

YULE:

Wiccan celebration of Winter Solstice

The Wiccan Calendar

The Wiccan calendar has its origin in rural, earth-based religious traditions. Its festivals follow the logic of seasonal progression as experienced by agricultural and herding peoples whose lives are centered on planting, harvesting, and storing the winter food supply thus produced.

The Wiccan calendar includes two cycles of festivals, lunar and solar, called the “Wheel of the Year,” which celebrates the mysteries of creation and reveres the Great Goddess and God, divinity honored as being both female and male. This annual cycle includes eight “sabbats” or solar festivals and monthly lunar rituals.

Many traditions hold a belief in the five classical elements, although they are seen as symbolic as representations of the phases of matter. Wicca honors these five elements in the form of the pentagram, the five elements being air, fire, water, earth, and aether (or spirit).



The Sabbats

Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn—birth, growth, fading, death—the Wheel turns, on and on. Ideas are born, projects are consummated, plans prove impractical and die. We fall in love; we suffer loss; we consummate relationships; we give birth; we grow old; we decay.

The Sabbats are eight points where inner and the outer cycles are connected, the interstices where the seasonal, the celestial, the communal, the creative, and the personal all meet. Wiccans enact each drama in its time in order to transform themselves, recognizing renewal and rebirth even in decay and death. We are not separate from each other, from the broader world around us;

we are one with the Goddess, with the God. As the Cone of Power rises, as the season changes, Wiccans arouse the power from within, the power to heal, the power to change society, the power to renew the earth.

Yule

(Winter Solstice, ca. **December 20-23**)

Yule or Yuletide (“Yule time” or “Yule season”) is a festival historically observed by the Germanic peoples. Scholars have connected the original celebrations of Yule to the Wild Hunt, the god Odin, and the pagan Anglo-Saxon Mōdraniht.

Later departing from its pagan roots, Yule underwent Christianized reformulation, resulting in the term Christmastide. Many present-day Christmas customs and traditions such as the Yule log, Yule goat, Yule boar, Yule singing, and others stem from pagan Yule traditions. Terms with an etymological equivalent to Yule are still used in Nordic countries and Estonia to describe Christmas and other festivals occurring during the winter holiday season.

Winter Solstice is the night of longest dark, the point of deepest night and winter before the returning of new life. It is the last moment of gestation, the time in the womb that’s about to end in birth, the nothingness that becomes the universe. Wiccans affirm this passage into awareness, from nothingness to the chaos of all hope and potential. It is the total stillness of winter, the furthest descent before winter cold gives way. Rituals for Winter Solstice reflect the awakening of death into life. At Yuletide we celebrate the birthday of the sun. It is a time of joy and hope as the sun is reborn.

Representations of Yule in various groups can vary considerably. Some celebrate in a way as close as possible to how they believe Ancient Germanic pagans observed the tradition, while others observe the holiday with rituals from different sources. In Germanic Neopagan sects, Yule is celebrated with gatherings that often involve a meal and gift giving.



In many forms of Wicca, Yule is celebrated at the winter solstice as the rebirth of the Great horned hunter god, who is viewed as the newborn solstice sun. The method of gathering for this sabbat varies by practitioner. Some have private ceremonies at home, while others do so with their covens or communities of practice.