

# 8 Magical Festivals of the Wheel of the Year to Celebrate



## WHAT IS THE PAGAN WHEEL OF THE YEAR?

If you're new to Paganism, witchcraft or spirituality, you might wonder, "What's the Wheel of the Year and how do you celebrate it?" From the depths of the winter solstice to the thinning of the veil at Samhain, the Wheel of the Year connects to the seasonal cycle of the natural world with celebrations dispersed throughout the year.

**The Wheel of the Year is the yearly cycle of Pagan celebrations, including the winter and summer solstices, spring and autumn equinoxes, and 4 major festivals of Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnassadh, and Samhain. The cycle begins with the winter solstice –also known as Yule– in December and ends with Samhain in October. The festivals are evenly spaced in 6.5-7 week intervals throughout the year and align with peaks and valleys in the earth's rotation around the sun and changing seasons.**

When you hear the words Pagan or witchcraft, your brain might flash to pentagrams, archaic rituals, and dancing skyclad in the moonlight. In reality, Paganism is a way of describing early, nature-based religions, which are still practiced in some forms today.

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# What is Paganism?

Paganism describes spiritual activities outside of other organized religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Pagans don't follow a uniform set of guidelines for their practice, though there are shared themes in both historical and modern Paganism.

Pagans often worship nature and may worship multiple deities or focus only on the goddess—a distinct departure from many single-deity religions whose gods are typically male.

Historically, 'Pagan' was used to describe non-Christians or people who worshiped more than one god. It may be derived from the Latin word, 'Paganus,' which was used to describe the "civilian" peoples that Romans encountered when conquering new parts of the world. Paganus may also have been used in a derogatory sense to describe ignorant, rural villagers. Either way, the terms Pagan or Paganism weren't often used positively by Christians or Romans alike.

Early Christians used Paganism to describe non-Christian or polytheistic worship throughout Europe from the Celts in Ireland to Hellenic Pagans in Greece. Thanks to pop culture, Celtic or Germanic Pagan rituals and practices may be the most well-known today. Books, comics, and films have incorporated Pagan elements like Stonehenge, Beltane and Samhain festivals, and the Norse or Greek pantheons, making them more well-known outside of Pagan circles.

Modern Pagans can be found around the world. Paganism may include Wiccans, neo-druids, neo-Pagans, and other groups. Many Pagans worship nature with celebrations and festivals throughout the year. The Wheel of the Year is the yearly cycle many Pagans follow, though there are no rules stating these celebrations must be observed. Pagans can decide individually on their activities and rituals, though many continue to use the Wheel of the Year to guide their practice.

## How Many Festivals Make Up The Wheel of the Year?

The Wheel of the Year typically includes eight festivals, starting with Yule in December, followed by Imbolc, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lughnassadh, and Mabon, and ending with Samhain in October. In modern Paganism, these eight festivals are generally agreed upon as the major celebrations in the Wheel of the Year. These festivals are known as sabbats in the wiccan community.

The term sabbat, first coined in 1613 in *Admirable History of Possession and Conversion of a Penitent Woman* by Sebastien Michaelis, is shortened from the Germanic term, hexensabbat, meaning witches sabbat. It is the same as the English term sabbath and the Hebrew term shabbat, which literally means the seventh day.

The eight holidays are separated into the Greater Sabbats (Moon Holidays) and Lesser Sabbats (Solar Holidays). Yule (winter solstice), Ostara (spring equinox), Litha (summer solstice), and Mabon (fall equinox) are the lesser sabbats. The greater sabbats are Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhain. They each fall between the lesser sabbats. Akin to Judaism, sabbats are celebrated from sundown to sundown.

Historically, the number and celebration names may vary as different Pagan groups focused solely on some festivals over others. Celts, for example, focused on the fire festivals of Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnassadh, and Samhain over other celebrations.

## What Festivals Make Up The Wheel Of The Year?

### 1. Yule (December 21 or 22)

Celebrated on the shortest day of the year in December, Yule is the first festival in the Wheel of the Year. It is also known as the Winter Solstice or Midwinter and is celebrated on December 21 or 22. Pagans often celebrate the balance of light and darkness, and Yule falls on the longest night before days begin to lengthen again.

Traditional symbols of Yule include the evergreen tree, the yule log, holly, mistletoe, and the yule tree. Evergreens are the symbol of renewal, while the yule log represents honor and protection. The continuous green of the evergreen

represents strength and is believed to have the ability to ward off death. Yule logs originated in ancient Scandinavia where ash trees were burned to honor Thor.

Holly and mistletoe are the masculine and feminine symbols of the holiday, respectively. Holly is thought to ward off evil. The green leaves represent hope and the red berries are for potency. Mistletoes green leaves represent the Mother Goddess's fertility while its white berries represent that of the Forest God. Druids used mistletoe in certain ceremonies to ward off evil and hung over beds to promote fertility.

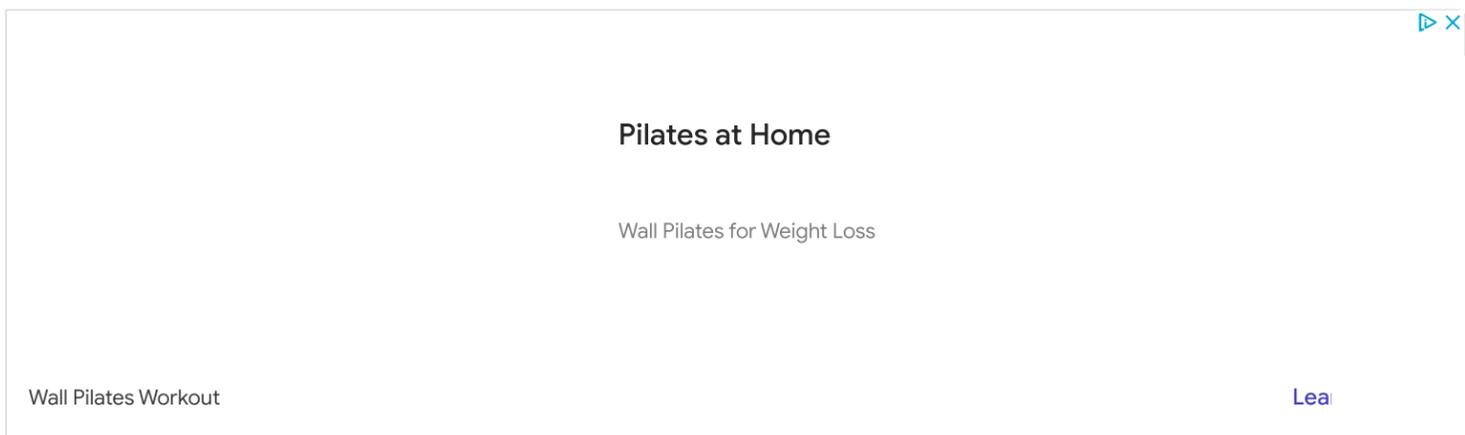
The Yule tree is a specific pagan tradition that dates back to medieval Estonia where trees were decorated with natural elements that were considered gifts from the gods.

Yule celebrations may also give thanks for the return or renewal of the sun. Activities include gift-giving and decorating trees or dressing homes with evergreens like mistletoe or holly, which may sound familiar to people who celebrate Christmas. Many Pagan traditions were later adopted by Christianity, and in some cases, their roots in Paganism may not be known.

## 2. Imbolc (February 1 or 2)

Imbolc is the first of the Greater Sabbats or fire festivals. The holiday originated with Celts of Ireland and the British Isles to celebrate the [pagan goddess Brigid](#). Brigid is the goddess of fertility, fire poetry, crafts and prophecy. The Filids, the poets and historians of the Celts, held her in particular regard. Brigid was eventually adopted by the Christian faith as St. Bridget, the patron of Irish nuns, newborns, midwives, dairy maids, and cattle. She is also one of the patron saints of Ireland.

There are two interpretations of the word Imbolc. The old Irish Neolithic translation is "in the belly of the mother." The second is said to come from the Irish Gaelic word oimelc, which means "ewe's milk." Celebrated on either February 1st or 2nd, Imbolc falls directly between Yule and Ostra. It isn't quite the beginning of spring, but Earth is on the precipice of a rebirth with the coming of spring. The ancient Celts used the milk from cattle and sheep who had recently birthed calves as a symbol of purification for the holiday. They also created dolls in Brigid's image from wheat, reeds, or cornhusks and lit bonfires.



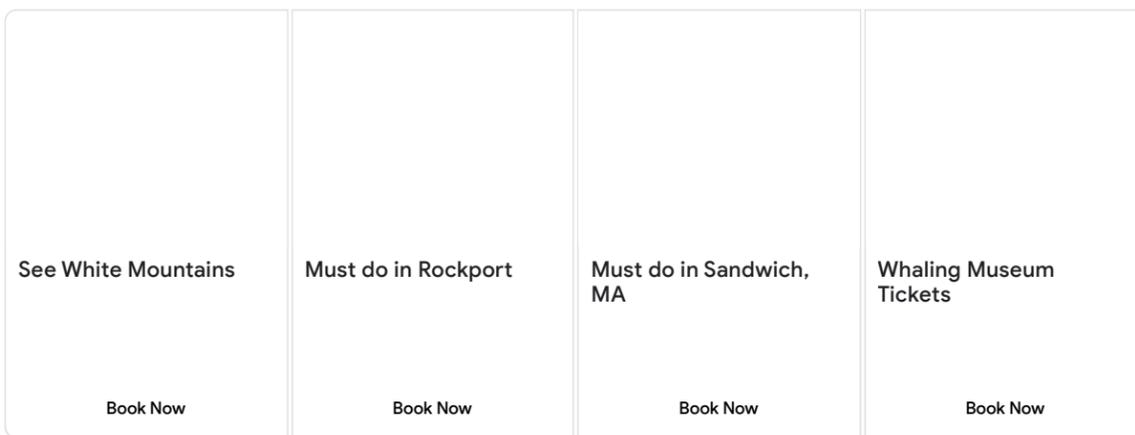
Along with the celebration of birth, Imbolc is also a time for reflection, reaffirmation, and planning. Celebrations focus on preparing for spring, and it is often associated with fertility. It was also traditionally important for farmers preparing for sheep to give birth, so it may also be considered a shepherd's holiday.

Today, Imbolc is celebrated by pagans and Christians alike, who adopted the holiday as Candlemass. In Christianity it is also a holiday for purification and receiving blessings for the year ahead.

## 3. Ostara (March 20 or 21)

Ostara is also known as the Spring Equinox and happens on March 20 or 21. The name Ostara is derived from the goddess of spring, Eostre, from Germanic pantheons. While not much has been written about Eostre herself, she is typically represented as a young fertile maiden. Young women used to collect morning dew to wash their face with as it was believed to be Eostre's essence and it would keep them young.

Eostre is also the inspiration for Easter, the Christian spring celebration. Many Easter rituals were taken from Ostara as it is believed that Christianity absorbed the holiday as its own paganism began to fade and Christianity became more popular. The focus of Ostara celebrations is on life after winter and celebrating the return of spring. Celebrations focus on balance, renewal, and rebirth. Flowers, eggs, and hares are three of the major Ostara symbols. Flowers and eggs represent renewal, while hare, known to mate at this time or year, represent fertility.



During this time of year, spring plantings may be beginning. Planting seeds may be one tradition practiced by modern Pagans during Ostara. Ostara is the beginning of the light half of the year and a time to nature and the physical world by gathering and enjoying food and friends and being grateful for nature's fertility.

## 4. Beltane (May 1)

**Beltane** is held on the first day of May. It is the second of the four fire festivals, so bonfires are an important tradition, symbolizing purification and fertility. Falling halfway between Ostara and Litha, it celebrates the peak of spring and the coming of summer. The name is believed to be derived from Celtic meaning "bright fire" or "the fires of Bel" in reference to the sun god Belenus.

Historically, the Celts would light two Beltane bonfires and walk between them to bless their cattle before they were sent to pasture. Bonfires represent the growing strength of the sun as the seasons begin to transition from spring to summer. After the herds were through, shepards would then jump over the bonfires as a blessing for themselves. It is seen as a cleansing and renewal ritual to ward off the darkness of winter and embrace the spring light. Household hearths also were often relit with fire from Beltane. Dancing around a Beltane bonfire is a fertility ritual for many Pagans historically and today.

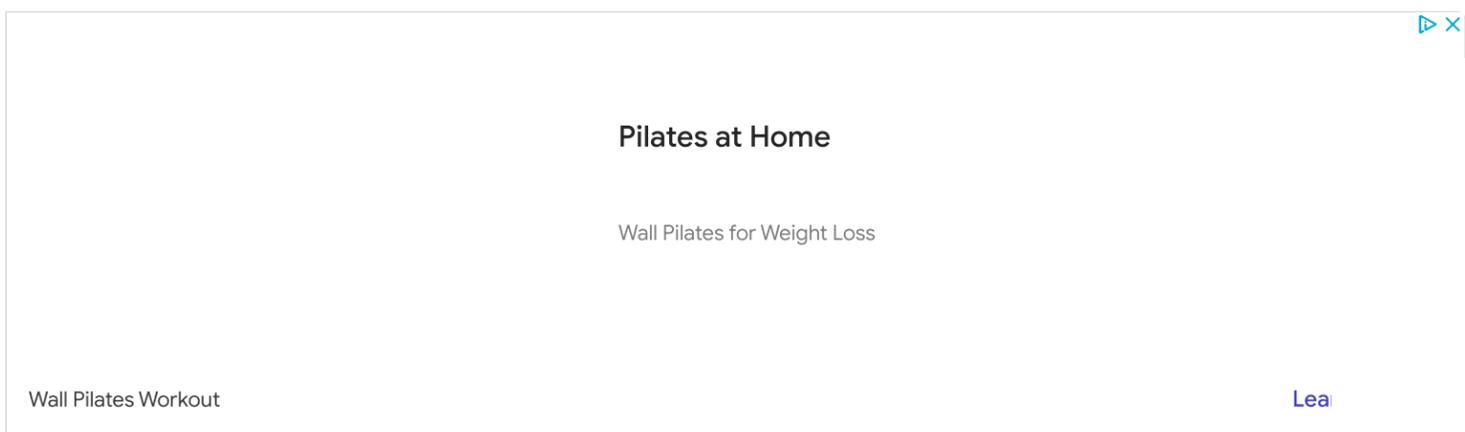
Beltane was a time for communities to come together and seek blessings from nature as herds were put out to pasture for the new livestock cycle and crops began to grow. The festival also took on a magical flare as food and milk were left for fairies, known as aos si, who were thought to play pranks that included poisoning milk supplies.

The **first recording of Beltane** celebrations dates back to 10 CE and continued until the late 1800s. It was revived by Wiccans and neo-pagans in the 1980s. They hold smaller ceremonies where bonfires are lit and flowers are used to create an altar. Beltane is one of the more well-known Pagan holidays, as its rituals have been adopted by multiple cultures often under other names, including Irminden (Bulgaria), Vappu (Finland), Kevadpüha (Estonia), Walpurgisnacht (Germany), and Calendimaggio (Italy). In English speaking countries, it is simply known as May Day. You'll find maypoles at many Pagan and non-Pagan spring celebrations. In both modern and historical practices, dancers wind ribbons around a pole or tree in celebration of spring and fertility. At these celebrations, people may wear flowers or create baskets of goodies to give to someone in need.

## 5. Litha (June 20 or 21)

Like Yule, Litha focuses on the balance of light and darkness. It is the longest day of the year and the peak of the sun's dominance. Litha is also known as Midsummer or the Summer Solstice and falls on June 20 or 21. It is a time to celebrate the abundance and growth as crops are producing fruits and vegetables and flowers are in full bloom. The following days grow shorter as power shifts towards darkness with longer and longer nights until the balance shifts again at Yule. This shift in power is represented in the Pagan myth of the Oak King and Holly King.

The **Oak King** represents the summer, ruling from Yule until Litha. The Celts believed that on Litha, The Oak King battled and ceded dominance to the Holly King, who represents winter and rules until Yule comes again. Oak and holly are symbols often associated with Litha.



It is believed that magic is at its most powerful on Midsummer night. Faerie are thought to pass through the human realm, offering blessings and playing tricks. Litha is also a celebration of the Celtic goddesses Danu, the goddess of

earth and fruitfulness, and Aine, the goddess of love, summer, sovereignty, and fertility.

Litha celebrations often include bonfires on hilltops to commemorate the distance between the Earth and the sun, though it is not one of the four Celtic fire festivals. Jumping over a bonfire on Litha is considered good luck, with the highest jump used to predict the height of the crops. Sunwheels and flowers are also symbols of this sabbat, with the colors of the season – blue, green, yellow/gold, pink, and purple – used to celebrate. Litha is also believed to bring the season of love, which is why handfastings, weddings, and love spells so often happen during this time.

Although Litha is a celebration of abundance and the sun's dominance, it also marks the coming of the darkness as the days will start to get shorter from this point on until Yule. To acknowledge this turn, the Celts would light large wheels on fire and roll them down a hill into a body of water. The wheel was a symbolic representation of the sun.

Modern Pagans may celebrate Litha with meditation, indoor or outdoor fires, flowers, and food. As it is a time for growth, those who celebrate use it as a time to set their intentions and align their energy with the abundance and bounty of the sun and summertime.

## 6. Lughnasadh (August 1)

Lughnasadh is celebrated on August 1. It is the third fire festival and the first harvest festival of the year. Although it is a fire festival, fire is not as prominent on Lughnasadh. This celebration is named for the Celtic warrior god, Lugh. It is said the Lugh held this festival as funeral games for his foster mother Taitiu, who gave her life clearing fields to make way for agriculture in Ireland. Feasting, athletic competitions, and ritual sacrifices of bulls to ensure a good harvest were historical practices associated with Lughnasadh.

The [Green Man](#), also known as John Barleycorn, is god of the harvest. He sacrifices himself every year to give humans life on Earth. As such, on Lughnasadh he is remembered and mourned with wreaths made of poppies and cornflowers.

Danu, the goddess of earth and fruitfulness, makes an appearance on this day as well as she is the Mother of Gods and Men, responsible for the harvest's abundance and blessings.

Lughnasadh is an important celebration for agriculture as it occurs before grain is ready to harvest. Often harvests would not begin until after Lughnasadh to ensure optimal yields. Symbols of this sabbat include corn, wheat, bread, scythes and sickles. Baking bread and eating newly harvested foods to celebrate is a tradition continued by many modern Pagans. They may also create altars with grains, apples, and other foods and decorate their homes with hand-crafted items and decorations to honor Lugh, who was also known as the god of craftsmanship.

Lughnasadh was [adopted](#) around 921CE as an Anglo-Saxon holiday called Lammas, which means "loaf mass." Like with Lughnasadh, the grains from the first harvest are used on Lammas to bake the first loaf of bread.

Ultimately, Lughnasadh is a time to celebrate abundance and joy, knowing that darkness is coming. You can use the day to take stock of what the spring and summer have brought and be thankful for the light in the coming darkness. It is a time to show your appreciation to the Earth and the waning Sun for all that they have brought.

## 7. Mabon (September 22 or 23)

[Mabon](#) falls upon the autumnal equinox when light and darkness are equal. Celebrated on September 22 or 23, the name 'Mabon' may be derived from [Mabon ap Modron](#), a [Welsh deity](#), who is often associated with tales of great hunts in [mythology and folklore](#). It is referred to as the pagan Thanksgiving as it is a time to show your gratitude to the Earth for its gifts.

Mabon is a celebration focused on successfully completing the harvest and giving thanks for having crops to survive winter. The focus on thanksgiving during this time of year is noted in several cultures. Hosting feasts and gatherings is common during Mabon. Apples and cornucopias or altars filled with grain and fruits are common symbols associated

with Mabon. Cornucopias represent a healthy harvest, while apples represent healing, renewal, regeneration, and immortality.

Some even play a game with apples on Mabon. The game entails whispering a secret question to the fruit before laying it on its side. Prior to cutting it in half horizontally, pick which side is yes and which side is no. Once the apple is cut, the side with the most seeds in the pentagram at the center gives the player their answer. Making wreaths with leaves, dried flowers, pinecones and small pumpkins is another common and easy way to celebrate. The wreath represents the cycle of life and the changing of seasons that are both things to be thankful for.

As it is the autumnal equinox, Mabon is also a time for balance and harmony. It is also a time for release of bad relationships and habits from the previous months and reset for the coming year. Those celebrating will pray to the Crone for their Mabon blessing. She is known as the Dark Mother and praying to her acknowledges the role that both darkness and light play in the life cycle and the lessons we can receive from both.

## 8. Samhain (October 31 to November 1)

Samhain occurs on October 31 and is the last of four fire festivals and the end of the Wheel of the Year. It is considered the last harvest festival and the start of winter. Along with celebrating the end of harvest season, it is also a welcome for the dark half of the year. Samhain is a well-known celebration worldwide as people participate in similar holidays like Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, or All Souls Day.

In Celtic times, families would leave their hearths to burn out during the final harvest and cattle were sacrificed as a thanks for all that was reaped during the light half of the year. Celts,

Pagans, and people of many faiths around the world, consider Samhain a time when [the barrier between the world of the living and dead is the thinnest](#).

Celebrations often include tributes to ancestors and family members who have died, along with celebrations, bonfires, and feasting. Celts would dress their livestock in costumes to ward off faeries who would try to kidnap ancestor spirits that would cross over to visit. Families and their ancestors would partake in a feast called Dumb Supper. Adults would invite the ancestors to join and give them the past year's news while children played games to entertain them. Cakes would be left out and all the windows and doors left open to allow the spirits to come and go as they please and partake in treats.

Like other pagan festivals, Samhain has been co-opted by Christianity. In the 9th century Pope Gregory declared [November 1st as All Saints Day](#) and November second as All Souls Day. Despite the attempted take over, pagan rituals remained, like dressing up in costumes and carving Jack o'Lanterns, although the Celts used turnips and the tradition now uses pumpkins. Even trick or treating stems from the pagan tradition of mumming. This where people would put on costumes and go door to door singing songs to the dead and receive cakes as payment.

Like the other fall festivals, the fruits from the harvest are included in Samhain celebrations and on altars to feed spirits who drift through the veils between worlds. Harvest foods like apples, pumpkins and corn, along with skulls, skeletons, and ghosts are all symbols of Samhain. As with Beltane, modern Wiccans brought back more traditional Samhain celebrations in the 1980s.

Pagan Festival	Date	Holiday Name	Themes & Traditions	Symbols	Themes & Traditions
Yule	December 21 or 22	Winter Solstice, Yule, Midwinter, Christmas, Brumalia, Saturnalia, Lesser Sabbat (Wicca)	Gift Giving, Shortest Day	Evergreens, Decoration Trees Or Homes	Rebirth Of Solar God

Pagan Festival	Date	Holiday Name	Themes & Traditions	Symbols	Themes & Traditions
Imbolc	February 1	Candlemas, February Eve, Brigid, Greater Sabbat (Wicca), Fire Festival (Celt)	Spring Cleaning And Preparation, Purification	Shepherds And Lambs, Bonfires, Doll Effigies Made Of Straw, Reeds, Or Cornhusks, Offerings Of Milk	Brigid, Celtic Goddess Of Fertility
Ostara	March 19, 20, or 21	Spring Equinox, Hilaria (Roman), Lady Day, Alban Eilir (Modern Druid), Lesser Sabbat (Wicca)	New Beginnings, Life After Winter, Light And Dark In Balance	Planting Seeds, Hares, Eggs, Budding Flowers	Eostre, Germanic Goddess Of Spring
Beltane	May 1	May Day, Rud-Day, May Eve, Beltene, Greater Sabbat (Wicca), Fire Festival (Celt), Walpurgis Night (Germanic)	Maypole, Flowers, Queen Of May, Youth, Growth, Light, Fertility	Bonfires, Dancing, Fertility, Maypoles, Flowers	Belanus, Celtic Sun God, Flora, Roman Goddess Of Flowers
Litha	June 20 Or 21	Summer Solstice, Midsummer, Summer Solstice, Alban Hefin (Druid), Lesser Sabbat (Wicca)	Longest Day Of The Year, Height Of Sun's Power, Inspiration, Enlightenment	Sun, Oak, Holly, Bonfires	Sun Gods, Holly King, Oak King
Lughnasadh	Lughnasadh August 1	Lammas, August Eve, Lughnasadh, Greater Sabbat (Wicca), Fire Festival (Celtic)	Beginning Of The Harvest, Giving Thanks, Baking And Breaking Bread	Bonfires, Bread, Grain, Scythes	Lugh, Celtic Warrior God
Mabon	September 21 or 22	Fall Or Autumn Equinox, September Equinox, Alban Elfed (Modern Druid), Michaelmas, Lesser Sabbat (Wicca)	Giving Thanks, Preparing For Winter	Apples Cornucopia	Mabon Ap Modron, Welsh God
Samhain	October 31	Halloween, All-Hallowe'en, Hallomas, November Eve,	Tributes To Ancestors, Spirits Of The Dead, Darkness,	Bonfires, Altars To Ancestors And The Dead,	Crom Cruach, Celtic Deity/Figure

Pagan Festival	Date	Holiday Name	Themes & Traditions	Symbols	Themes & Traditions
		Samhuinn, Greater Sabbat (Wicca), Fire Festival (Celt)	End Of The Year And Start Of Winter	Apples, Pumpkins And Other Fall Fruits	

Because of the difference in when seasons fall, the sabbats are celebrated at **opposite times** of the year in the southern hemisphere. For example, Mabon is celebrated on March 21 instead of September.

While the dates are different, the traditions are much the same as in the northern hemisphere.

Sabbat	Southern Hemisphere Date
Lughnasadh	February 1
Mabon	March 21
Samhain	April 30 – May 1
Yule	June 21
Imbolc	August 1
Ostara	September 21
Beltane	October 31
Litha	December 21

# What Are The Different Types Of Paganism?

## Celtic Paganism

The term 'Celtic' refers to the cultures, languages, and peoples found in six regions in northwestern Europe: Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man, and Brittany.

Celtic Pagans focused primarily on the four fire festivals: Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhain. These names are Celtic in origin. Specific practices, traditions and beliefs vary by region, but celebrating the changing seasons and using fire to represent purification and fertility is a common thread between them.

## Slavic Paganism

Slavic Paganism originates from northeastern Europe and focuses on changes in the natural world, expressed through the conflict between two gods: Veles, god of the earth, cattle, and the underworld and Perun, god of thunder, storms, rain, and fertility. Their cyclical struggle represents the changing seasons, which are often accompanied by storms and severe weather.

Some Slavic Pagans also believe in a world tree with three planes of existence: the celestial plane where Perun and other deities live, a middle plane where humans dwell, and the underworld where Veles may be found. The number three is a powerful number in Slavic Paganism, as reflected in their world tree and three-headed gods, symbols, and idols.

## Germanic Paganism

The term 'Germanic' doesn't refer only to modern-day Germany but includes part of northern Europe and Scandinavia. Germanic Paganism may draw upon elements from Celtic and Norse mythology, folklore, and Pagan practices. Pagans may also be called heathens in this region.

One commonality between different Germanic Pagans is the importance of trees both symbolically and in rituals. Norse mythology also includes a world tree—Yggdrasil—with nine realms. Germanic Pagan rituals are often conducted in tree groves, and trees or poles may have been used to represent the world tree. While little is known about

Germanic festivals, Germanic Pagans likely held celebrations in February and December and may have had a spring or summer festival too. Communal feasts, ritual drinking, sacrifice, and divination are featured in their celebrations.

## Hellenic Paganism

Hellenic Pagans worship the Greek pantheon, which includes Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite, Apollo and other gods and goddesses. Hellenic Pagans may include the four elements of earth, air, water, and fire in their rituals. However, there are no specific rules on how or who to worship. Hellenic Paganism is based on the idea of reciprocity—you give something because you get something from these deities' involvement directly in your life. You might make a sacrifice to Demeter, the goddess of the harvest, for a successful harvest, or Hera, goddess of marriage and family, after the birth of a child.

## Roman Paganism

Much like ancient Greece, Rome was a polytheistic society that worshiped a pantheon of gods. Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Pluto are just a few of the deities on the Roman pantheon. As Christianity was introduced and became a primary religion in Rome, the term Pagan was applied to people who worshiped more than one god. The term was later used by the Roman military to describe peasants and civilians in newly conquered lands.

In many ways, Pagans, Wiccans, and druids have many things in common. All worship or focus on nature and the cycle of the seasons. However, there are some distinct differences.

## Wicca Paganism

Wiccans are Pagans that focus on two deities: the god and goddess. The goddess has three aspects—maid, mother, and crone—that are closely associated with and celebrated during the moon cycles. The Horned God is closely associated with sun cycles and Wheel of the Year celebrations. In Wicca, the eight festivals in the Wheel of the Year are known as greater sabbats (Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhain) and lesser sabbats (Yule, Ostara, Litha, and Mabon).

## Druid Paganism

Historically, druids were religious leaders in Celtic cultures. Neo-druids are less organized and don't follow one set of rules or rituals. Neo-druids also follow the Wheel of the Year and celebrate the eight festivals. Druids may be polytheistic, but their primary focus is nature, not deities. Some druid groups—or groves—may call to the quarters (North, South, East, West) during their rituals. All druids worship nature, which often involves spending time alone in natural spaces to connect spiritually. However, many druids keep their practice private.

## How Did Christianity Impact The Wheel Of The Year?

Christianity did not impact the Wheel of the Year. The festivals included in the Wheel of the Year have roots in Pagan culture, especially Celtic Paganism. The rituals, symbols, and celebrations associated with the festivals in the Wheel of the Year pre-date Christianity. These Pagan festivals were grounded in the essential parts of life—season, nature, sun, light, darkness, planting, harvest, birth and death—and were often associated with multiple gods from various pantheons. However, Christianity may have borrowed some symbols and celebrations from Paganism. This is why we see similarities between Yule and Christmas, Imbolc and Candlemas, and Ostara and Easter.

There is also speculation that some Christian figures may have been borrowed from Pagan deities. For example, Christians may have adopted the goddess Brigid as Saint Brigid. The Catholic Church references historical accounts of an Irish woman named Brigid as the Saint. However, St. Brigid's feast day falls on February 1, which is also Imbolc, a celebration associated with Brigid the Goddess. St. Brigid celebrations also involve doll effigies and historical references to bonfires.

## How Many People Still Practice Paganism?

An estimated 1 million Americans, or .04% of the U.S. population, identified as Wiccan or Pagan, according to the Pew Research Center. Other surveys show continued growth in the number of respondents identifying as Wiccan or Pagan during the early to mid-2000s. Paganism is growing worldwide, but getting specific numbers is difficult due to the

private nature of some Pagans and the variety of practices that exist. Fear of judgment may also make it less likely that some Pagans will disclose their personal beliefs.

Luckily, the practice of Wicca, Druidry, and Paganism doesn't require disclosure. Many practitioners choose to practice privately, observing the Wheel of the Year and selecting the rituals and celebrations that are the most meaningful to them. The decline of populations participating in organized religion, and the increased presence of witchcraft and Paganism in pop culture may make it easier to practice more openly in the future.

While the eight festivals that form the Wheel of the Year were historically community-wide celebrations, the symbols and rituals can be used for private practice too. Whether you seek out a Pagan community or practice privately, the Wheel of the Year can guide your spiritual journey with meaningful rituals and symbols that have endured time, prejudice, and absorption by other organized religions. Use these eight festivals to connect with nature, the changing seasons, darkness and light, and the ebb and flow of the natural world.

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# Mabon Gods & Goddesses

The Gods & Goddesses of Mabon all share harvest, fertility, and life-death-rebirth themes. Appropriate Goddesses of Mabon and the Fall Equinox are all grape/wine, berry, fruit, vegetable and harvest deities. Appropriate Gods of Mabon and the Fall Equinox are all wine, fruit, forest, and harvest deities. Mabon and the general harvest season also bring about the characteristics of all Crown aspects of the Triple Goddess in all religions.

Mabon also brings themes of harmony & balance, harvest, death, the Underworld, rebirth, agriculture, fruits, grains, inspiration, writing, music, commerce, fertility, the Moon, nature, wilding gods, & all aspects of the forest, from its animals to the plants and spirits of the trees.



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## The Gods & Goddesses of Imbolc

The Gods & Goddesses of Imbolc all share fire, fertility, growth, and rebirth themes. Appropriate Goddesses of Imbolc are all virgin or maiden deities....

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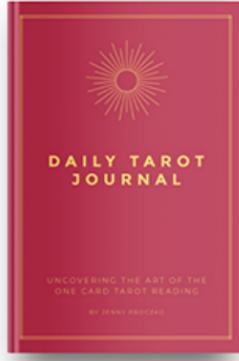
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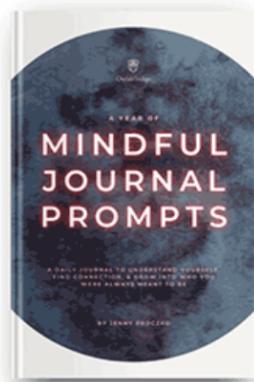


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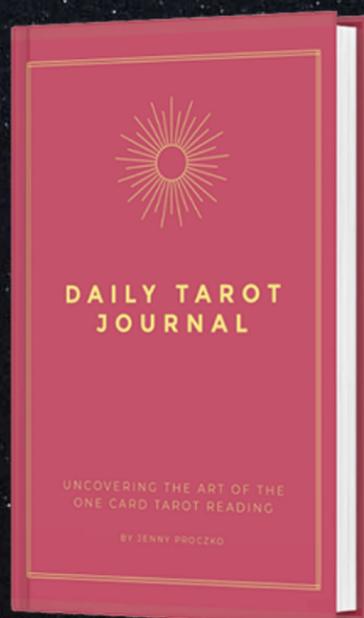
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