descended upon the earth. The two were incredibly close just as most mothers and daughters are when girls begin to transition into womanhood.

Demeter was the life-giving goddess of agriculture, grain, and harvest. She provided mortals with plants, food, and vegetables. She also gave them the ability to cultivate wheat. She showed them how to plant the seeds, nurture them, and harvest them. She even taught them how to grind the grain to produce flour, which they could turn into bread. Demeter left her daughter with the nymphs of the sea to watch over her while she went to tend to her earthly duties.

Zeus knew that the nymphs would never let Persephone out of their sight for fear of Demeter’s wrath. So, he had Gaia plant an enchanting narcissus flower in a nearby garden. As Persephone wandered away from her mother and into the garden, she saw the flower and was immediately drawn to its beauty.

No sooner had she stooped to pick it, than the ground beneath her feet began to quake and a gaping crack soon appeared. As the crack widened, Hades and his chariot of black horses emerged from it and began charging towards Persephone. Before she could even master a scream, Hades grabbed Persephone and took her down with him to the world of the dead. The nymph named Sion witnessed the abduction and had tried to rescue Persephone, but there was nothing she could do. She was no match for Hades. Sion was so distraught over her friend’s abduction that she cried until she melted into a pool of her tears, forming the river Sion.

When Demeter returned, she couldn’t find her daughter anywhere. So, she asked the nymphs about it, but they had no answer. Demeter was furious that they didn’t protect her daughter like they were supposed to. Her wrath rained down on the nymphs, and she cursed them with plumed bodies, scaly feet, and wings. They would no longer be called nymphs of the sea. They would henceforth be known as Sirens.

When Persephone’s belt was washed up by the river Sion, Demeter knew that something dreadful had happened to her daughter. She roamed the earth for days on end driven mad by her beloved daughter’s disappearance. She searched endlessly, neglecting her duties to tend to the earth to nourish the mortals. Plants withered, animals died, and famine ravaged the earth resulting in untold misery. The cries of the mortals reached Mount Olympus, and Zeus knew that he had to intervene to calm Demeter’s wrath and spare humanity.

Zeus sent Hermes to the underworld to bring Persephone back home to her mother. When he got there, he was surprised by what he found. Instead of finding a sorrowful grief-stricken maiden, he was met with a radiant Queen.

During her time there, Hades had beautiful gardens built for Persephone. He treated her with respect and compassion, and she inevitably began to fall in love with him. She saw a side to him she had never seen before, and she embraced her new home helping the spirits of the dead to cross over.

When Hermes requested her return, Persephone was conflicted. On the one hand, she loved Hades and wanted to remain with him, but on the other, she loved and deeply missed her mother.

Hades was terrified that if she was presented with the choice of staying with him or returning to her mother, he would lose. So, he gifted her with six pomegranate seeds to eat, and she did. In Greek mythology, it was believed that if one ate food given to them by their captor, they would always return.

When Hermes brought Persephone back to Mount Olympus, Zeus asked her where she would like to live. She expressed that she wanted to stay by her husband’s side. Demeter was infuriated by her response and was convinced that Hades had something to do with it. She wouldn’t have any of it. She made it known in no uncertain terms that if her daughter did not return to her, she would never again tend to the earth.

Zeus decided that Persephone would split her time between her mother and her husband. Since she ate six pomegranate seeds, Persephone would spend half the year with her mother at Olympus and the other half with Hades. When she descends to the Underworld, the Earth becomes barren (Autumn and Winter). When she reunites with her mother, the Earth comes alive once again (Spring and Summer).

**Other Traditional Celebrations**

### **Festivals of Dionysus**

The time around the Autumn Equinox was celebrated by the Greek people in many ways. In ancient Athens, Oschophoria was the name of the grape harvest festival. It was held in what would be modern day late September. This festival was sacred to Dionysus, the Greek God of Wine. Men would carry grape heavy vines throughout the town in a procession, followed by drinking, singing and general merriment.

Dionysus was the one who showed the people how to cultivate the grapes in order to make wine, and Priestesses of Dionysus would mix some of this sacred drink with water and serve it to the community in a large goblet called the "kantharoi.”

### **The Eleusinian Mysteries**

This was also the time of the perhaps more well known celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries. This celebration was held in the city of Eleusis, a city in Attica, north of Athens. The mysteries honored the great Goddess of Grain, Demeter, and her daughter, Persephone.

The festival is held here, because it is commonly believed that during Her search for Persephone, Demeter was welcomed by the King and Queen of Eleusis. Demeter nursed the sons of the King, and even tried to make one of them immortal by holding him over the sacred fire. She was interrupted by the Queen, and in fury, revealed Herself to the Queen and bid her to build a temple in Her honor in the city.

The temple was built, and in late Autumn, the Mysteries began. It is said that this is when Persephone returns to the realm of Her husband, Hades. Demeter begins to grieve once again for the loss of Her daughter.

## **Michaelmas**

The time of the Autumn Equinox is also the time of the Feast of Michaelmas. This was a day to honor the Archangel Michael, who is the warrior of God, and said to be the one to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

This was a day of hospitality and forgiveness, and a quarterly day of settling rents and accounts with the people. Traditionally, families would dress a goose and feast on it together with family and friends. Payment of geese was also a traditional thing during this time, because it was believed that if one were to feast on something so fine as goose, it would surely ensure prosperity for the rest of the year.

**Celebrating Mabon**

As mentioned earlier, the main themes of this sabbat center around reflection, letting go, and creating balance.

In the physical realm this is the time for looking back upon the efforts of the past–not just this year, or the last, but also of your lifetime. Look back at this time and be sure to congratulate yourself on all those things you have done well, while, at the same time, being sure to think of things you wish to improve. As with any effort you may put forth there is always work on someone else’s part that allowed you to build upon it. Mabon is an excellent time to give thanks to all the time and energy put forth by others to help you. The work done by others not only helps you by making your work easier, it gives you a base to build higher than you could without it.

At Mabon, we realize that this is not only a time of the physical balance of day and night, but a time of energetic balance. Forces of dark and light are trading places once again in their cycle. Since this is one of the two days of balance in the year, along with Ostara, is it traditional to clean house. It is at this time that you begin to rid yourself of all of the clutter around your home and in your daily life. The thresholds of the house are blessed to protect those living inside. Foods are harvested, canned and stored, wood is chopped, animals begin to hibernate in preparation for the winter, and new clothes are bought and made for the colder times that await. Balance the outdoor activities with the mental activity of reading and storytelling. The harvest theme of Mabon cannot be denied. With all of the blessings we have received it is natural to use this time of year to show our gratitude.

A feast of plenty on this day, in honor of the God Dionysus, is traditional. Whereas cornbread was most appropriate at Lammas, wheat bread is best now to coincide with the harvest. Apples are ripening now, and nuts may be ready, as well. Do not forget fruit juices of apple and grape, whether or not fermented. One idea for a ritual gesture is to start a tradition of passing a “cup of gratitude” at this feast. To do this, a chalice is filled with wine, blessed and passed around the table clockwise. As each person takes it, they speak about what they are thankful for and once they have spoken of all of their blessings, they drink from the cup, or pour a small amount into another cup, and then pass it on to the next person.

Magically speaking, this is an excellent time to perform spells around the idea of balancing out your life. Remove any guilt, and replace it with love and acceptance. The light half of the year from the spring equinox, until Mabon, is the best time of the year for outward turning magic. This magic is that which draws from and affects forces which lie outside of yourself. Spells which turn upon inner forces and mostly affect your own self will become more and more important as the dark half of the year grows in power.

Here are some ideas for how you might honor this sabbat:

* Arrange baskets of fresh fruit for friends or family.
* Fill a bowl with fruits and leave it as an offering to the gods
* Fill a basket with pine cones, colorful dried leaves, wheat, acorns, and fallen pine branches and leave it by your door.
* Make a protection charm of hazelnuts strung on red thread.
* Hang dried ears of corn on the front door, doorposts, or outside light fixtures.
* Serve a Mabon meal of wine/nectar from the God, and beans and squash from the Goddess. Some sort of soup with carrots, onions, potatoes, radishes, and/or corn combines both the energies of the God and Goddess.
* Collect milkweed pods to decorate at Yuletide and to attract fairies.
* Call upon the elementals and honor them for their help with:
 East= Air: school and knowledge
 South = Fire: careers and accomplishments
 West = Water: emotional balance and fruitful relationships

North = Earth: the home and finances

* Make wine
* It is a good time to walk the forests, gathering dried plants for use as altar decorations or herbal magic.

Here are some popular recipes for foods used in Mabon rituals and celebrations:

**Apple Butter (Lotwaerick)**

4 quarts Apples

2 quarts Water

1 1/2 quarts cider

1 1/2 lbs. sugar

1 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. allspice

1 tsp cloves

Wash and slice the apples into small bits. Cover with the water and boil until soft. Press through a sieve to remove skin and seeds. Bring cider to a boil and then add to apple pulp and sugar and cook until it thickens, constantly stirring to prevent scorching. Add spices and cook until it is thick enough for spreading. Pour into sterilized jars and seal.

**Blackberry Wine**

3 lbs. blackberries

3 lbs. of sugar

1 gallon boiling water

Wash berries, put in a large bowl and over the boiling water over them. Stir well, then cover the bowl and leave for ten days. Strain liquid through muslin, add the 3 lbs. of sugar and stir well. Cover the bowl and leave for 3 days, but stir daily. Put into bottles and cork, loosely at first. Allow to ferment for six months, slowly pushing in the cork as time passes.

**Honey Whole Wheat Bread**

9 cups whole wheat flour

4 tsp. salt

2 pkg. active dry yeast

1 1/2 cups milk

1 1/2 cups water

6 Tbsp. butter

1/2 cup honey

Sift together 3 cups flour, salt and yeast. Combine milk, water, butter, and honey in a saucepan and heat over low heat until liquids are warm (butter need not be melted completely). Gradually add to dry ingredients and beat 2 minutes. Add remaining flour a cup full at a time until a soft dough forms. Turn onto lightly floured surface and allow to rest 10 minutes. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Place in large greased bowl and turn to grease all sides of dough. Cover and allow to rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. Punch dough down and turn out onto lightly floured surface. Divide dough in half and shape each half into a loaf. Place into greased loaf pans. Cover and let rise in warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. Bake at 375° for 35-40 minutes. Remove from pans and cool on racks.

Other seasonal food ideas include: hearty soups; roasted squash and root vegetables; roasts; apple cakes and pies; nuts; scones and heavy pastries; and corn dishes.

**Sharing the Wisdom: Preparing Your Ritual**

Use this space to consider how you would honor this sabbat in a ritual way, whether for yourself or for others. This is meant to be a loose guide to inspire you, and to build confidence in your own intuition, vision, and abilities to incorporate more ritual in your life.

1. **What would your ritual space look like/what environment do you envision?**
2. **What items would you include on your altar? What do they represent to you?**
3. **What Elements would you include? How will you include them? And why?**
4. **What words do you feel should be spoken or sung? You might jot down your ideas, and create a loose outline to follow.**
5. **What is the best way for you, personally, to connect with this sabbat? How will you demonstrate that through ritual action?**

**Reflections and Integration**

Going back through your life in increments of 5 years, reflect upon this season/sabbat in the Wheel of the Year and what it has meant to you in those various stages of life. Use these questions as a guide:

* **What memories stand out to me the most about this season in each stage of life?**
* **How did this season/sabbat make me feel emotionally? Physically?**
* **How do my past experiences of the season/sabbat correlate to the present?**
* **In my highest vision, how would I best connect with this season/sabbat?**
* **From this year forward, what changes might I make to align myself more with the energies of this season/sabbat?**