

**EDAIN
McCOY**

OSTARA

**CUSTOMS, SPELLS & RITUALS
FOR THE RITES OF SPRING**





Ostara: Celebration of Balance and Renewal

The spell of the sacred dawn rushes to envelop you as you awaken. On the eastern horizon, the sky rapidly turns from black to a rich midnight blue, then from amber to orange, and finally to a bright azure as the first long legs of the sun step tentatively over the horizon and flood the land with light. The daylight will last exactly twelve hours before the last of the sun's legs steps out of our landscape again, giving way to the night, which will also last exactly twelve hours. It is the day of the vernal equinox.

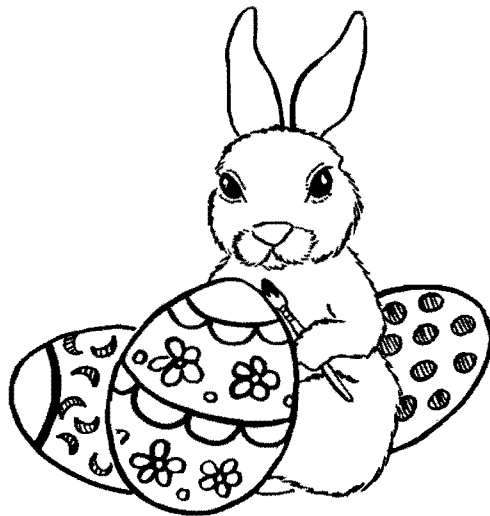
Learn to connect with the spirit of Ostara, one of the most primitive and “earthy” of the solar festivals. Edain McCoy uncovers the origins, lore, and customs of this ancient celebration of lengthening days and the awakening earth, heralded by the vernal equinox in late March.

From coloring eggs with natural plant dyes to spring cleaning rituals to spells for love and lust, this book is bursting with rituals, recipes, magick, myths, customs, crafts, and games to incorporate into your own Ostara celebrations.

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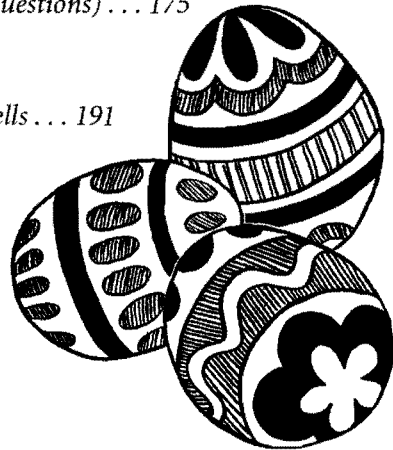
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Introduction

The Rites of Spring

The hushed expectancy of the sacred dawn envelops you as you awaken. It is the day of the vernal equinox. The warming rays of the sun have been hidden by the shadow of the Earth for only a little more than twelve hours. You throw on a shawl, go outdoors, and look to the eastern horizon as the sky turns from black to a rich midnight blue, from amber to orange, then finally to a bright azure as the first long legs of the sun step tentatively over the horizon to flood the land with light. The daylight will last exactly twelve hours before the last of the sun's legs steps out of our landscape again, giving way to the night, which will also last exactly twelve hours. You revel in the perfect balance of heaven and earth, knowing that, with this special sunrise, ancient rituals are renewed.

Behind the doors of a locked bedroom a young Witch lights the ribbon-bedecked pastel candles on her altar and murmurs a private welcome to the Goddess of the Sun.

An elderly, robed man—a Druid alone in the woods—stirs blood-red wine three times three before offering a toast to the spirits of spring.

Children in the daycare center of the local Greek Orthodox Church dye hard-boiled eggs a rich red to share as gifts and offerings to celebrate the miracle of life renewed.

An ecumenical study group wends its collective way through the twists and turns of the labyrinth they have created to reenact ancient resurrection rituals and to honor the rebirth of many religion's deities of spring.

A Wiccan coven in England walks out to a secluded meadow bursting with new greenery and taps three times on the back of Mother Earth to gently awaken her from her winter's nap.

The citizens of a small town in Scotland march through the hills and meadows outside their village banging on pots and pans, blowing whistles, ringing bells, and shooting off rifles to celebrate the arrival of spring.

A solitary student of Witchcraft gathers the first flowers of the season to decorate her personal ritual space, and is surprised at how in tune with the earth's energies this simple act makes her feel.

An Irish lad dons the leafy mask of the Green Man and dances on his nimble feet through the streets of his village, where its citizens are celebrating the greening of the earth.

A German woman who has no conscious knowledge that the hare was an animal sacred to the spring goddess of her ancestors still feels compelled to make a rabbit stew for her family's equinox dinner, a tradition practiced by her grandmother.

Simple.

Timeless.

The Power of Light

These age-old rituals borne within the atavistic impulses of our forbears in order to acknowledge the spring equinox are still with us. They come in many forms and are expressed in both religious and secular cultures the world over. Archaeologists estimate that the two equinoxes and two solstices that quarter our solar year were first celebrated in tribal and clan communities as religious festivals as long as 12,000 years ago.

While the moon's phases often relate to internal or spiritual changes, the turning points of the sun correspond to external or physical life, usually marking a commu-

nity's all-important hunting, herding, and agricultural seasons. For this reason these are often thought of as "earthy" festivals, even though the element of fire, as a symbol of the sun, predominates the rituals. That the spring equinox—often called Ostara or Eostre in nature spiritualities today—is one of the most primitive and "earthy" in character of these solar festivals is hard to deny. We still see vestiges of this impulse to dance wildly upon the face of the reborn earth and to seek out sexual encounters in the annual ritual known as spring break, when college students shelve their inhibitions and head en masse to the warm beaches of the southern United States to seek the satiation of unmet primal urges.

When Russian composer Igor Stravinsky composed his ballet *The Rite of Spring*, he sought to capture the primitive energy of ancient equinox celebrations in his music. When the ballet was first performed in Moscow in 1913, the audience was in a state of near riot. The then-unfamiliar musical dissonance and the hard-driving, erratic beat underlying it were fiercely disturbing, no doubt awakening long-suppressed atavistic impulses in its listeners. These impulses, so long repressed by popular culture—in particular throughout the puritanical latter half of the nineteenth century—have been embraced with joy by the modern Pagan community worldwide.

A majority of our Ostara traditions come from Europe, where this festival is known by a variety of names, including Eostre's Day, vernal equinox, Alban Eiber, Bacchanalia, Lady Day, and Jack in the Green Day. It has also been celebrated the world over under names honoring other deities of spring. In some cases it has served as the point at which the solar year was believed to stop and restart, an appropriate symbolic relationship for a holiday that acknowledges above all that life is never at an end, but is renewed again and again in endless succession.

The most well-known new year's celebration connected to the spring equinox is the Kalends of March, or the old new year's day of ancient Rome, observed around March 25, the approximate date of the equinox 2,000 years ago when the old and new calendars are calculated together. Named for Mars, the Roman God of War, March was the first month of the year, according to the old Roman calendar. Until a new calendar was adopted in the Middle Ages, much of Europe, which had been heavily influenced by the Roman Empire, still acknowledged the month of March as the start of the new year.

A vestige of this old new year is still seen in the way the signs of the zodiac are arranged in modern Western astrology. The first sign of the zodiac is Aries. The sun

enters the sign of Aries just about the time of the spring equinox, an event that has marked the beginning of the Western zodiacal year for centuries.

The Romans also celebrated the Festival of Janus around the spring equinox. Janus is the two-faced god who looks both to the past and future at the same time. He stands at the portal of time when past and present meet and sees into both. Today Janus appropriately gives his name to the *new* new year's month, January.

The concept that the spring equinox marked the time of the new year was not confined to Rome. In ancient India the festival of Vaisakhi, celebrated on the new moon closest to the spring equinox, marked the beginning of their new year, as did the festival of Kalacharka in Tibet, which is now fixed on March 15.

Many other celebrations falling on or near the vernal equinox are still known today. Some are celebrated as local folk festivals, and others have all the panache of their original practices. A list of some of these can be found in Appendix A in the back of this book.

As you explore the meaning, customs, and deities of this primitive spring rush we call Ostara, it will also deepen your appreciation for the unique character of the other seven solar festivals that spoke the wheel of the year. As the wheel of the year turns, it appears to us to pause briefly on these special days, marking not

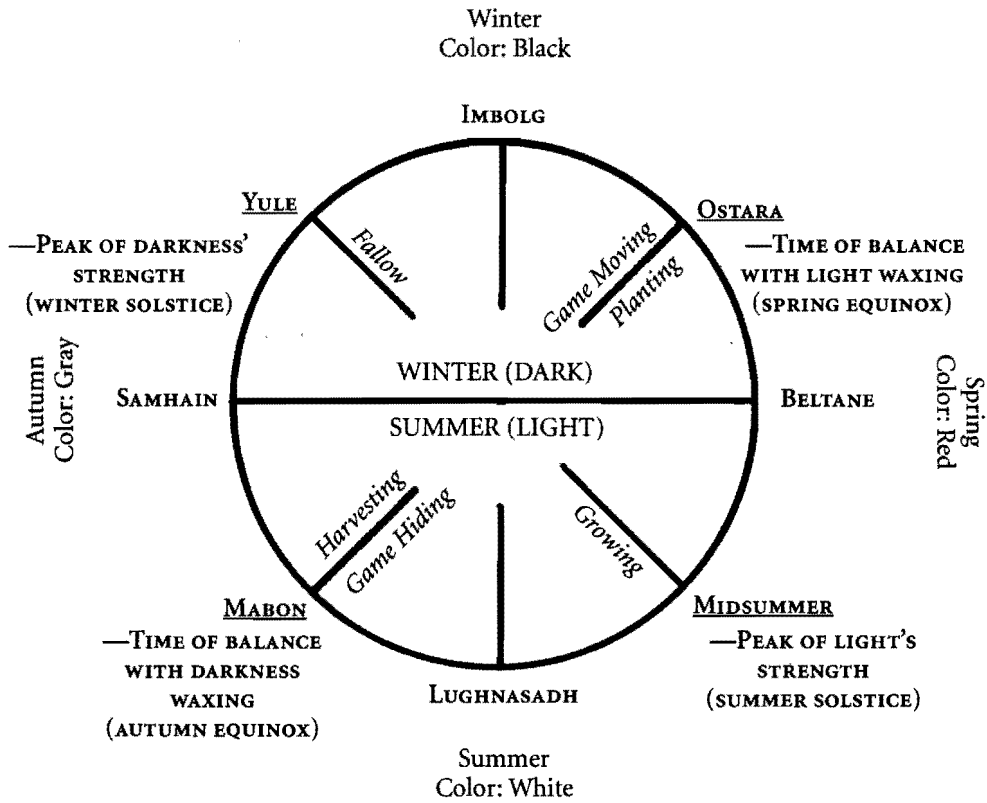
only changes in the earth's seasons but also changes within ourselves. They correspond with the eternal life cycle of the God and Goddess whose union creates all things, and with the ebb and flow of our own life cycles.

The sabbats all have something to teach us about the eternal cycles on which our souls travel, and should be a time set aside to recognize their importance. The word *sabbat* comes from the same Greek root as "sabbath," meaning a day of rest set aside to honor our deities.



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The Rites of Spring



THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR: A conceptualization showing Ostara's place in the ever-turning cycle.

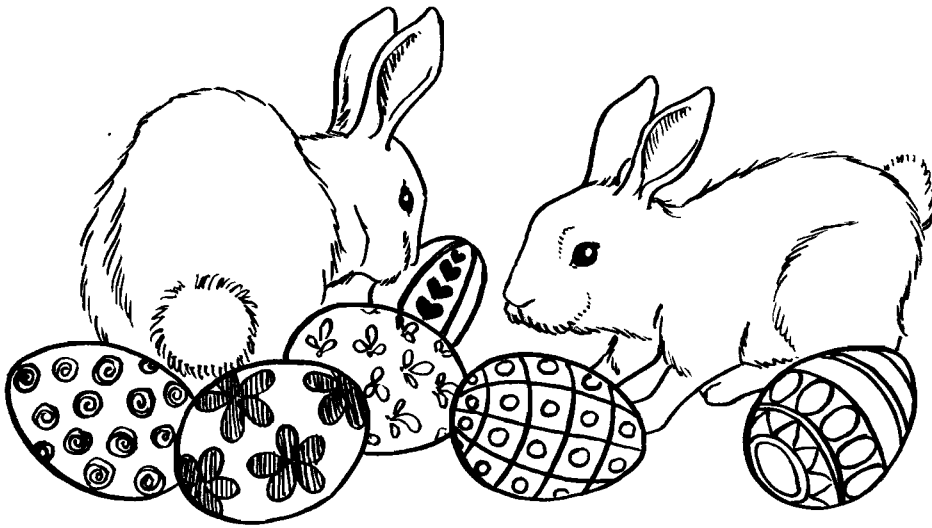
These sabbats and their relation to one another can be seen on the drawing of the wheel. These are:

Samhain	October 31
Yule	Winter Solstice/December 22
Imbolg	February 2
Ostara	Spring Equinox/March 22
Beltane	May 1
Litha	Summer Solstice/June 22
Lughnasadh	August 1
Mabon	Autumn Equinox/September 22

It should never be assumed that one sabbat is more important than another. Though we naturally have our favorites, each one presents an opportunity for spiritual growth and for bonding with our community of family, friends, and spiritual partners in ways unique only to that particular festival.

Ostara—or the rites of spring—is a spiritual legacy bequeathed to us by our ancestors. We all have a right to participate in and enjoy them. Many would say we have a duty to celebrate—to not allow these rituals and customs that meant so much to our forbears to disappear from our lives that are increasingly insulated from the natural world.

This book will show you how to embrace Ostara as a point of balance in your life, reflecting this moment in time where dark and light, day and night are in harmony for a brief moment in time before the light is victorious and carries us on to the bounty of summer pleasures. You will learn to connect with the spirit of the festival and to incorporate its rituals and customs, both ancient and new, into your own Ostara celebrations, renewing your understanding of the festival and enhancing your enjoyment of the entire wheel of the year.



1

Eggs-actly Ostara

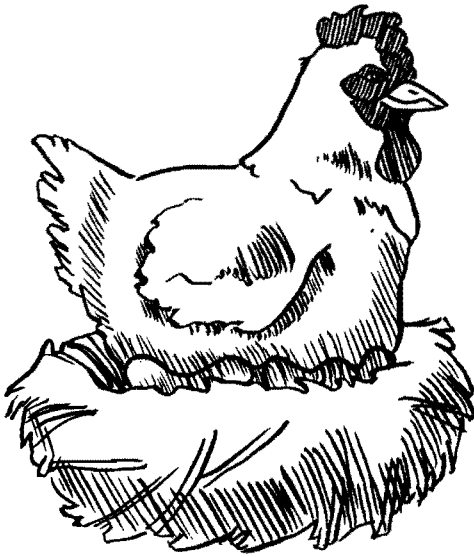
The not-so-humble egg is inarguably the most pervasive symbol of the world's spring festivals, Ostara included. Within its shell is contained all the archetypical connections humanity has ever held with life, death, and life renewed. This eternal cycle of rebirth at spring is a major theme in the spring holidays of virtually every one of the world's religions, from the most ancient Pagan expressions of spirituality to the most modern sects of Christianity.

How did the egg—particularly the chicken egg—get appointed to this lofty position of symbolizing a universe full of new life? Like many of our modern holiday customs, the egg's place in spring spiritual rites is derived from the way our ancestors observed the natural world around them and honored their deities through these natural occurrences. With modern refrigeration, factory farming, and a fast-moving global marketplace making a variety of food abundant to us year round, it's hard for

us to fully comprehend that food was once a seasonal commodity that was impossible to obtain when the natural conditions allowing it to be produced were unavailable.

The eyes of a laying hen and the amount of light she receives are the components responsible for her ability to produce eggs. A hen lays eggs when the retina, the part of the eye that captures light and images, is stimulated for periods of twelve hours or more by sunlight. When that light stimulation ends, so does her laying cycle. Because fire, the only source of light for our ancestors, was not a strong enough light to fool the hen's retina, there were no fresh eggs for a full six months out of every year.

Though the scientific connection between light stimulation and laying cycles would be not known for many more centuries, their laying pattern was still reliable. Hens could be counted on to begin producing fresh eggs at the spring equinox and cease producing them around the autumnal equinox, a holiday period associated with dying and death and imagery opposite that of Ostara. As the world bloomed and greened anew each Ostara, the abundance of fresh eggs made them a natural symbol of new life.



In Asia, red-colored eggs are on occasion offered at funerals and births to symbolize the natural cycles of life, death, and rebirth. In the Ukraine, eggs called *krashanka*—sometimes dyed in shades of bright yellow—are eaten to celebrate the rebirth of the sun. More elaborate eggs, called *pysanky*, are decorated to use as talismans of fertility, prosperity, and protection. In places as diverse as west-central Africa and the southern Appalachian Mountains of the United States, eggs are buried near cemeteries to encourage reincarnation.

Rebirthing Spell

Gently place one egg in a pan that is half-filled with boiling water. As you watch the egg boil in the steaming pot, concentrate on something you feel is gone from your life that you wish to have manifest back into it. Conceptualize this desire as living within the egg, a need that will be birthed into being with the egg's assistance. Visualize this miracle happening with as much clarity and detail as you are able. Do this for at least five minutes, then remove the pan from the heat and allow it to cool.

When the egg is able to be handled, take crayons or felt markers in any color or colors you feel best represents your desire and draw a symbol or some other representation of your wish on the egg.

Bury the egg near your front door, as deep as is reasonable. Each time you walk past the place where the egg is buried, be sure to remind yourself of its purpose by restating to yourself an affirmation of your desire.

In a short time the egg will break down, the shell cracking open and the yolk decomposing. This symbolic life, death, and rebirth of your wishing egg is linked by magick to your life, and it will help your desire to be rebirthed soon.

Eostre's Eggs and the Legend of the Easter Bunny

The Anglo-Saxons hailed Eostre as the Goddess of Spring, the Greening Earth, and Fertility. Her name means "moving with the waxing sun." Around the time of her festival, on the day when light and dark are equal, the local animals began giving birth or going into their sexually receptive cycles, named "estrus periods" after the goddess. From the fiercest to the most humble, the woodland animals—who also worshipped and loved Eostre—would play in the warmth of spring light and feast on the new vegetation Eostre provided.

One of Eostre's devotees was a small hare who wished very much to give a gift to his goddess, but he didn't know what he could possibly offer that would be of any value to her. Then one day while foraging, the hare came across a fresh egg, a very prized commodity indeed. The little hare wanted very badly to eat the egg, as it had been a long time since he'd feasted on anything finer than dry grasses. Before he could take a bite of his prize, he realized this egg might make the perfect gift for Eostre. But, he pondered, Eostre could have all the eggs she wanted, anytime she wanted them. She was a

goddess, a creator, the embodiment of Life itself. Giving her just any egg would never do. How, he wondered, could he make this egg a fit offering for his goddess?

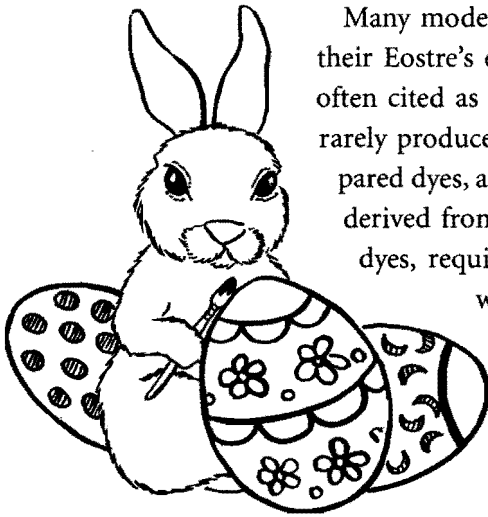
The little hare took the egg home and pondered how to make it as beautiful and new as Eostre made the world each spring. He began to decorate the egg. He painted it in the hues of Eostre's spring woods and placed upon the shell symbols sacred to Eostre. When he felt he could not make the egg any more beautiful, he took it to Eostre and offered it to her.

Eostre was so pleased by the little hare's sacrifice of his egg to her, and by the manner in which he decorated it for her, that she wanted everyone—especially children, who are themselves symbols of new life—to enjoy these representations of her bounty. Since that Ostara day long ago, the descendants of that hare have taken up the task of delivering decorated eggs to the world's children at spring. They are called Eostre's Bunnies or, more commonly, the Easter Bunny.



Decorating Eostre's Eggs

The egg decorating and gifting custom long ago emerged in the modern West from the Teutonic traditions in which Eostre was first honored. Today, spring egg-decorating kits are numerous and inexpensive, and many adherents of the world's Christian religions decorate them in celebration of the resurrection of their savior deity, Jesus.



Many modern Pagans and Witches like to use natural dyes for their Eostre's eggs, sometimes called Ostara eggs, since Ostara is often cited as a Greek translation of Eostre's name. Natural dyes rarely produce a color as dark and rich as the commercially prepared dyes, and some finishes tend to scratch or rub off. They are derived from plants just like natural fabric dyes and, like these dyes, require more preparation and dying time than needed

when using commercial dye kits. By using the materials nature provides, though, you will be coloring eggs as they were done in the past. Also, the use of natural herbs can be used to help empower specific eggs to assist with specific magickal tasks.

To make your own natural dyes you will need a generous fistful of herbs or plants that produce colored stains, a small- to medium-sized saucepan, and a wooden spoon. Glass saucepans are best, as metal can become irrevocably stained by natural dyes.

Place about three cups of water in the pan and allow it to come to a low boil; add the plant material and stir occasionally so that the water becomes a very deep version of your desired shade. The color the eggs take on will always be significantly paler and you may need to add, boil, strain, and repeat to get the darker shades you desire. When you have the water the shade you want, strain the plant material out of the water, return the water to the pan, and bring the water to a light simmer. Add to it a pinch of salt, a tablespoon or two of vinegar, and a couple tablespoons of cream of tartar. Mix these in well. Remove from heat, and place eggs in the dye until they attain the desired hue.

I have not personally experimented with all the dye sources listed below, but I have had experience with a great deal of them. The others I know of from contact with people who have tried them. But don't let this list limit you in any way. Playing with natural dyes is fun. Feel free to experiment with any nontoxic plant source to which you have no allergy to see how a dye made from it might turn out. Sometimes the resulting color will be a delightful surprise.

Natural Dye Sources and Colors

SOURCE	COLOR
White Grapes	Pale Yellow
Carrot Tops	Yellow
Turmeric	Yellow
Vanilla Extract	Yellow Orange
Daffodil Blossoms	Yellow Green
Dandelions	Orange
Onions	Orange
Orris Root	Rusty Orange
Paprika	Orange Brown
Heather	Pink
Madder Root	Red

continued

Eggs-actly Ostara

Blackberries	Red Violet
Bracken	Green
Red Cabbage	Robin's Egg Blue
Iris Blossoms	Pinkish Blue
Blueberries	Blue
Black Raspberries	Blue
Beets	Blue Violet
Mulberries	Blue Violet
Cayenne	Rust

The symbolic image of the egg is almost as important as its organic aspect, so don't overlook using "eggs" crafted from wood, foam, or plastic. All can be painted with nontoxic watercolor or acrylic paints or covered with seasonal decals. You may decorate eggs with faces, symbols, or any other idea that captures your fancy. With a few trinkets or decorative items found in craft stores, and some school glue, you can add sequins, beads, fake gemstones, glitter, or feathering to make Ostara eggs say just how you feel about the season, your goddess and god, or about the person to whom you will be offering them.

Above all else, bear in mind that there is no wrong way to decorate your Ostara eggs. If they appeal to you as symbols of the season, that's all that matters. However, you may want to keep in mind as you decorate that the colors you choose have meaning in both the archetypical and magickal sense.

Yellow • This is the color of creativity, mind power, intellectual pursuits, communication, and the solar plexus region of the body. It is also associated with the sun and with egg yolks.

Orange • Orange is another solar color. It is used in spells for attraction and friendship. Spells for willpower often use orange, as this is the color of the navel-area energy center, called a chakra, the area in the body governing personal desire and drive.

Red • Red is the color of blood, and this fact links it symbolically with the cycles of life, death, and rebirth. In the Greek Orthodox Church, eggs dyed deep red are used to decorate altars in homes and churches, and are given away as gifts after the traditional Easter Eve church service. The Druid priests of the Celtic tribes were reputed to have used red eggs in a similar manner. Red is also the color of desire, courage, lust, sexuality, war, and strength, and represents the womb blood of the Mother Goddess from which all things are born.

Green • This is the color of the Earth Mother in spring and summer. It represents abundance, prosperity, personal appearance, and fertility. Spells to neutralize difficult situations or induce calm often employ green. Green is linked to the energy center around the heart, so it's a natural that spells for love of all types work well under green's influence.

Blue • Blue represents sleep and dreams, peace and healing, and fidelity and unity, and is frequently employed in spells for dream magick and astral projection. Its paler shades are often associated with the coming of spring and with virgin goddesses.

Violet • This is the color of intense spirituality, metaphysical mysteries, deep sleep, the healing of serious illnesses, the uncovering of past lives, and of communicating with higher-level beings. This is also the color of the crown chakra of the body, which is activated when we seek a connection with the divine.

White • White is used in healing and purification spells and rituals. It is always perfect as an all-purpose color substitute when no other color feels quite right.

Brown • Brown represents the Earth and its animals, and is often used in connection with stone magick to help the inner self connect to the rhythms and energies of the Earth.

Black • Contrary to its reputation, black is not a color of evil or negativity. It represents mysteries, voids, and the Crone Goddess, and is used in spells to absorb and dispel negative influences. Though not a popular Ostara color, black should never be summarily dismissed as a magickal color choice when decorating eggs

for spells or ritual. Even though it is associated with death in the West, it is symbolic of life in many parts of the East—and it should be remembered at Ostara that new life may only come from death, be it physical or metaphoric.

Pink • Like all pastels, pink is associated with spring. It is used primarily in spells and rituals for household peace and romantic love.

Silver • Silver represents the moon, the Goddess, psychicism, and the inner self.

Gold • Gold can represent the solar deities, both male and female. It is also used in summer festivals, in rituals to honor the sun, and in spells for wealth and employment.



Making Cascarones

Did being hit over the head ever seem like a blessing to you? It would if you lived in the American Southwest, where the Latino people have adapted a lovely Easter egg custom with Pagan origins into their spring celebrations. They bless you by knocking you in the head with special eggs known as *cascarones*. Cascarones (pronounced *cahs-cah-ROE-nays*) are eggshells that have been collected for many weeks prior to Easter and carefully hollowed out. They are then decorated and filled with a variety of substances that will shower over their recipients when cracked over their heads. Common cascarone fillers include confetti, lavender, sage, perfumed herbs, and flour or cornmeal. Though the idea now is more one of playfulness, it was once a very real tool for making magick and offering the blessings of the equinox to others.

Items you will need to make your own cascarones include eggs and some clear carton-sealing tape. You will also need bowls to catch the inside of the eggs as you hollow out the shells; colorful items with which to decorate your eggs, such as paints and decals; and some herbs or confetti with which to fill out the empty shells. A small kitchen funnel can also be useful to have on hand.

Start by emptying the eggs. Make a small hole in both ends of the egg (I use a fork tine) and, with the narrow end down, gently blow the contents into the waiting bowl. Wash out the empty shells with cold water and let dry. Paint and decorate the shells before filling them. The filling is done by taping up the smallest hole and using a small funnel in the larger hole to channel your desired contents into the egg. Be careful not to fill the shell more than three-quarters full or it will not break well and could be solid enough to hurt the recipient of your attention. When full, seal the other end with clear tape and store in a cool, dry place until Ostara morning.

A Cascarone Love Spell

Following the instructions given above, make a cascarone and fill it with magickal herbs associated with attracting romantic love. These include lavender, yarrow, apple blossom, rose petals, daisies, lemon verbena, willow, or rosemary. Copal can be added too—this is a popular herb in Mexican folk magick. You may also want to toss in some herbs that help create a lusty atmosphere, such as cloves, cinnamon, dill, or damiana.

As you create the cascarone, visualize the contents as catalysts that will allow your desired lover to notice you more intently without impinging on his or her free will to choose a lover. On Ostara you can either shower the object of your desire with the cascarone or break it open in a flowing river while visualizing your goal being carried to the heart of your loved one.





Ostara Egg Recipes

And what do you do with all those egg innards you collected from making your cascarones? You bake, of course. Food items made with eggs, honey, and milk are liberally consumed at both Ostara and at Beltane, the other spring sabbat, which falls on May 1. These are traditional foods due to their availability to our ancestors in the spring and summer months.



Baked creations with lots of eggs are popular in French cooking, which is generally thought of as a hard cuisine to master. There are, however, many simplified versions of these difficult creations, and the first recipe is one of them. It can be used either for a family or coven meal, or as a brunch offering.

Baked Sandwiches

- 12 slices of bread, crusts removed
- 2 cups milk
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup grated Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 cups diced ham (vegetarians may substitute alfalfa sprouts)

Line the bottom of a 9 by 13-inch greased pan with 6 slices of bread. On top of that place the ham and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each of the grated Cheddar and Monterey Jack cheeses. Cover this with the other 6 slices of bread and sprinkle the remaining cheese over it.

In a separate bowl, mix the eggs and milk well, and pour over the sandwiches.

Bake for 1 hour, or until top is golden, in an oven that has been preheated to 350 degrees.

In Pagan practice egg nog is not just for the Yule season. Egg drinks are popular in the spring as well. The word *nog* is Old English and has nothing to do with December or winter. It simply means “a strong ale.” This recipe does not contain alcohol, but it can always be added if you like your nog that way. Please consider the needs of those you will be sharing it with before making that decision.

Note that this recipe uses uncooked eggs, which is more and more creating health issues. Incidences of food poisoning, particularly salmonella, have been on the rise. If you can find pasteurized eggs or eggs that have not been factory farmed, you increase your chances of avoiding a serious illness. You may also choose to gently heat the eggs and milk, stirring constantly, to kill any bacteria.

Egg Nog

- 12 eggs, separated
- ½ pound confectioners’ sugar
- 2 quarts cream or rich milk
- ⅓ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Beat the egg yolks until smooth, then mix them together with the sugar, cream, and salt in a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until just stiff, folding in the remaining ingredients. Pour this into the egg yolk mixture and mix them well. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours before serving chilled. Makes about a half gallon.

Egg pies are often known as quiches, another French name for a dish thought of as hard to concoct. This one is a bit less elaborate and can be made just as tastily with egg substitutes if you're looking to cut calories and cholesterol.

Egg and Artichoke Pie

- 6 eggs, well beaten
- ½ cup milk
- 1 can artichoke hearts, chopped
- ½ cup fresh, sliced mushrooms
- ⅓ cup diced onions
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 1 deep pie shell

Mix all the ingredients together and pour into the pie shell. Bake for about 40 minutes in an oven that has been preheated to 325 degrees. If the outer edges begin to bake too fast, remove from oven and cover with foil. Test for doneness by sticking a knife in the center and seeing if it comes out clean. Allow the pie to sit for 5 minutes before slicing.

This next recipe is a Southwestern breakfast treat that will give new zip to your morning meal.

Eye Poppin' Chili Eggs

- 1 (8–12) ounce can green chili peppers, drained
- 4–5 ounces cubed Monterey Jack cheese
- 4–5 ounces cubed Cheddar cheese
- 8 ounces salsa plus 4 ounces salsa (hot, medium, or mild)
- 6–8 large eggs, well beaten
- ½ cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Grease the inside of a 9 by 9-inch baking pan and preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Line bottom of pan with chili peppers. On top of that place the cubed cheese and 8 ounces of salsa. Pour the beaten eggs over this. Top with a mixture of 4 ounces of salsa and the shredded cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Bake about 20 minutes, or until top starts to turn gold and a knife comes clean from the center of the eggs.



Hunting the Wild Egg

Easter egg hunts were first popularized in the United States in the spring of 1862, when America was in the middle of its hideous Civil War in which young men were dying daily of injuries and disease, and famine was starting to appear in many areas of the ravaged South. First Lady Dolly Madison was the first dignitary to host an “egg roll” on the lawn of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., during the War of 1812 in an attempt to garner public support for her unpopular husband. But it was President Abraham Lincoln who tapped into the archetypal importance of the egg as a symbol of hope and new life. He ordered decorated eggs and other popular treats to be hidden on the White House lawn. He then issued a public invitation to the children of Washington, D.C., to come and search for them on Easter morning. With few exceptions, American presidents have kept up the practice, and it has since become a cherished national Easter custom mimicked around the nation.

Many people are unaware that the egg-hunting custom predates President Lincoln by at least two thousand years. In Asia and India, the practice of hunting hidden eggs in spring was symbolic of the belief that we are fully responsible for our actions and reactions, and that we must each find our own way to life renewed. Because this incorporated reincarnation themes, the egg hunt was a time to reflect on the balance of rights and wrongs and how to improve one’s position in the next life.

In German and Scandinavian lands, the tradition of offering eggs to the Goddess in exchange for blessings or wishes was a common spring practice. With the rise of Christianity in Europe making Pagan practices a capital offense, those offerings had to be hidden where only the Goddess could find them. Thus the “egg hunt” by the authorities ensued, and was eventually made into a game for children.

The search for eggs also has a deeper metaphysical meaning in many cultures, in particular in the East. The hunt represents the soul’s eternal quest for life renewed so that it may have the opportunity to perfect itself and reach a union with the deities.

The Teutons buried eggs under barns and animal dwellings to increase the fecundity of livestock, or placed eggs beneath beds to encourage human fertility. Eggs were also buried by the Teutons and Anglo-Saxons in spring to make gardens and fields fertile. They were believed to bless gardens and farmland with fertility and abundance. This is a practice still used by many modern Pagans who enjoy planting and tending magickal gardens.

The “How Does My Garden Grow” Egg Blessing

After you have prepared your garden for planting, take a hard-boiled egg and mark upon it symbols of the earth, growth, and fertility. Browns and greens work especially well here. With your bare hands, dig a small hole in the middle of the planting area while murmuring a prayer to the Goddess of the Earth. Speak from the heart to honor her and ask for her blessings on the garden. Place the egg in the hole and cover it while still repeating your prayer. Walk clockwise three times around the entire perimeter of the garden and chant:

*Egg of the Goddess, giver of all things,
grow my garden abundant this spring.
Strong and sacred this place must be,
springing forth its bounty, so blessed be.*

Return to the center of the garden and cover the egg to bury its magickal energy at the heart of your garden.

The Eggshell Fertility Talisman

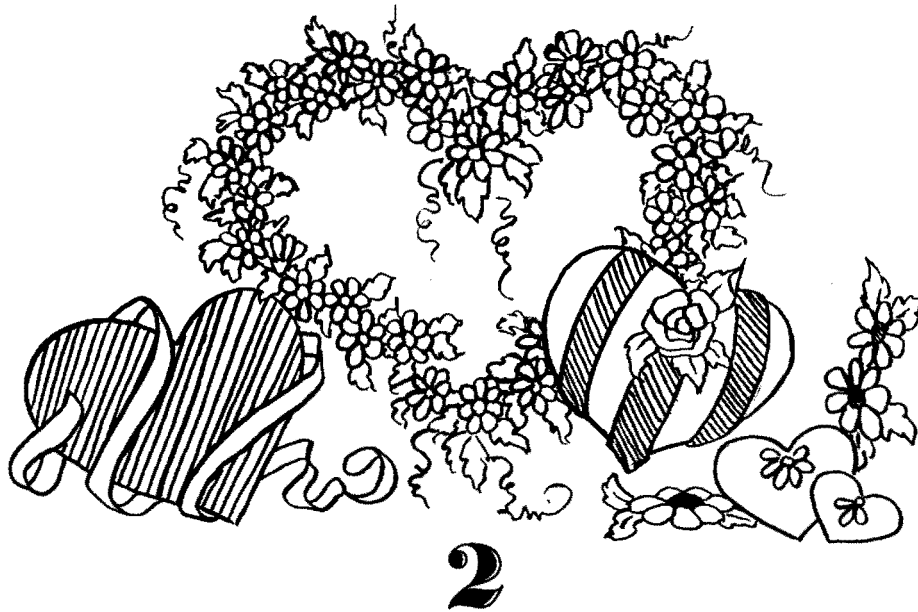
For this talisman you will need a small green circle of cloth, a needle and thread, a piece of paper with a picture of your goal, eggshells, and some fertility herbs such as bistort, carrot (root and tail), nuts of all kinds, wheat, myrtle, rice, rye, barley, pine cones, acorns, juniper, pine, cedar, lemongrass, honeysuckle, and turnips. You may also include stones associated with fertility such as holey stones or geodes. Handle all of the ingredients, infusing them with your desire to have a baby. Then place them together in the green cloth and sew them shut. Holding the talisman between your hands and your belly, say:

*Charm of egg and life to be,
power of fertility, come to me.
Like the Goddess whose blood mingles with mine,
so shall I give birth in nine months' time.*

Wear the talisman over your belly area as much as possible, renewing your intent by chanting the above quatrain when you can to assist you in becoming pregnant.

Other Egg Magick

- Use a broom to sweep hard-boiled eggs from outside your home to the inside to bring in abundance and fertility.
- Use brown eggs in magick to assist in animal husbandry or to ease a pet through giving birth.
- Brown eggshells can be added to protective or healing magick for pets or livestock.
- Bury rotten eggs near a crossroad to cause abundance to be taken away from an enemy.
- Paint half of a hard-boiled egg in a traditional god color such as red or gold, and the other half in a goddess color such as silver or blue, to represent the whole of creation. Let your own feelings about colors guide your final choices.
- To ensure that there will be no shortage of food at your home during winter, and to help keep those living there safe, bury one egg at each of the four cardinal points of your property: east, south, west, and north.
- Add well-washed eggshells to talismans for protection.
- To assist a couple who is having trouble conceiving, decorate a plastic or wooden egg to give as a fertility talisman.
- Decorated eggshells hanging from bushes and trees shed blessings of abundance on the land they surround.
- Bury eggs in your garden before doing your spring planting.



2

Sacred Sex and the Spring Fling

The term “Dark Ages” has gifted us with a somewhat skewed perception of our collective past. We associate the Dark Age period (approximately 450–1000) with an overall stigma of ignorance, lack of education or an unwillingness to learn, harsh stratification of social classes, slavery with backbreaking labor, primitive warfare, superstition, and disease. Granted, some of those characteristics were present, particularly in Europe, but that was not all there was to the lives of those people. No matter how knowledgeable we are about our history, most of us still have to struggle to overcome the well-implanted notion that people in the past were sort of stupid and lived such miserable existences that they just had no fun at all. This is simply not true.

We know this because we have the Pagan festivals of the past to show us how our ancestors conceptualized and honored their seasonal festivals. Though the amount of

leisure time individuals have at their disposal has increased sixfold since the early 1900s, the fact remains that the simpler the society, the less time people needed each day to “make a living,” and that left more time for play. The highly anticipated seasonal festivals of the past were excuses to leave the everyday world behind and play for as long as possible. The Pagan festivals of the past could last for days, or even a full week, and they often did.

No doubt the precise ways in which Pagan seasonal festivals have been celebrated throughout the centuries have been altered by passing from the territory of one ruler or one religious conqueror to another, but their character remains intact. We have a need to observe these demarcation points of the seasons that is every bit as strong as our impulse to worship deities who fit the mythic adventurer’s archetype. They are the gods and goddesses we still know and honor today, and this includes the Christian savior god, Jesus. Try as they might to eradicate or replace these holidays with others more acceptable, the powers that be found these ancient practices to be deeply ingrained in the human psyche. In fact, the atavistic impulse to let those basic instincts take over as the wheel of the year turns was ultimately insurmountable.

Almost nowhere are these impulses toward hedonism more evident than at Ostara. The inner explosion of merrymaking and sexual arousal that rises like tree sap in us each spring is a natural extension of the patterns of life encoded in our collective genetic memory. It is no accident that at the first hint of warm spring weather we move our activities outdoors. We crave the caress of the warm fingers of the sun on our bare flesh, the sensual feeling of cool water soaking our bodies on a hot afternoon, and the companionship of others that has been curtailed throughout winter. We get excited at the sight of the sun rising earlier each morning and setting later each night. We get to wake up in the sunlight, when it’s so much easier to rise from bed. We can drive to work or school under clear blue skies, and still enjoy the outdoors in increasing daylight hours when we arrive home in the evening. We buy new clothes, try on bathing suits, and head to the beaches to commune with others who feel these same impulses.

If we feel this way about the coming of spring in the twenty-first century, imagine how it must have felt to our ancestors, who felt lucky just to have survived through winter with limited food supplies. As if the very real possibility of starvation weren’t enough, they lived through the cold months without modern insulation, central heat, convenient companionship, flu medicines, microwave popcorn, snow throwers, and a host of other creature comforts we take for granted.

There were no easy entertainments for our ancestors on those cold days and nights. There were no local libraries to walk to and no theaters and no shopping malls. In that pre-industrial age, opportunities to fill the day with meaningful work were limited because the planting and growing seasons were past, and there were limits on how one could fill leisure time outside of the home when winter blanketed the world outside the front door. Game was scarce and hunting often tedious and unsuccessful. The few existing roads leading in and out of a community—and this was true even into the early twentieth century!—were often covered in ice and snow, or had turned into such a mire of ankle-breaking mud that it made visiting a neighbor's home impossible.

Storytellers were prized wintertime commodities in any isolated community, providing escapism the way television or novels do today. The instant music—all customized to personal taste—that we take for granted today was unknown until the early twentieth century. Local musicians provided the only music source available and could be used only where communities were close enough and the weather cooperative enough to host a gathering. Little wonder music, dance, and heart-pounding rhythms are intimately associated with early humanity's cherished rites of spring.

Spell to Bring Spring's Blessings to Your Home

Early in the morning on a sunny spring day, take several pastel ribbons, a pen, and something to use to make the ribbons adhere to the area around an open window. Be careful to choose an adhesive that will not discolor or deface your window frames or walls.

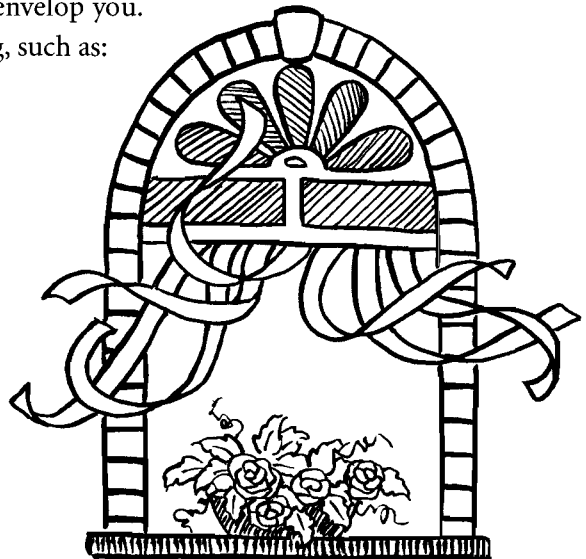
Take these items to a window of your choice and open the window. Stand there and allow the spring breeze to envelop you. Hold out your arms to embrace it. Offer a greeting, such as:

Welcome, Spring!

Welcome are your balmy breezes.

Welcome, deities and nature spirits of spring.

*I welcome spring's blessings of new life,
growth, love, partnership, and
the promise of bounty to come.*



Get comfortable in front of the window and think about which specific blessings associated with the coming of spring you want to receive. Write these on the ribbons with the pen. You may write the same desire on more than one ribbon if you want. This not only intensifies the effect of the spell, but adds to the aesthetic beauty of it.

When you have written on all your ribbons, attach them by one end around the inside of the window frame so they catch the breeze. It is best to attach them by the left side; “left” in this case meaning how the ribbon is oriented when viewed on the side where the writing is located. This allows the incoming breeze to follow the flow of the writing rather than blow against it. If you were doing a spell to remove something from your home, or to prevent something from entering, attaching the ribbons from the right would be best.

Stand in front of the open window and admire your handiwork. Finish the spell with a simple offering of thanks to the spring wind:

*Warm spring wind who blows my way,
bringing blessings on this sun-filled day;
to all the spirits who in spring winds dwell,
thank you for this successful spell.*

Allow the window to remain open for as long as you can while the breeze captures your wishes on the ribbons and blows them into your home.

Sacred Sex and the Spring Sabbats

When warm weather arrives and the layers of heavy clothing come off, we feel . . . well, to coin a modern term, “sexy.” This is no accident of our scanty modern dress, but yet another impulse implanted in our psyches by our ancestors.

The first modern society to try and recapture this feeling was, odd as it may sound, the overclothed Victorians. The overt romanticism that characterized the Victorian era (1837–1901) used hearts and flowers to sweeten the strong sexual overtones of the coming of spring. Greeting cards abounded, proclaiming the mantra that “In spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to love.” It was nicer than saying, “Hey, guys get horny when it’s warm.” The inherent sexual repression of that era impeded the extension of acknowledging any sexual—uh, “turn to love”—feeling to females. A little romantic

flutter, all in the name of finding a husband, was all they were allowed.

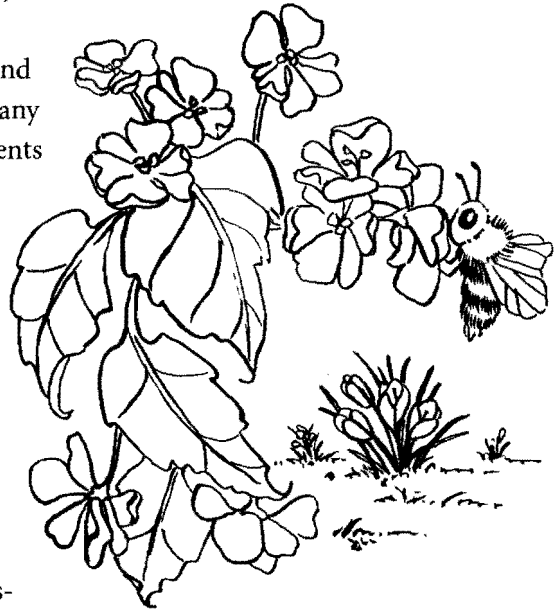
We are all part of the human experience and possess all the same atavistic codes. In many ways, the Victorian's teasing advertisements aimed at romance made it clear that they were aware, on some level, of the sexual nature of spring, but chose to play it down. In either case, that inner coding was there and the same titillation was present. This is what made the whole romance thing so appealing to the Victorians.

The Victorians were also the first modern society to have bathing clothes made for them so that men and women could enjoy the sport of swimming in spring, a pastime that has since only increased in popularity.

These swimming costumes, which covered bathers from neck to below the knee, were anything but revealing, though they were considered scandalous in their era and an invitation to sexual hijinks.

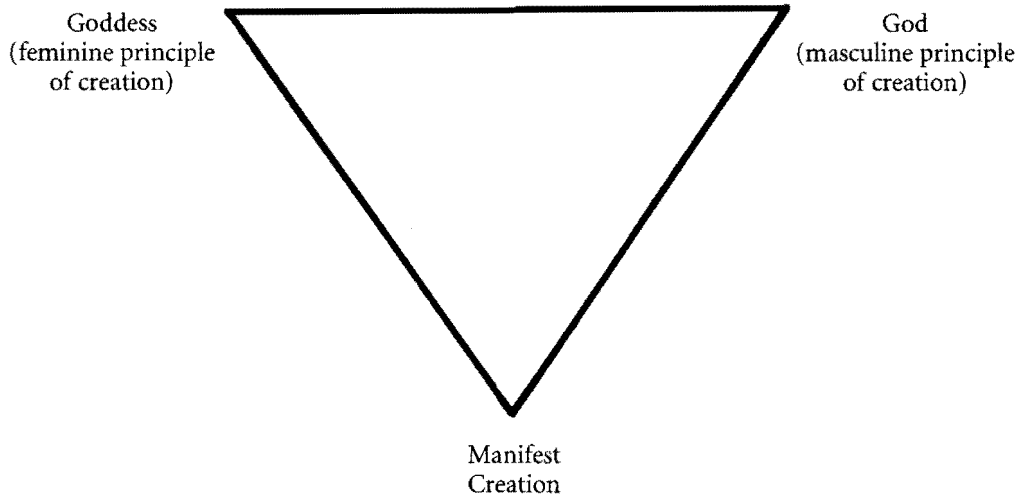
If any society could have once and for all repressed those encoded spring impulses to revelry, it should have been the Victorians. But, once again, fighting human nature proves to be an impossible task. From before recorded history our ancestors recognized the inherent sexual nature of spring. How could they miss it? It was all around them. Animals who had hibernated all winter were emerging from their dens and burrows to seek mates and create offspring. The infant buds of small plants and wildflowers were emerging from the earth like the heads of babies crowning at the opening of the birth canal. When the era of planned agriculture arrived, it was not lost on people how the planting of seeds in the womb of Mother Earth, just as men planted their seeds in the wombs of women, created new life.

In old Europe it was customary for a farmer and his mate to engage in sexual intercourse on the freshly plowed fields prior to spring planting. Through this act of sympathetic magick, the couple sought to draw to the land the fertile and creative blessings of the God and Goddess so that their crops would grow strong and healthy.



This idea of sex as a creative process mirrored early humanity's concept of the roles of their God and Goddess, who were conceptualized as mating in spring, fertilizing the land with the future harvest. Sex at spring festivals like Ostara became a sacrament, a conduit for those divine blessings to filter through to the local community and on into the land, plants, and animals.

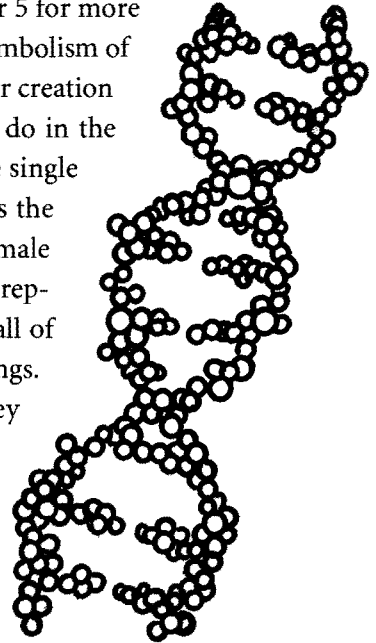
Sacred sex was not and still is not always enacted with sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. It is also done symbolically. Symbolism is the language understood by ritual. Notice how the symbol of an herb, stone, or glyph is understood in magick as a symbol of the goal, and used as a catalyst to help manifest that goal. This is the same way the symbols of the reproductive systems of the deities function as archetypes for the male principle of creation (God/man) and the female principle of creation (Goddess/woman). When these two forces are joined, they represent the union of two halves of the whole, the creative lifegiver of the universe from which all things are born. This concept is sometimes illustrated as an inverted triangle, showing the two principles at the top and their collective oneness via creation at the bottom.



THE TRIANGLE OF MANIFESTATION

This ritual of union between these two halves of the whole, whether done in symbolic style or de facto, is known as the Great Rite. (See chapter 5 for more information and a detailed ritual script for the Great Rite.) The symbolism of the Great Rite is the foundation of the Pagan belief system. It is our creation myth; our Genesis. It represents our belief that what the deities do in the macrocosm is reflected by us in the microcosm. It represents the single principle of creation that gave birth to the universe. It represents the manifestation of that one creative principle into male and female aspects, so that each of us is God and Goddess in our own lives. It represents earth and sky, the elements, the animals, and the plants, all of which share their creator's ability to produce new life and new things.

The life cycles of the God and Goddess are never-ending. They are the center point of the spokes on the wheel of the year. The cycle is often represented as a spiral that looks similar to a DNA strand, those genetic cells that carry an individual's encryption for existence. Many Pagans find it both empowering and humbling to think their own sexual acts could be all this and more. That's more than sex, more than a sacrament. It is a mystery revealed; the secret of life in the universe.



Sex, Sacred Sex, and the Rede

There are as many differences between sex and sacred sex as there are between an elephant and a dog. Though they have similarities—they are both mammals, both assist humankind, both are intelligent, etc.—they are what they are and, in general, cannot be interchanged.

The same can be said for sex. Sex can be very sacred, but never delude yourself that sex is always a sacrament. Just because Paganism is accepting of all types of sexual lifestyles doesn't make it an excuse for taking advantage of others or engaging in dangerous behavior. It also doesn't mean everyone you meet at a Pagan festival is there to accommodate you sexually and that you have the right to belittle their personal commitments to their chosen lifestyle if your advances are rejected.

There are few rules in Paganism, but we live by the Pagan or Wiccan Rede, the fundamental measure of all our thoughts and actions:

As it harms none, do what you will.

This is the oldest and most consistent single theme in world spirituality and it obligates us to act responsibly, harming no other being as we seek our own happiness. Some Pagans also feel the Rede applies to the self as well, and assert that you have an obligation to cause no harm or injustice to yourself.

On the spiritual level, the penalty for transgressing the Rede is the threefold return of the harm you do, which can spill over quickly into your physical life. This means that any energy you send out onto that great wheel of life will make a full circle and be revisited on you three times over. This requires us to think carefully about any action we take, be it magickal or mundane. There are times we may feel we are doing good but in truth we are meddling in situations that are none of our business. Good intentions do not absolve you from responsibility. Instead of getting back those good intentions threefold, we will get a threefold blast of interference in our lives. When sex as a sacrament is violated, we further incur the threefold return of the injury we do to the deities, whose sacred union our sexual acts represent.

On the purely physical level, harmful sex can be disastrous. Thinking that all sexual acts are sacraments and that this automatically shields us or our partner's partners from consequences is a dangerous delusion. Your sexual act might be as holy as the womb of the Goddess herself, but that fact will never protect you from sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies.

More young people than ever are finding their way into the Pagan religions, Witchcraft and Wicca included. Based on the mail I receive, these young people are some of the brightest and best we could wish for, both for the future of the Craft and for humanity. But this doesn't change the fact that it's harder than ever to grow up. The world is getting more crowded and moving at a faster pace each minute. There is more to learn and more is expected of today's teens than ever before.

One of the toughest choices facing teenagers is whether or not to become sexually active. Those teens involved in Pagan spiritual practices recognize the sacred meaning of sex but, as with anyone with an adult body, they feel the impulse to engage in non-sacred sexual experimentation. In spite of this, a growing number are seeking the willpower to postpone their initiation into the world of the sexually active until they feel they have other factors in their lives in good order. This is difficult to do and their choice should be supported by friends and family.

Whether you live within a non-monogamous, monogamous, serial monogamous, or plural lifestyle, just be happy that you have the right to make informed choices.

There are many who would love to take that right away. Never allow yourself to feel pressured to go against your personal choice in sexual lifestyle. Many pressurers exist both inside and outside of Paganism. Their sole function is to make you feel there is something wrong with your choices and that, to become a full part of whatever group or ideology they claim to represent, you are required to bring your choices in line with theirs. Stick to your well-thought-out convictions. They are yours and, if they harm no one, they are just fine the way they are. It helps to keep in mind that it is your pressurers who actually feel threatened by you, and that your convictions make them question their own values—they seek to validate their decisions by coercing others to verbally and physically confirm the rightness of these choices for them. Remember, discussions about your choices are great, sermons are not.

Lucky for us, sex and the way we choose to practice it is a pleasure that cannot be taken from us without our consent. Even better, sacrament is not the only reason to engage in sexual activity, any more than is procreation. Sex is the best way to express our most intimate connections to others and bond us to our significant other or others as nothing else can do.

Sex is also just plain fun.

Sex Magick

Sex is powerful—not a dominating power, but powerful in its own right. Sex and the orgasm it produces are potent catalysts for spells and rituals. The control over these processes, and even abstinence from them, can create a silo for holding magickal energy. The contents of the silo build and tighten as if it were a wound spring, holding more potential for energy the more tightly it is coiled.

Sex magick is a study all unto itself, and its secrets and mysteries span the globe and the centuries. In general, if you have a willing partner and want to experiment with spellcraft during sex, follow these steps:

1. With your partner, decide on the precise goal of your spell.
2. Create a symbol that the two of you feel best represents the fulfillment of your magickal goal. This can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be. Make at least five copies on poster board. Do this with your own hands, not with a fancy copy machine. You should both take part in this creation and do so while placing as much energy and visualization into the symbol as possible.

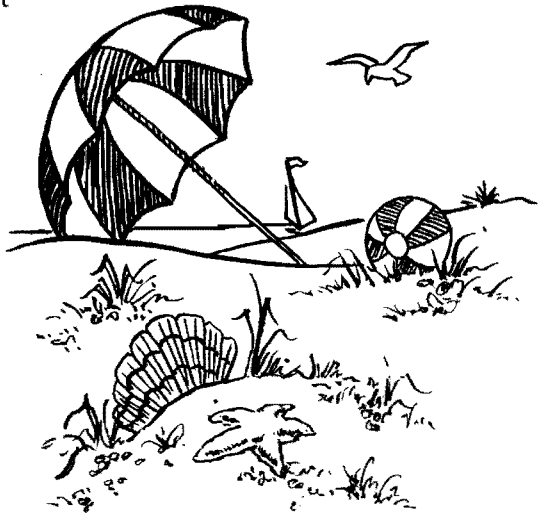
3. Spend several nights in meditation over the symbol you have created, making sure it is linked on all levels of your mind with your magickal desire. Communication skills are essential here, and you need to discuss what you see and feel while gazing upon the symbol, as this will hone the shape of the magick you hope to create. The more in sync your vision of the spell is with the vision of your partner, the better it will work.
4. Place the symbols on the walls, ceiling, etc., in the room where you will be engaging in magickal sex, making sure the symbols are visible from all angles should you switch your sexual position several times during the course of your spell.
5. As you begin your sex magick, allow yourselves to reaffirm your magickal goal, then let it go and lose yourselves in the excitement of sex. It's virtually impossible to have good sex while focusing on anything else, though a few very advanced tantric masters can do it. (Tantra is a spiritual discipline originating in India. Among its practices is the control and prolonging of sexual energy toward spiritual or magickal ends. Many books exist on the topic, lots of them containing practical exercises. Check your bookstore or library for current titles.) It's also virtually impossible to have an orgasm that will be strong enough to produce a lot of magickal energy while thinking about something else. This is why you have your symbols.
6. As you near orgasm, gaze into one of the symbols you have created. Use the one most convenient to you, which is why you placed several around your working area in the first place. Don't think about its meaning, just look and let your programmed subconscious do the work. As you orgasm, the energy you are producing will be channeled into the symbol and go to work for you.

Hie Thee to the Beach

Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The city is almost synonymous with hedonism, a mecca for the young seeking uninhibited diversion and sexual adventures. In the 1950s and 1960s it was the destination of choice for American college students on spring break. Today many warm beaches in Florida, Texas, South Carolina, California, and neighboring Mexico get their fill of unbridled collegiate enthusiasm around Ostara.

This impulse to carouse in spring is another of those genetic traits we inherited that especially affects the young of any species. In Europe's deep past, communities gave their young people great sexual license at their spring festivals. These liaisons were encouraged as symbols of hope for the future, a part of the natural mating rituals necessary for life to continue. It was hoped the young people would choose mates with whom they could be fertile and with whom they could contribute to the future of the community. The young people just wanted to have fun.

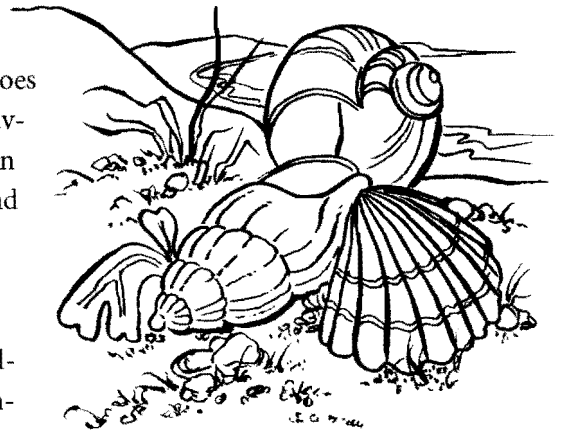


If you end up on the beach this spring, you'll find you're in a place where you have the magick of earth, water, and wind literally at hand. Only a thunderstorm on land could offer a better place to be for spell-crafting. Try any of the following suggestions for making magick at the beach.

Beach Spells

- Use a flat area of sand to draw a picture of something you want. You may use a stick, your finger, or even water-soluble paints. As you draw, infuse your creation with all the energy of your need. Allow it to wear away on its own as your desire manifests.
- Honor the deities of the sea by tossing bread crumbs into any natural body of water at dawn or sunset. Their blessing will be returned to you threefold.
- Sitting at the exact spot where the world of water and the world of earth meet places you symbolically between two worlds. To the ancient Celts these were places with great magickal potential. As you straddle these worlds, visualize your magickal wishes traveling through you to and from these realms where desires must first manifest before they come to you.

- To ground yourself when you feel frazzled or flighty, burrow yourself deep into the warm sand and bury your feet while taking deep, relaxing breaths.
- Arrange small shells into the initials of someone in whom you have a romantic interest in order to attract his or her attention. Allow the formation to wear away on its own.
- Toss smaller shells back into the sea as an offering to the Sea Goddess Yemaya or the Sea God Neptune.
- Sit at the shoreline and, with eyes closed, ask the sea deities to send you a talisman of their power to carry with you. When you feel your request has been granted, open your eyes. You may find an interesting shell or piece of driftwood has appeared near you. Be sure to thank the deities for their gift to you.
- Ask the deities to assist you in finding a shell for your altar to represent the element of water. You might even find one big enough to blow into, like a horn, to use in ritual for calling the quarters or announcing the beginning and ending of a ritual.
- Comb beaches and lakeshores for small stones that have had a hole worn through the center by the eroding action of water and sand. These are gifts of the earth and water elements, and symbols of the Goddess. Wear them on cords around your neck as amulets for fertility or protection.
- At low tide, go the water's edge and, with your forefinger, draw a representation in the sand of something you desire. Pour your mental energy into it and ask the sea spirits and deities to bless your petition. Walk away without looking back and allow the tide to come in and carry the wish to sea when it goes out again. Tides are caused by the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon on the Earth. There are two high and two low tides, occurring at equal intervals during each lunar day, which is about 24 hours and 51 minutes. Several Internet sites, including harbortides.com, can help you pinpoint these for any given area.



- At low tide, sculpt in the damp sand a representation of something you wish to remove from your life. As the tides come in and wash the sculpture away, they can also take away what you choose to release from your life.
- At the midpoint in the tidal cycle, when the tide is neither fully in nor out, tread cautiously to the shoreline and allow the wind, water, and the pull of the moon and sun to balance your soul and mind and purify your spirit.
- Immerse yourself in water as an act of purification or to dedicate yourself to your spiritual pursuits.
- Immerse yourself in water while visualizing yourself gathering cleansing energy from the water. As you slowly emerge back onto dry land, visualize that you are carrying all those desirable things from the unseen world into your own physical life.



Magickal Travel Protection

When the weather turns balmy and we begin to travel more, we are forced to also think about the risks involved in travel to other locales. It's all too easy to think we are immune from dangers in vacation destinations. The relaxed, outdoor focus we are drawn into makes us forget that we're still in a public place and that there are people who make their living preying upon the mistakes made by travelers. Have fun, but use your common sense.

A Protection Charm for Home, Hotel, or Car

To help protect your home, hotel, or car from break-ins, you will need a small circle of gold or white cloth, a dark marking pen, some ashes or salt, some dried mugwort, needle and thread, and three small stones. In the center of the cloth mark a large X and say:

*Banished be all potential harms,
cradled and protected by the equal arms.*

In the center of the cloth place the following items while reciting this or similar words of power:

(Place in the mugwort.)

*Sacred herb of the travelers here
protects and eases my traveling fear.*

(Place in the ashes or salt.)

*Ash of hearth and safety of home,
protect me always while I roam.*

(Place in the three small stones.)

*Stones to ground harmful intent,
stones to carry me home again.
Pebbles that mar the feet of the thief,
pebbles that give my worries relief.*

(Start sewing the cloth shut.)

*Protected must my (home, hotel, or car) be,
by my will and the power of three times three.
So mote it be.*



Return to the Ordinary World

Like all mythic journeys, the hero must eventually return to the world from which he or she came. Life should be changed for the hero, perhaps for the better, and the mythic adventure, and all that has been learned from it, will have been internalized and carried into every aspect of life from that point on.

For young people indulging in spring break revelry, or for the average vacationer reluctant to return to the demands of daily work, it is hard to get the mind back into ordinary-world thinking. The following spell to boost mental prowess may help.

The Brain Boost Spell

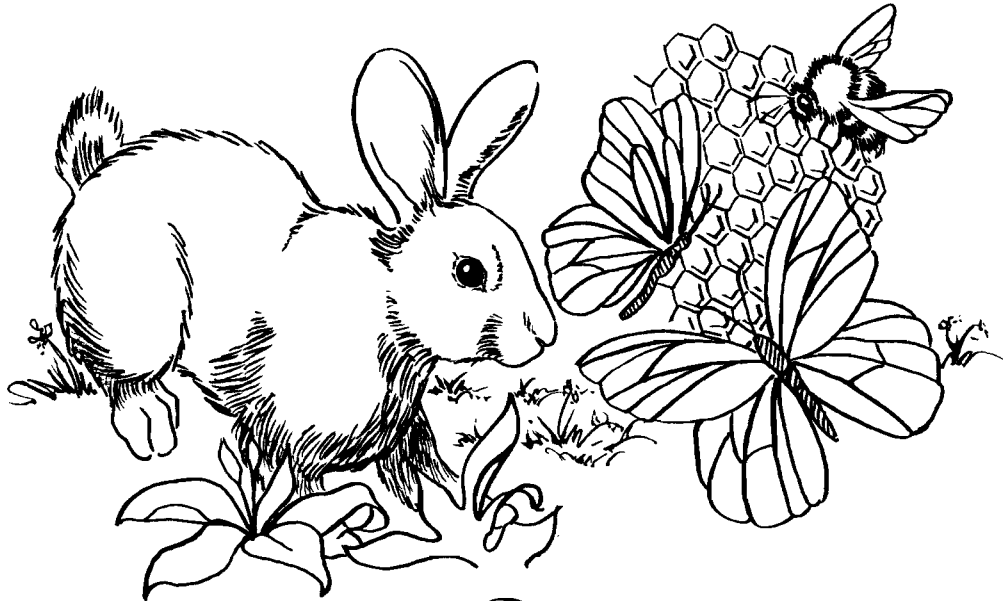
For this spell you will need some powdered eyebright, rue, chicory, or, if you've got a strong arm and a mortar and pestle you can rely on, some powdered acorn. These are herbs that are associated with intellect and powers of concentration. You will also need an east wind, which may prove a lot more elusive than a handful of rosemary grounds.

When we refer to a wind as an east wind, we usually mean it is originating from the east, bringing with it the special archetypal associations of that direction and its attendant element. In this case it is the element of air who governs the arena of mental focus and intellect.

Spend as much time as you can before enacting your spell sitting in the east wind, and handle the herbs to infuse them with a deeper connection to you and your need. As you do this, concentrate on increasing your mental focus and powers of intellect. See yourself as a rising star in your office or being the student with the perfect memory. See yourself enjoying these aspects of yourself, and performing the tasks associated with them with ease and joy.

When you are ready, blow the herbs from your open palm into the wind, to be carried away to work on your behalf. As they go, bid them farewell with a quatrain such as:

*Herbs of mind and intellect blow,
giving me focus as you go;
into the east wind I send my desire,
my brain power grows and glows like fire.*



3

The Birds and the Bees (and Bunnies and Butterflies)

The traditional symbols and colors of Ostara have been accepted by both Pagan and mainstream cultures for hundreds of years, just as the colors red and green or a decorated evergreen bough from the ancient festivals of the winter solstice have been accepted without question. Though some new mythology has been applied to them, and the celebrations have been given new names such as Easter and Christmas, these archetypes provide the anchors we need to get through our lives; because of this, they have become potent catalysts for magick and ritual.

This is the first of two chapters exploring these archetypes. In the first, we'll look at the birds, the bees, and the other animals associated with Ostara. In the second, we'll explore further Ostara spells, rituals, and recipes.



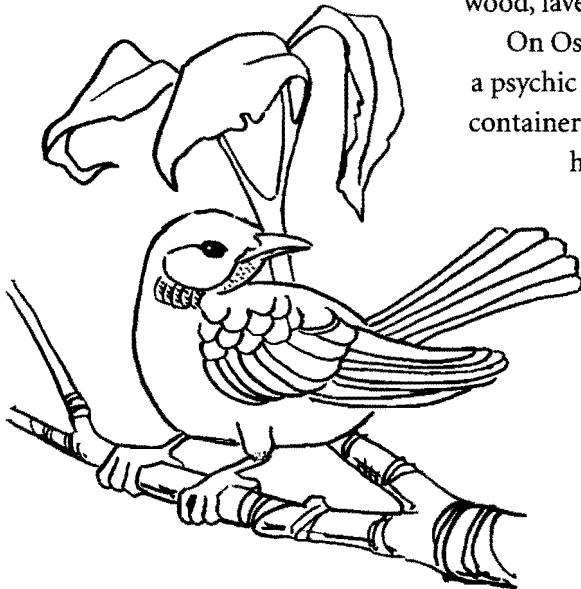
The Robin

Most birds are sacred to the masculine aspect of the divine. As the migrating birds return to northern climes in spring, so does the young Sun God who had similarly retreated during the cold of winter. In much of western Europe and North America, the red-breasted robin in particular represents the young Sun God, the spring aspect of his life cycle.

Schoolchildren all over North America are taught that, like the crocus, the sighting of a red-breasted robin is a sure sign that warm weather has come to stay. The rich turquoise of their eggshells, which we call “robin’s egg blue,” has become as much a symbol of spring as the bird itself. When you see your first robin of the spring, greet it as a welcome emissary from the young Sun God.

The Robin’s Feather Spring-Cleaning Spell

For this spell, any feather will do as long as it is not synthetic. These can usually be found in parks and wooded areas if you spend enough time there. It does not have to have belonged to a robin—that is just too much to ask. Instead, in our magickal mind, we will view it as if it really belongs to the robin. You will also need some light incense that contains purifying magickal properties, such as sandalwood, lavender, lemon, or cedar.



On Ostara morning, begin your spring-cleaning with a psychic cleansing of your home. Light the incense in a container that is portable, either one on a chain or a heat-resistant bowl you can carry without being burned. Carry the incense in your nondominant hand, or the one you do not write with. For most people this is the left hand. In the dominant or right hand, carry the feather.

Beginning at the center of your home, move outward in a counterclockwise motion while making sweeping motions with the feather. Visualize the incense purifying each



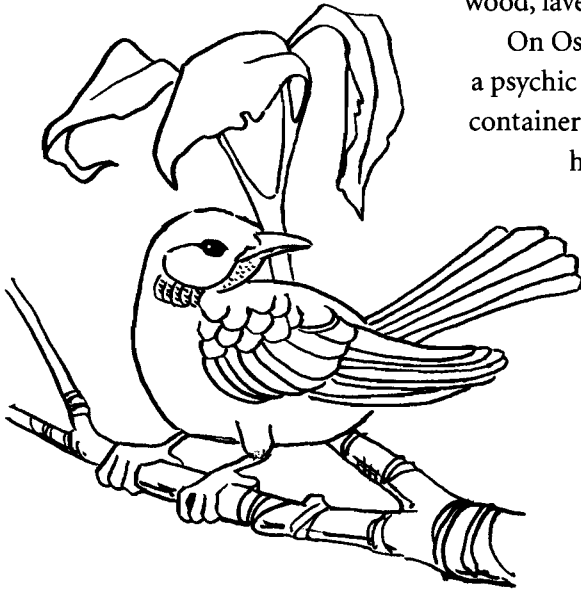
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Beginning at the center of your home, move outward in a counterclockwise motion while making sweeping motions with the feather. Visualize the incense purifying each

room while the robin's feather sweeps out the winter's psychic stagnation, allowing for fresh magick to be made.

As you walk room to room, chant something like the following:

*Incense, fill this dwelling for me,
clean and clear it now must be;
feather of robin, emissary of the sun,
banished be winter, my spell is done.*

When your psychic spring-cleaning is complete, stand the feather in the ground near your front door to bring the robin's spring blessings from the young God into your home.



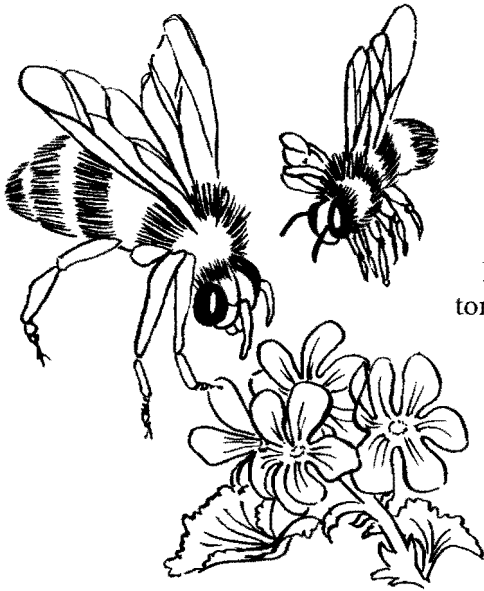
Honeybees and Honey

Bees are sacred to many goddesses the world over, and in particular to goddesses of spring and the sun. As with other creatures who first appear after winter dormancy, the bee returns with the Goddess and symbolizes new life.

Bees also make honey. Honey is the same golden color as the sun, which is also gathering strength at this time, and is first noticed as a real force of nature again by the time of Ostara. As the solar archetype, the sun is often associated with the energies of the young God, though in many ways it remains ambiguous enough to also serve as a symbol of the Goddess.

A honey ale of ancient origin, known as mead, was and is a popular drink for the spring sabbats—even more so at Beltane (May 1) than at Ostara. Because it functions as a sacred drink, and because the Celts who developed it used a lunar as well as a solar calendar, and because there were strict rules prohibiting marriages between May and the first new moon in June, this sacred association of honey with spring is the root from which our modern term “honeymoon” originates.

Honey was and still is used to maintain good health. The most popular of these today has been given the moniker honegar, a blend of honey and apple cider vinegar that, when taken daily, is reputed to be a tonic to keep the drinker healthy. It also is believed by some to function as a mild restorative for lost energy or for minor illnesses



and lack of sexual drive. The practice of dosing one's family with a spring tonic goes back to medieval Europe and is still common practice in the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains of the southern United States. Anyone who remembers, or who has seen in ceaseless reruns, the 1960s sitcom *The Beverly Hillbillies* will probably remember the Clampett family and friends fleeing from the bitter "spring tonic" Granny whipped up in hopes that they would feel invigorated and seek out romantic encounters.

The concept of achieving health, wholeness, and balance through the drinking of honegar is linked to the perfect wholeness and balance of the masculine and feminine energies as personified in the God and Goddess who are but two halves of a whole. In the case of honegar, honey is solar and represents the energies of the God, and the vinegar

made from apples is symbolic of the moon and the Goddess.

Honegar's origins are unclear, but seem traceable to Teutonic folk practices that probably have origins dating back at least 500 years. Until at least the 1970s, honey concoctions were available through German apothecaries.

Making Honegar

To create this simple concoction, you will need equal parts of raw honey and apple cider vinegar, a large saucepan, the traditional wooden spoon for stirring, and some canning jars. I use two 1-quart canning jars and about 20 ounces of honey and 20 ounces of vinegar.

Don't prepare to make more than two jars at a time. The honegar does not go fast unless you're dosing a large number of people. It should be refrigerated at all times to keep it fresh, but it is traditional to make it on a full moon and to discard any unused portion on the next full moon when more should be made. Honegar is at its most potent for one lunar month. Don't make too much or it will go to waste. Plan on making a fresh batch each full moon.

As you begin to make the honegar, it is essential to get yourself into a focused mind frame that allows you to create a successful magickal health potion. Though this is an act of cooking, it is still a magickal act. In fact, Kitchen Witchery—the art of magickal cooking—is an old and popular practice. It uses a combination of the ingredients, the baking process, and the eating of the final product for its success. (If you are interested in pursuing this art, you may want to obtain a copy of Patricia Telesco's *A Kitchen Witch's Cookbook* [Llewellyn, 1994] as a place to begin your studies.)

Using no more than a single cupful at a time, place equal parts of the honey and the apple cider vinegar into a saucepan. Over medium heat, stir the mixture almost constantly in a clockwise motion with the wooden spoon. Don't turn the burner too high or you will cause the mixture to boil. As you do this, be sure to concentrate on the purpose of what you're creating to further infuse it with magickal energy.

Keep stirring until you feel the heaviness of the mixture start to break up. This means the honey is melting down and blending fully with the vinegar. When all sense of the heaviness is gone and the color of the mixture appears consistent, remove it from the heat.

Keep stirring occasionally as the honegar cools. When it is cool enough, pour it into the glass jars and cap it with a snug seal. It is wise to first sterilize the jars by placing them on a cookie sheet in a 200-degree oven for about ten minutes, as you would for any other canning project (an alternative is to boil the jars for about ten minutes). Store the jars of honegar in your refrigerator.

It is also a tradition in Wiccan practice to take the jars outside and further charge them under the light of the full moon. Hold them up to the moon's light and ask the fullness of the Mother Goddess to infuse the brew with strength and vitality, imparting the blessings of vigorous good health to all who drink.

Dose the honegar once or twice a day, using 4–6 tablespoons per an 8-ounce glass of drinking water.

Other Magick with Honey

- Add some honey to love spells to include the romantic aspect of the “honeymoon” to the spell.
- Add some empowered honey to hand lotions to give the golden Midas touch to everything you handle.

- Add a small bit of honey to purification oils or ointments to capture the cleansing energy of the sun.
- Share honey with a person in whom you have a romantic interest to increase your chances of developing a firm relationship with him or her.
- Place some honey in a mouthwash so that your words will be sweet to others.
- Use a small amount of honey in a ritual bath whose goal is health, fertility, virility, protection, or strength.
- Add honey to a magickal face mask whose end goal is enhancing personal beauty.*
- Mix a small amount of honey with oatmeal for bathing to keep your skin soft and youthful.* (*I discuss the making of magickal beauty products, including those containing honey, in my previous book *Enchantments: 200 Spells for Bath & Beauty Enhancement* [Llewellyn, 2001].)
- Soak a key in honey and vinegar to help you gain entrance to doors otherwise closed to you, such as a potential employer who will not give you the chance to present yourself. Rinse the key in pure cold water and carry it with you as a talisman until the closed doors confronting you open to admit you.
- Soak coins in a mixture of honey, ginger, and mint to help you find money for a specific need.
- Use honey as a libation or offering to your deities or to friendly faeries.



Hares and Easter Bunnies

The legend of the Easter Bunny, as related in the previous chapter, is but one aspect of the hare-rabbit archetype associated with Ostara. European folklore associates the hare with Goddess energy, most specially the shapeshifter aspect—the part of the Goddess that can transform herself into other beings and travel at will to any place in all worlds.

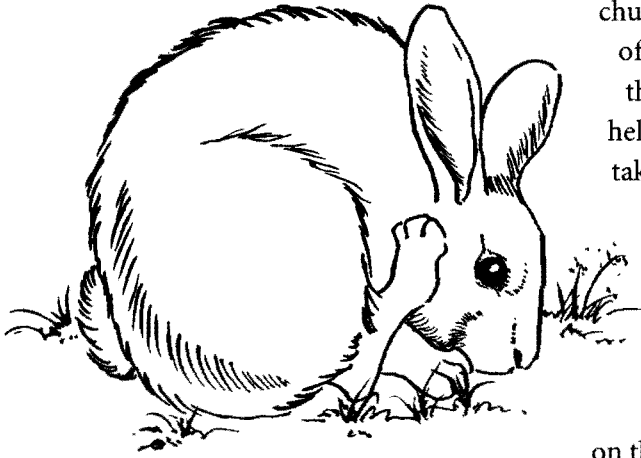
During the European Witch persecutions (the height of which occurred between 1300–1700), many women were accused of coming to their victims in the dead of night in the guise of a hare. Free to travel about the village or countryside unnoticed,

the hare Witches could lay curses, torture those they did not like, or steal eggs, vegetables, and personal items to be used in spells against the person from whom the item was obtained. More than one European country has a folk legend about a farmer who came upon one of these hares making mischief and managed to lash out at her and sever a paw. The next morning the suspected Witch would be seen with her arm bandaged at the stump where her hand had been the previous day. Other legends tell of the hare being shot and, as it died, transforming itself back into the body of the suspected Witch.

These legends are the origin of the modern superstition that it brings good luck to carry the foot of a hare or rabbit. In the end of those folk legends we just explored, the farmer who took the hare's foot would keep the severed paw so he would have power over the Witch from whom it was taken. It was believed that, with her hand in someone else's possession, she and her legions would not be able to raise a hand in magick against that person. Hence, the idea that the hare or rabbit's foot brings luck.

Though the art of shapeshifting is an advanced Pagan magickal art, this had nothing to do with the legends created about the hare other than people knew it was possible for some people to achieve this "unnatural state." In truth, these legends were no more than ways to instill fear in a populace that someone else wished to control. They served with success to diabolize the ancient religion of Witchcraft so that the church could continue to hold sway over the people. Witch hysteria, based upon the idea that Witches worshipped and did the bidding of the devil, fueled mass killings and political battles, and allowed rivalries and jealousies to be taken public. All these communal tribulations ultimately benefited only the church and not the community, which was convinced it was doing God's work by putting to death all who were as much as accused of Witchcraft.

In every one of these trials the burden of proof was on the defendant, a sad situation for the accused. There was no acceptable logic for proving a woman—and in some cases a man—was not a Witch, as the church and its followers interpreted the meaning of the word. This accused-as-good-as-convicted situation contained an added bonus for the church, who had instilled this mass fear in the first place. According to Witchcraft laws dating from medieval Europe, the church was permitted to confiscate all property belonging to a convicted Witch. It was a losing battle for anyone who was different or disliked, and therefore likely to be accused.



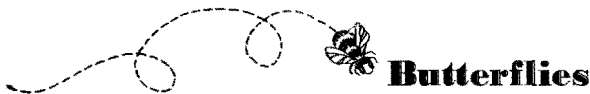
As with many Pagan symbols diabolized by the church, hares were once symbolic of the power of the Earth Goddess. The female leader of the Iceni tribe of Britons, Boadicca, who helped turn back the Roman legions who had taken over Britain, worshipped the Warrior Goddess Andraste, whose totem animal was the hare. Boadicca would make hare sacrifices to Andraste and worked out a system of learning the outcome of battles by watching the movements of a hare she would release on the eve of military engagements.

Hare Magick and Divination

- Observe hares and rabbits in the wild and attempt to ascertain from their movements answers to questions you're pondering. To begin, assume that movements to the right are positive answers, and movements to the left are negative. Jerky or uncertain movements can mean the answer is unclear at this time. The more swift or sudden a movement, the more emphatic the response.
- Pet the foot of a hare or rabbit for good luck—this means one still attached to a living creature, not a severed foot, and certainly not one commercially manufactured and dyed by a novelty company.
- If your personal ethics are not opposed to wearing animal fur, and you already own rabbit hair clothing, you can magickally charge your rabbit hair sweater or jacket into a talisman of protection. Do this by holding the garment against your solar plexus area (just above your navel) and projecting into it the energy of protection. Visualize the garment glowing with an electric white light that will envelop you in an egg of protective energy when worn.
- Use hair from a rabbit or hare to assist in all divinations. They can be most effective when tied to the base of a pendulum (pendulums are trinkets suspended on a chain or thread). When held still, the subtle turnings of the pendulum hint at

answers to questions asked. Suspend the pendulum and watch its movement. In general, clockwise and up-and-down motions indicate a positive response, while counterclockwise and side-to-side motions indicate a negative response.

- Rabbit hairs can be added to potions for invisibility—or astral projection—and secrecy, to enhance their effect.
- Cactus plants or the herb lady’s slipper in a garden will help keep out marauding hares.
- Rabbits and hares will bring the blessings of the Goddess to land on which they live. If you don’t mind sharing your garden with them, know that they tend to build warrens on land that offers hilly areas and deep tree roots for burrowing. They also like to forage in nonchemically treated lawns with lots of growth that most homeowners want to eradicate. If you have a warren, be sure to leave feed for the rabbits to keep them from foraging elsewhere. I once had a rabbit warren on my property that put me in a bad situation with my gardening neighbors, who did not enjoy sharing the bounty.
- Call upon the spirit of the rabbit during meditation to allow it to share its totem energy with you. Rabbit energy is quick, tricky, good for helping you change course, good for helping you escape bad situations quickly, good for helping you slip into the underworld (recall *Alice in Wonderland’s* scene of following her white rabbit into the underworld), and good for helping you with invisibility spells and astral projection efforts.



Butterflies

Just as the cocoon from which a butterfly emerges is a symbol of autumn’s retreat into winter slumber, the butterfly itself is a symbol of the result of that long winter’s nap. This creature so beautifully mimics the winter death and spring rebirth of the God that it is not surprising that its elemental and planetary associations are air and the sun respectively. Air is one of the two “masculine” elements—fire being the other—and the sun has long been a symbol of the God’s waning and waxing life cycle.

The butterfly wraps itself into its cocoon as a larva, little more than a worm—an immature being with much more growing to do. It enters the womblike environment of

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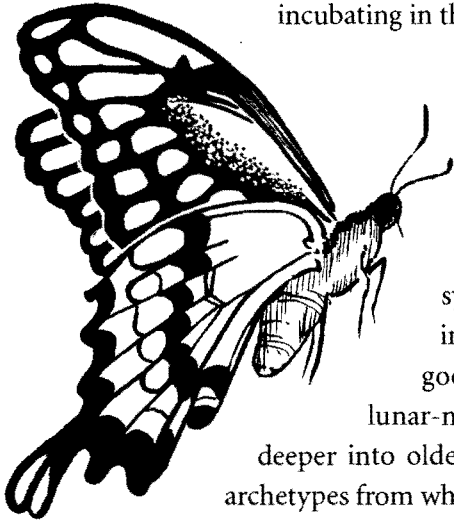
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the cocoon to await a rebirth in spring. This is much like the unborn God incubating in the womb of the Goddess, his mother and consort. Here he sleeps, grows, and is nurtured by the womb. Though he is reborn to her at Yule, or the winter solstice, he comes into his full youthful vigor at Ostara . . . just like the butterfly.

The butterfly also has its goddess associations. The sun is as much a Mother Goddess symbol as it is a symbol of the God. Though this concept is less popular in modern eclectic Wicca, which tends to broadly divide god and goddess correspondences into solar-day-God/lunar-night-Goddess, Witches and other Pagans who delve deeper into older cultures find a much more interwoven tapestry of archetypes from which to enrich their spiritual ideas.

Solar goddesses have been known in many cultures, as have lunar gods (a resource I recommend for exploring the solar aspects of the feminine is Patricia Monaghan's *O Mother Sun* [Crossing Press, 1994]), notably among the former are the Celtic and Middle Eastern cultures. The cocoon of the butterfly is symbolic of the deep underworld slumber in which the Goddess of Spring is trapped during the winter, away from her people and unreachable while her land lies fallow and fruitless. The earth craves the touch of her feet walking upon its face and, when she emerges from her winter prison at Ostara, the land and all its creatures celebrate the return of life.

On a mundane level, butterflies also speak to us of the playfulness of the balmy days of early spring. We all feel compelled to delight in, and even to pursue, these colorful, winged creatures who flutter and dance on capricious breezes. They seem to beckon us elsewhere, encouraging us to follow them into a summer world that is the most beautiful of all places on the astral or inner planes of reality. They almost dare us to piggyback them and travel into other worlds. This may be one of the reasons folklore teaches us that spring faeries—denizens of all worlds—travel on the backs of friendly butterflies.

The Butterfly Guided Meditation

Guided meditation differs from meditative contemplation in that it uses a script that has been well defined beforehand. This is not to say that it does not allow room for exploring the unexpected. It just allows us to reach the end goal of our meditation, without being forever sidetracked by the astral world, by giving us a place to which we may return at any time and resume our journeys.

To begin the butterfly guided meditation, visualize yourself as a larva. In the beginning your awareness is limited. Your thoughts are limited. Your movement is limited so that you're at the mercy of birds and any other animal who desires you as a snack. You exist on survival instinct alone, with little you can do to protect yourself against predators and the harshness of the elements.

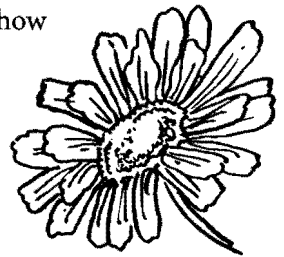
As the days grow shorter and colder, you feel driven to seek shelter in a hollow tree. Once there, you attach yourself to the inner trunk. Soon a silken thread emerges from your body and you find yourself wrapping it around you like a blanket. You find this comforting and, when the threads are wrapped snugly around you, you burrow into this cocoon and suddenly find that you cannot fight the urge to have a long, deep sleep.

Part of you is afraid of this deep sleep; the other part cannot think about fighting the compulsion to let go of the world you just left. Unsure of what awaits upon awakening, you fall into the sleep of the unconscious.

Imagine now that you're floating in unlimited darkness, so deep in unawareness that you feel you have no body, no will, and little thought processes. You feel secure and loved, at one with the creative powers of the universe. You are in a place of nothingness and all that is.

After incubating in this state for what you sense must be a long time—though you have no true consciousness of time—you begin to feel the tickling of awareness around the corners of your mind. Flashes of consciousness sparkle in your soul. You feel much warmer than you did when you went to sleep, and you feel compelled to leave the cocoon in which you've been so comfortable.

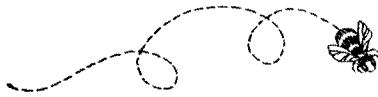
As you begin to struggle to move your body again, you are amazed at how much lighter, yet stronger, it feels. As the dry cocoon breaks apart you can see, through an opening in the tree trunk, that you are awakening into a world of warm breezes and bright sunlight. As you step off the cocoon you find yourself airborne, and somehow this is not really a surprise.



As you flutter on your new wings from the tree, you see around you a world awash in greenery and spring colors. Flowers are blooming, trees are budding, and the sounds of creatures laughing and playing fill your ears.

Most wonderful of all is the sense of freedom you feel as you dance from one gentle breeze to another, on wings so colorful that it awes you to watch the Ostara sun filter through their fragile thinness, infusing you with vigor.

Play about on the breezes, traveling where you will and meeting benevolent spring spirits and faeries as you go. When you are ready to return to your normal waking consciousness, visualize your butterfly self flying toward your resting body, becoming more dense the closer it gets. Feel your consciousness shift back into your physical self and, when the butterfly merges with you, open your eyes.



Spring Faeries

I saw my first faeries when I was a child. I was six years old and already displaying my lifelong problem with insomnia. I would often rise from bed to gaze out of the second-story window. The window looked out upon our neighbor's English-style garden. One clear spring night I saw ladies dancing around a circular flower bed. They were semi-transparent, and at first I thought I was seeing ghosts, but soon realized

that these lovely creatures were not humanlike enough. I watched them, entranced, until I fell asleep with my head in the windowsill. Soon after I was given a children's storybook containing a drawing of faeries, who looked exactly like the beings I saw dancing in my neighbor's garden that night. From that point onward no one could tell me there was no such thing as faeries.

Debate abounds over exactly what we mean by "faery." They have been believed to be everything from the original inhabitants of western Europe to Pygmies from Africa;

Picts from Scotland; the remnants of the old gods and goddesses of Europe; Ireland's early inhabitants and deities, the Tuatha de Danaan; earth and nature spirits; elemental beings; giants; small winged creatures; elves and dwarfs; tree



spirits; mischievous spirits; helpful benefactors; fallen angels; and the ghosts of defeated races of the past.

The urge to categorize with impunity has no place in Pagan spirituality, and a faery can refer to any or all of these things and more. For our purposes, the spring faeries mentioned in this book refer to nature spirits, the sort that folklore tells us awaken with Ostara to help the earth flower and bloom. These are conceptualized by us as the garden gnomes, the flower faeries, and the tiny winged creatures of folk fancy whose roots go deep into the uncharted areas of old European Pagan beliefs.

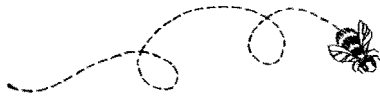
Many modern Pagans wish to attract these creatures in the spring to bless their garden and to join in worship circles. Many of these faeries can protect your home and land and look after your animals. (Though not all faeries are inclined to being helpful, or even pleasant, to humans. If you need help making the distinctions you may want to refer to my previous book, *A Witch's Guide to Faery Folk* [Llewellyn, 1993].)

At many Ostara circles, libations, or symbolic offerings, are made to the local faeries to attract their attention and win their goodwill. These are similar to libations sacrificed to the God and Goddess during ritual. To offer a faery a libation, place any of the items from the list below in a bowl on the ground near a hearth, in a barn, in a garden, or in the woods, with the firm intent that it is a gift. You may even wish to write out an invitation to partake, or just state it aloud as you set it in place. Make the invitation sincere and simple, letting the faeries know you wish to have them be a part of your magical life and that you acknowledge their existence and importance in nature.

Faeries want to be believed in. Many ancient myths and folk legends tell tales of how the world of faery and the world of humans was demarcated by the deities to protect the faeries from us, not us from them. Sir James M. Barrie (1869–1937), author of the early twentieth-century classic *Peter Pan* (1904), drew upon these legends as they were told in England and his native Scotland when his storybook faery, Tinkerbell, is only able to live if people believe in her.

LIBATIONS AND GIFTS FOR SPRING FAERIES

Fresh Milk	Honey
Bread	Primrose Blossoms
Lilacs	Cowslip
Dandelion Wine	Fresh Berries
Honeysuckle	Shiny Coins
Pussywillows	Ale



Rams and Goats and Lambs

Rams and goats are on occasion kept as pets and, more frequently, seen as coven mascots. To bring the spirit of the young god into the sacred space, they are paraded about ritual sites at Ostara and Beltane by modern Pagans similar to the way they were in the past.

Rams and goats symbolize the youthful, masculine side of the creator deity. They are viewed as randy creatures, able to mate quickly and with vigor. The horns they bear on top of their shaggy heads serve many symbolic functions throughout various Pagan traditions. Across Europe, they were viewed as phallic symbols of sexual potency and fertility, and as symbols of the great Horned God of the Woodlands.

In modern Judaism the ram's horn has been used for thousands of years to call Jews to worship on the eve of their new year, Rosh Hashanah (September or October on the Jewish lunar calendar). In the weeks before Rosh Hashanah, and other festive events throughout the Middle East, it is not uncommon to hear the ram's horn tooted by both the merrymakers and the religious, much as firecrackers are frequently heard in North American neighborhoods around New Year's Eve, and on the Independence Day celebrations of the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

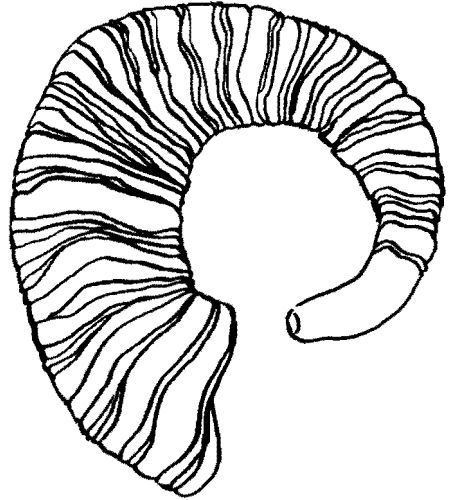
To blow the ram's horn requires no musical skill, but it can be helpful if you have some knowledge of instrumental music and understand how to blow brass wind instruments. Place your lips in a tight seal within the small opening of the short end of the ram's horn, rather than around its outer edge. As you blow, "buzz" your lips, vibrating them in the same manner as if you were mimicking rude noises with your lips. The tighter the buzz and stronger the air current, the louder and higher-pitched the ensuing tone will be.

Ram's horns are not difficult to come by, and make excellent ritual tools. Try seeking them, along with beautiful covers and stands, at Jewish supply shops.

Uses for the Ram's Horn

- They make excellent altar decorations and centerpieces in spring, symbolizing the randy Horned God of the Spring. Decorate them with spring foliage for added impact and to bring in an added feminine flavor.

- Blow on them to announce the beginning of rituals or to open the doors between worlds. Ram's horns can replace bells or drums in this way and offer us an ancient connection to the announcement of sacred time.
- Use them to represent the principle of the creator deity in rites of divine union (see chapter 5).
- Blow them in joyous celebration of coven festivities and during circle dances.



More Horns: The Maiden and the New Moon

Be aware that the horn theme in Ostara symbolism continues with the archetypes surrounding the Maiden Goddess of Spring. The goddess is the young feminine expression of the awakening sexuality of the creative deity, as opposed to the rams and goats that express the masculine side.

One of the primary symbols of the maiden goddess is the waxing crescent moon, a symbol often used to adorn the foreheads of Pagan priestesses. When worn this way the moon is most often depicted resting on its back, similar to the horns of a bull or goat. This is very telling when we consider that God and Goddess are really one, just as are all living things in the physical world, and that they merely are handled separately by our minds and psyches.

Any dairy food is an Ostara food, especially if it comes from a goat or a lamb. In fact, these dairy products often function as archetypes of the season from February through Beltane. Cheese is no exception, and goat cheeses in particular have a very close connection with Ostara.

For your Ostara feast, try serving goat cheeses, such as feta or Montrachet. They go well with dry, light wines like zinfandels. They also add a unique flavor to chicken and fish. Or you might want to try the following goat cheese pasta. Similar recipes are popular in Greece, where goat cheese is preferred over dairy products derived from cows.

Ostara Pasta with Goat Cheese

- 16 ounces penne pasta
- 1 cup rich milk
- 2 well-beaten eggs
- 12 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
- ¼ cup dried tomatoes, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon basil
- ¼ teaspoon parsley flakes
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms, any variety (optional)
- ½ cup chopped black olives (optional)
- ½ cup bread crumbs (optional)

Grease a 9 by 13-inch baking pan and preheat oven to 350 degrees. Boil the pasta until just al dente. Mix the milk and eggs together; set aside. In another bowl, mix the feta, tomatoes, pepper, basil, parsley, mushrooms, and olives. Remove the penne pasta from the stovetop and drain well. Blend in the feta mixture. Place in the 9 by 13-inch pan. Top with bread crumbs if you like, then pour the milk and egg mixture over the top, distributing it evenly and allowing it to soak down into the pasta. Bake for 30 to 45 minutes, or until top is starting to turn golden.

The lamb is a cousin of both the ram and the goat and, though in most cases it bears no horns, it also serves as a symbol of Ostara. The lamb begins its journey into the spiritual symbolism of the wheel of the year at Imbolg (February 2), a time when pregnant ewes began to lactate, indicating that the new lambs are about to be born. Another name for Imbolg is Oilmec, which is thought to derive from the words “ewe’s milk.”

In much of the Middle East and northern Africa, the lamb was a symbol of the virgin goddesses of spring and, in many of these cultures in the not-too-distant past, they served as seasonal sacrifices to the deities. This connection was so ingrained in the psyches of the tribal peoples of that region that the spiritual meaning of the lamb and its sacrifice was carried over into the spring religious rituals of the Jewish Passover and

Christian Easter. In Judaism it was the blood of a slain lamb that kept the Angel of Death away from Jewish homes during Passover. In Christianity the lamb is connected with their sacrificial deity, Jesus, who is often referred to as the “lamb of God.”



The Sign of Pisces

Pisces is the twelfth and final sign of the zodiac, coming to a close at Ostara. This again coincides with the old Roman New Year. Pisces is symbolized by two fish pointing or swimming in opposite directions. This imagery at work is identical to that of the Roman God Janus, for whom January—the new month for the New Year—is named.

Janus is a two-faced God. This is not only a symbolic designation, but a physical one. By two-faced we do not mean duplicitous, but rather having once face looking behind, or to the past, and the other facing forward, or into the future. This unusual characteristic was the reason Janus was chosen as the deity of the Roman new year. His visage perfectly represents pivotal points in time.

The two fish that are the symbol of the constellation of Pisces serve that same archetypal function. The pair are always depicted as facing or swimming the opposite directions, one looking to the past and the other to the future. Their astrological influence passes as Ostara arrives, giving way to the sign of Aries the ram as Ostara passes.



You might want to try the following simple fish recipe to bring Piscean energy into your Ostara celebration.

Tender Baked White Fish in Eight Easy Steps

- 9 (3 by 3-inch) pieces white fish
- 2 beaten eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
- 2 cups crushed crackers
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon parsley flakes
- Salt (optional)
- Butter or margarine to taste

Step 1. Grease the bottom and sides of a 9 by 9-inch baking pan and preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Step 2. Partially thaw enough white fish portions to fill the pan, approximately nine 3 by 3-inch pieces.

Step 3. In a mixing bowl, blend together eggs and milk.

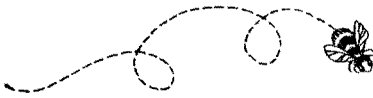
Step 4. With a rolling pin, crush the crackers. Choose your favorite snack cracker and experiment with different flavors.

Step 5. In a separate mixing bowl, blend the cracker crumbs with ground pepper and parsley flakes. Add salt if you like the taste, but remember most snack crackers are already heavily salted.

Step 6. One by one, hand dip the fish portions in the egg and milk mixture, then liberally coat them with the cracker mixture. Place the coated fish in the baking pan.

Step 7. Evenly distribute any remaining crumbs over the top of the fish.

Step 8. Liberally dot the top of the fish with butter or margarine and bake for about 1 hour.



The Horse

Horses are rich with Pagan symbolism. They are archetypes of the journey between the worlds of the dead and the deities and that of the living. They represent repressed or unconscious sexual energy, and sleep and dreams. The dreams connected with the horse are usually nightmares, the suffix “mare” telling us that these were once believed to be brought to us from the otherworld by a horse or, in the deep past, a horse goddess. Even more upsetting to some, the sense that they were not actually in their beds made many feel that the horse came and took them away on their night terror, returning them when she was finished.

Most important to Ostara, the horse represents elusiveness and youthful, feminine power. The Welsh Horse Goddess Rhiannon is a great example of a powerful woman depicted on horseback who cannot be captured, no matter how hard her pursuers followed.

Because horses journey in freedom between the worlds, they have a two-season connection. At Mabon, the autumn equinox, they represent journeying to the otherworld, and at Ostara they symbolize the return to earth of the Goddess from the underworld of winter.

We can use the horse image to help make our own astral travels to the otherworld and back through our dreams. This is sometimes referred to as inner journeying, guided meditation, or an out-of-body experience. We do this by mentally riding the back of the dark horse of autumn or the white horse of spring between the worlds, aided by a magickal philter.

Philters are small vials of blended oils or waters that have been most often employed in love magick, though they can be used to induce a dream state that will allow for the conscious projection of the consciousness or astral body. A famous and disturbing painting dubbed *The Nightmare* captures all these images. Created in the late eighteenth century by Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli, it depicts a young woman writhing on her bed in a tormented sleep. On the table beside her bed rests an open philter vial, and through an opening in her bed curtains comes the head and neck of a dark horse, with eyes like fire, leering at her.

Because most medieval philters were reported to be concocted of dangerous substances, many modern ones are created for anointing the body only. However, they can

be made safe for consumption by crafting them of lightly scented waters or vinegars, avoiding volatile oils and toxic plants.

An Astral Travel Philter for a Horse Otherworld Journey

To make your philter, you will need to find and cleanse a small glass bottle with a snug topper or cap. Fill it about two-thirds full of filtered water, then add any or all of the below-mentioned items, based on your personal affinities and keeping in mind allergies and other sensitivities of those who will be drinking your philter, to catapult their dreams into astral travels.

If you are definite about wanting to drink your philter, think about using:

Olive Oil Filtered Mugwort

Catnip Filtered Rosemary

Chamomile (only if you have no ragweed allergies)

If you think you'd rather use the philter to anoint yourself, you might want to add:

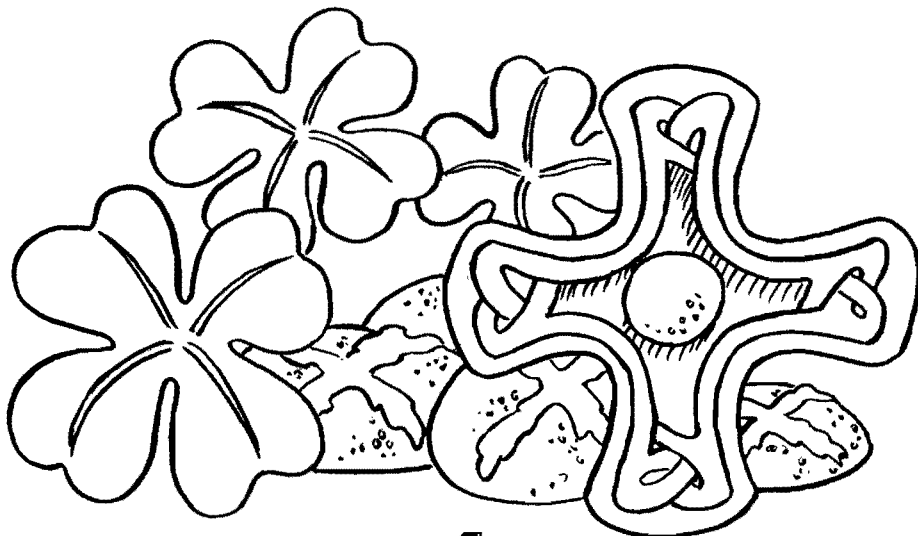
Poplar Leaves Dragon's Blood

A Moonstone Lavender Oil

The Hair of a Horse (white or black, depending on season)

Lilac Oil (if you want to travel to past lives)

Charge the finished philter under the light of a full spring moon with visualization and a request to your personal deities to ask their help in opening the doors of the otherworld to you. If you're using the philter to anoint yourself, it should be stored near your bed under a dark cloth so that it will never be exposed to sunlight. Keep the philter refrigerated if you will be drinking it. To use as a drink, you may put some of the philter in a tea, or drink straight from the vial before going to sleep. You only need a very small amount. If you want to use it to anoint your body, use your forefinger to place a single drop on your temples, forehead, and solar plexus. When you get into bed, visualize the horse of the Goddess coming to you so that you may ride her to other worlds and back again.



4

More Symbols, Spells, and Recipes

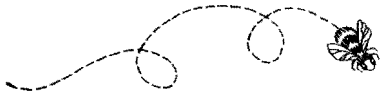
Quick! Pretend like you're watching a very old rerun of *Captain Kangaroo*. "Boys and girls, what do these things have in common?"

Crosses	The Letter X
Celtic Crosses	Sun Wheels
Shamrocks	The Crossroad
Swastikas	St. Bridget's Cross
Brigid's Cross	Four-Leaved Clovers

These icons all employ the image of the equal-armed cross, an intersecting point with four arms extending out from its center in equally spaced proportions.

What does that have to do with Ostara?

Everything.



The Cross

The equal-armed cross, in all its many forms, has represented the four major turning points in the solar year since before history and the written word. Pagan and Wiccan practitioners often refer to the equal-armed cross by the term “sun wheel,” as it marks the turning points of the sun: summer solstice and winter solstice, autumnal equinox and vernal equinox.

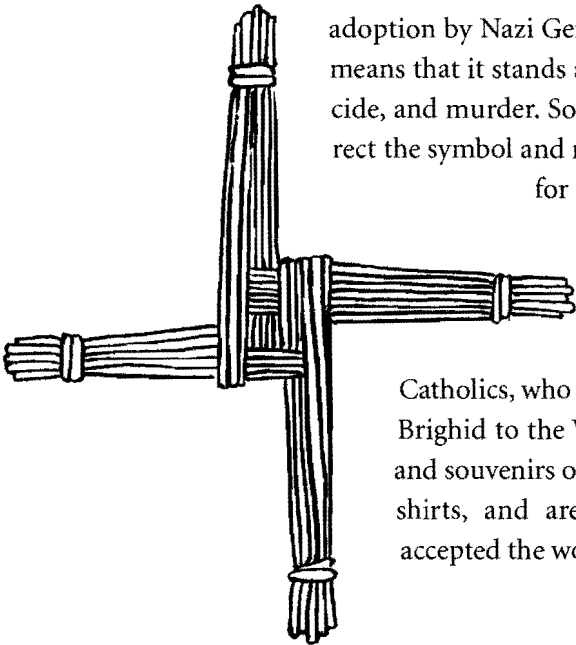
The Teutonic and Indian cultures were the ones who most vigorously adopted this symbol as a religious motif, and it is still a popular icon within modern Teutonic traditions. The early Aryan people of what is now India created a sun wheel motif that

would appear to be spinning clockwise with the Earth. This spinning sun wheel is still known today as the swastika. It’s sad that the swastika’s adoption by Nazi Germany as the emblem for their national flag now means that it stands as a symbol of corrupt power, destruction, genocide, and murder. Some modern Teutonic Pagans have tried to resurrect the symbol and restore it to its rightful place as a spiritual symbol

for the ever-turning wheel of the year, but they have met with lots of resistance.

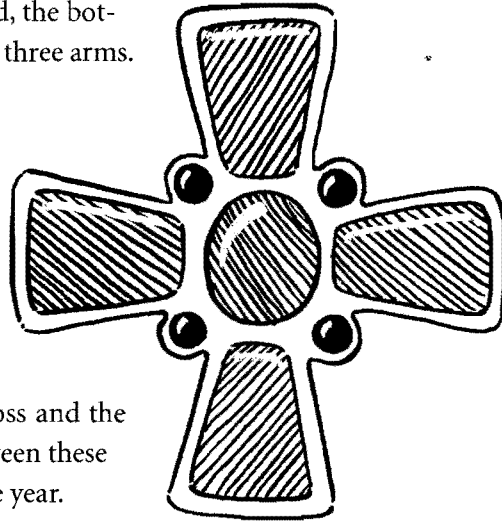
In Ireland, another sun wheel appeared as the symbol of the Goddess Brighid. Now dubbed the St. Bridget’s Cross by Irish

Catholics, who have transformed many of their old myths to link Brighid to the Virgin Mary, the crosses are popular decorations and souvenirs of a trip to Ireland. They are seen on jewelry and t-shirts, and are available as woven straw creations that are accepted the world over as examples of Irish folk art at its best.

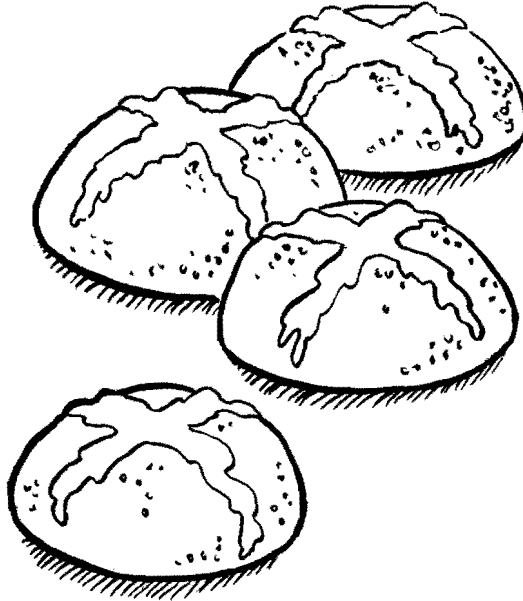


ST. BRIDGET’S CROSS

Also in Ireland we find Celtic crosses that echo the equal-armed cross's original meaning. For practical purposes, such as for mounting the cross in the ground, the bottom arm is often made longer than the other three arms. Many of the crosses have arms that are completely equal in length or have a longer vertical arm clearly not in keeping with the appearance or mood of the horizontal arm of the cross, suggesting that it is somehow separate from the main design. Most telling, these crosses often employ a circle in the design just less than halfway between the center point of the cross and the outer arms to represent the connection between these four solar turning points on the wheel of the year.



The equal-armed cross has been adapted into the spiritual iconography of many of the world's major religions, most notably as the Latin cross of Christianity. In the Christian version, the bottom arm of the cross is longer by almost half than the other three. This alteration to the equal-armed design stems, again, from practical application. In ancient Rome the Latin cross was used for the capital punishment of political rivals, especially those in conquered countries. Christians sometimes find it surprising to learn that the crucifixion of their savior God, Jesus, was not an isolated incident. He was a victim of political assassination because he represented a threat to the establishment of the Roman government in what had once been the free and sovereign nation of Israel, whose deities, culture, values, and customs were at odds with those of Rome. The long vertical arm of the Latin cross allowed it to gain a sturdy foothold in the ground for public executions. It was also carried by the front ranks of the marching legions of Roman warriors and, again, the long vertical arm made hoisting and carrying the cross more practical.



The image of the cross is also seen during the Easter season when bakeries are full of traditional sweet rolls known as Hot Cross Buns. Though they are now associated with the Christian holiday, breads with spiritual symbols emblazoned on them have been part of Pagan practice the world over, ever since the methods of processing and baking grain was first discovered. Reclaim Hot Cross Buns as a Pagan tradition. Many variations of the recipe abound, and they make wonderful Ostara treats.

Hot Cross Buns

Frosting

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 cup orange juice

Dough

- 3 cups unsifted flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup evaporated or whole milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup softened butter or margarine
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$ heaping teaspoon allspice
- 1 cup raisins and/or walnuts
- 1 package dry yeast
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot water (for dissolving yeast)
- 1 large, well-beaten egg

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees.

While the oven is warming, combine all ingredients except yeast, hot water, the egg, and the frosting ingredients, and mix them well.

Dissolve the yeast in the hot water, then add it and the egg to the rest of the mixture. Combine well. Shape into a ball, and place in a lightly greased bowl, turning once to grease the top.

Cover the mixture with a cloth and allow the dough to rise in a warm spot for about an hour, until it has nearly doubled in size.

Shape the dough into round balls about 3 inches across and place them at least 3 inches apart on a lightly greased and floured baking sheet. Place the sheet in the preheated oven.

After 5 to 8 minutes of baking, open the oven and use a sharp knife to slash an equilateral cross about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch deep into the top of each bun. Allow the knife to pry open these wounds slightly so they will be less likely to bake themselves closed again.

Return the buns to the oven and allow them to bake for another 15 to 20 minutes, or until they are a brownish gold.

Remove the buns from the oven and drizzle the frosting on them.



The Crossroad

Another equal-armed cross synonymous with Ostara is the crossroad. These intersections have been in existence since people first began making routine travels from one place to another, in particular with the rise of trade. Though they are with us year round, they are a natural representation of the sun wheel, appearing to continue equally in all directions for eternity, and the perfect symbol for any equinox or solstice.

Legends of goddesses appearing at or granting wishes at a crossroad are numerous. These intersections represent a meeting place between the worlds of matter and spirit. For those following Celtic magickal traditions they represent a place in between places containing magical potential. For example, are you on the east-west bound road, or the north-south bound road? It's not clear. You are in the place in between places, where two worlds meet.

In Britain and Ireland the Horse Goddesses Epona and Rhiannon are often said to be traveling through crossroads at dawn on magickal days such as Ostara. At the autumn equinox they most often move west, toward the deities' home in the other-world. At Ostara they are more likely to travel east to greet the waxing sun as its legs first step over the edge of the Earth.

The method employed for seeing these goddesses differs from folktale to folktale, but it usually involves being there before sunrise, making an offering, and having performed some little ritual beforehand, such as plucking the tail feather from a red hen and dipping it in a mixture of spring herbs before wearing it on your person. Legends from England say you must sit, unseen and silent, in one of the quadrants and ring a small bell three times. As you ring the last note, the goddess, on horseback, will ride by, moving either east or west.

A popular Mother Goose rhyme of English origin talks about going to the crossroad of the town of Banbury to see the Maiden Goddess of Spring, often conceptualized as a young woman in flowing white robes who is clearly of divine origins:

*Ride a cockhorse to Banbury Cross
to see young lady upon a white horse;
with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
she shall have music wherever she goes.*

The Greek Crone Goddess, Hecate, often cited as the model for the secular Halloween witch, was another deity of the crossroad. A goddess of the autumn and winter aspect of the crossroad, she was claimed to have been seen during the new moon walking with her black dogs at the local crossroads. She could level curses or offer blessings to those who passed her by, depending upon that person's karmic situation. Hecate's followers often left offerings and petitions at crossroads to seek her assistance with problems or to protect them on their travels.

Because the crossroad provides us with ready-made magickal energy, many spells—both ancient and modern—are employed near them around Ostara for love, protection, and to honor the Goddess. To have them work their best, try to find an isolated crossroad where you might be able to work unseen for at least five minutes, and exercise extreme caution if you are out alone after dark. Unfortunately magick and sacred ritual won't protect us completely from evil people. Also, try to find a crossroad that makes a perfect X with its arms oriented as directly as possible to the four cardinal points of east, south, west, and north. A compass can help you decide how closely a crossroad is to perfection.

Crossroad Spells for Ostara

- To increase your chances of becoming pregnant, take a small cloth bag with some rice, bistort, and mustard seeds tied inside it to a crossroad just before dawn. Bury it in the northwest quadrant and water it like a newly planted seed.
- Protection from psychic energy and unwanted spells or negative thoughts can be enhanced by burying a Witch Bottle in the southeast quadrant of a crossroad. More often buried near an entry point to a home, a Witch Bottle is a glass container the Witch fills with thread, needles, pins, nails, broken glass, salt, ashes, vinegar, citrus fruit juice or pulp, and often some blood or urine.
- To enhance the efficiency of a protection talisman containing cross symbolism, place it at the center of a crossroad under a full moon and visualize it being charged with renewed energy that encompasses the world of form and the world of spirit.

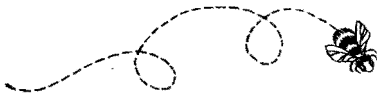
- To gain protection, go to each of the four quadrants of the crossroad and, starting at the southeast quadrant and moving counterclockwise, make a large X on each quadrant with your finger or small stick found near the crossroad. Leave a small gift for the spirits of the crossroad, then chant a prayer to Hecate to look after you, such as:

*Blessed be the ancient crone,
accept this offering at your throne;
bless me, Hecate, I ask you with love,
protect me always from below and above.
I ask your guidance as I go through each day,
I ask your help to pave my way;
make safe the path without a hitch,
trusting in you, Goddess of the Witch.*

- To banish nightmares, you will need a blue or purple candle and small blue cloth in which you tie skullcap, linden, and lavender. Take it to a crossroad in the evening, just before sunset, and bury the bag in the northeast quadrant. Place the lit candle on top of the site of the buried bag, but first make sure all dried grass and other flammables are clear of the burial spot.

Sit for while and visualize the candle burning away the dark images that have haunted your mind while the bag culls the energy of deep, dreamless sleep. When you are ready, extinguish the candle and head home. Burn the candle for few minutes near your bed before you're ready to go to sleep for the night. (**Important Note:** Use extreme caution with any fire magick. Never leave a candle unattended. Be always conscious of flammable items nearby, or the presence of curious children and pets. Set a kitchen timer or alarm clock to go off after a few minutes if you are not sure you can stay awake while the candle burns near your bed. Remember, three-quarters of successful magick involves commonsense efforts in the everyday world to back up your spells.)

- To get rid of an unwanted lover, write his or her name on a piece of paper in red ink or liquid dragon's blood and press it into a piece of raw meat that's a little past its prime. If possible, include in the meat some small item belonging to your unwanted suitor, or try using a pebble or teaspoon of soil from that person's home. Bury this in the southwest quadrant of the crossroad to help the unwanted lover move on and find a new romance.
- Crossroads are sometimes viewed in folklore as portals to the land of the dead, or the otherworld. In Europe and Russia—and in more and more places in North America—it is not hard to uncover local folklore about a crossroad that has been in existence for hundreds of years. These are places where unwary travelers might meet spectral dogs, malevolent spirits, ghosts, or even the apparitions of an entire army who once used the road en route to battles. Offer libations of basic food-stuffs, such as bread, to honor the dead as they pass between worlds. Place your offering in one of the western quadrants to honor those departing the earth, and in the eastern quadrants to honor those coming to visit the earth plane.



The Colors of Ostara

The question is as baffling as the “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” argument. Do we associate pastel colors with new life because we associate them with spring, or do we associate spring with pastels because we associate them with new life?

We often refer to these pastel shades with the prefix “baby,” as in baby blue, baby pink, etc. Even though psychologists tell us that infants are better stimulated by bright colors, we still feel compelled to give gift items to babies that are pastel. Another example of our passion for spring pastels can be seen in the candies and confections commercially prepared for the spring season, particularly for Easter. They are most often dyed pretty shades of pastels and other light spring colors that make us think of warm weather and of being outdoors. This attraction to muted colors speaks eloquently of their archetypical association with the concept of rebirth.

Because the outdoors is a focus at spring, many of these shades are adopted from nature: grass green, robin's egg blue, and pale yellow for the waxing sun. These colors are also associated with spring goddesses. Even the Virgin Mary is often portrayed in blue garments.

From medieval England comes the popular Mother Goose rhyme that tells us about the color of garments of the awakened Spring Goddess:

*Daffy Down Dilly has come to town
in a yellow petticoat and a green gown.*

The spectral colors, as seen in a rainbow, are also Ostara colors when they appear in muted shades. Many of the silk flags that are now popular as seasonal home decorations contain rainbows. Rainbows are almost as much Ostara symbols as the colors they contain, and symbolize promises, new life, renewed hope, and reaffirmation of faith in the God and Goddess. Over the last several decades the rainbow symbol has also been used by organizations who wish to promote human unity and the celebration of diversity. Rainbow flags and bumper stickers are often displayed to indicate pride in a gay or lesbian lifestyle, and promote acceptance of sexual lifestyle diversity as well.

For spring magick, adopt these Ostara colors into your spells and rituals to enhance their quality.

Grass Green • Fertility; Eco-Magick; Rituals to Honor Earth Goddess; Rituals to Honor Woodland God; Good Fortune; Personal Beauty.

Robin's Egg Blue • Purification; Chastity.

Yellow • Wealth; Health; Intellect; Communication; Astral Travel.

Lavender • Love and Romance; Healing.

Pink • Romantic Love; Household Peace.

Blood Red • New Life Rituals; Goddess Rituals; Vigor and Vitality; Lust and Passion; Strength; Courage.



Dancing the Rites of Spring

Dancing has been a part of Pagan and tribal spiritual practices since long before recorded history. It was and is used to mimic the desired outcome of spells, to raise and send magickal energy, to create a healing atmosphere, to become one with other beings, to make a hunting expedition successful, to shapeshift into an animal form, to prepare for battle, to celebrate community events, to unite life partners, and to celebrate the God and Goddess.

Ostara dances have three major themes:

- The union in sacred marriage of the God and Goddess, including their sexual union.
- The smooth and airy movements that mimic the spring breezes.
- The hard-driving, primitive aspects of early humankind celebrating the rush of basic instincts boiling to the surface during spring rituals.

When choosing music for magickal or ritual dance, it is best to select music without lyrics. Lyrics, unless specifically crafted for your occasion and need, can interfere with your concentration about the purpose of the dance. It's all too easy to be listening to the words rather than our inner self or the voices of our deities. It's even better to choose music that never had lyrics to begin with because the energy of those lyrics has been preprogrammed into the collective unconscious and into your own memory. This can interfere with the magickal goal of your dance.

Ostara Dances for Groups and Individuals

Rites of Spring Dance

This is the hard-driving, earth-pounding, wild-out-of-the-head dancing that was immortalized in Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, the ballet that caused a near riot when it debuted in 1913. This dance may be done alone or in groups. Since it ultimately evokes a trancelike sensation in the dancer, it is effective either way.

To do this dance, move in a slow, clockwise circle to a pounding rhythm. Your circling will be slow, but your movements frantic. Pound your feet on the face of Mother Earth and feel the inner primitive in you come out in all its glory as you abandon yourself to the wild beat of this dance that both celebrates and awakens the earth.

Music to Try • *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky, or any of the atonal, multi-rhythmic pieces experimented with by twentieth-century composers. A music store with a full selection and knowledgeable staff can help you locate something appealing to your sense of the primitive.

The Butterfly Dance

You can dance with the butterfly by allowing yourself to mimic its movements, transporting yourself into new worlds. Consider making or purchasing a garment with gauzy sleeves that sweeps from the wrists to the waist or ankles like large gossamer wings. Try looking for these in theatrical or dance-costume stores. You might also want to use large silk flags to swing in your arms as you dance, or make them by attaching rectangles of colored silk—decorated with Ostara symbols if you like—to wooden dowels that are inexpensive and obtainable at any hardware store. Dance like the air and let your wings swing fully and catch the spring breeze.

Music to Try • *Dance of the Hours* by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, or anything with a fluttery melody or playful tempo.

The Wind Dance

On a windy spring day near Ostara, dance outdoors and attempt to blend your spirit with that of the wind. Gauzy clothes, such as you might have chosen for the Butterfly Dance, will help you feel that you're capturing and flowing with the wind. Some prefer to dance nude when they have the privacy. Spin and allow your dance to flow. Be fluid as the wind and, with outstretched arms, allow your mind to drift to all the qualities of the air elements and celebrate the warmth of spring. Become the spring wind. Learn what it thinks and feels and memorize all its qualities to draw on later to assist you when working with the element of air in magick and ritual.



Music to Try • Viennese waltzes, such as those by Johann Strauss, or *The Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy* from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. A Christian song of creation in waltz tempo that also works because of its veneration of life renewed is *Morning Has Broken* (words and music by Eleanor Farjeon). Popular singer Cat Stevens recorded a version of the song in the 1970s, and it is still available on his "Greatest Hits" album.

The Mating Dance

No matter how much a part of our lives social dance has become in the last 500 years, there still remains a large part of it that strikes us as being a mating ritual. Men and women will often seek not to dance with the best dancers in terms of form and technique, but want always to have a turn with the one they deem the best-looking or most sexually attractive. A good dance can be good sexual foreplay, or at least offer a momentary fantasy of romance. If you are dancing with an opposite sex partner, choreograph your dance with some give and take, one moment allowing the woman to be the aggressor, and the next, the man.

Music to Try • Ask a knowledgeable music salesperson or ballroom dancer to show you where to find recordings of bolero music. The slow, sensuous, Latin rhythm of bolero makes it a natural for inspiring movements of grace and sexual tension. If you like a little more earthiness to your music, try a tango. This sensual dance from Argentina has been referred to as the closest thing to sexual intercourse you can experience while fully clothed and vertical.

The Spiral Dance

The “spiral dance” is a popular Pagan metaphor for the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The spiral is viewed in Paganism as the symbol of life, and this conceptualized correspondence was borne out in the twentieth century when DNA, the threads on which the map of genetic selves is hung, was proven to look like two interwoven spirals. Spiral dances are popular in groups and work best in this setting. Following a designated leader, link hands or connect yourselves with garlands or handkerchiefs and dance in a spiral, inward, toward the center of your circle. This phase of your dance represents death. Follow your leader in a spiral outward again to represent rebirth. This dance can be either solemn or spirited, depending on how your group feels about spiral imagery. Some groups interpret one phase as solemn and the other as spirited. Experiment to see what feelings and energies each interpretation evokes.

Music to Try • Anything at all that fits the atmosphere your coven or group wants the dance to have. If you can't agree on a musical style, you might want to try something that starts slow and picks up speed as it progresses. Middle Eastern folk music often flows in this progressive pattern.

If you can't find anything you like, you can make a recording that will work for you using parts of existing music you already own. Just remember that this is copyrighted material you're using and it cannot be legally distributed to others without the publisher's permission. In the United States, willful copyright infringement can result in fines of \$100,000 and may include imprisonment. Don't risk turning a great ritual dance recording into trouble for yourself.

Other Music and Dances

Spring dance rituals can be as unique as the music that appeals to you. Feel free to experiment with music you like to find the type that best connects you with the spirit of the season. You might try to adapt hymns such as *This Is My Father's World* (words by Maltbie Babcock, music by Franklin Sheppard) which, when the masculine pronouns are replaced with the feminine, evokes Ostara's creation of the Earth.

Some classical music has been written specifically as an interpretation of the energy of spring. Among these are Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi's spring movement from his symphony *The Four Seasons* (1725). American composer Aaron Copland wrote a ballet in 1945 called *Appalachian Spring* containing lots of interpretive dance themes.

In the last twenty years numerous Pagan recording artists have emerged, many of whom have created music specifically for seasonal celebrations. Their recordings are available through Circle Magazine or through the metaphysical retailer Azure Green. See Appendix B for contact information.



Deck the Halls with Boughs of Flowers

Flowers and spring are so synonymous that it almost seems redundant to even talk about flowers in a chapter on Ostara symbolism. These are not the heat-indifferent wildflowers of the summer equinox, but the delicate flowers that symbolize the first new growth of the earth each spring. Whether growing naturally, as in tree blossoms, or being cultivated by humankind, these first flowers are symbolic of the new life of Ostara, the first-born children that sprout from the womb of the earth.

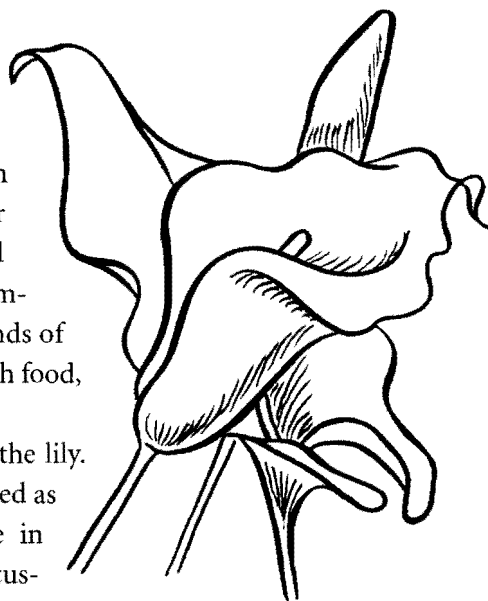
American schoolchildren are taught that the crocus is one of the first signs of spring's arrival. Though this is about as ancient as Victorian England, where much of

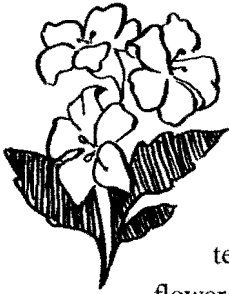
our modern flower language comes, the small buds have indeed become welcome signs that winter has passed.

The idea of new life was so deeply planted in the mind of the Slavic Pagan cultures that they believed Ostara to be a day when death had no power. Modern Pagans still following Slavic traditions will create a doll or poppet to represent Death, then symbolically kill him by tossing him into moving water so he can float away or drown. Flowers are tossed into the river after him as songs of farewell are sung from the bank or shore. After Death's drowning, brightly painted red eggs are given to all who processed to the communal ritual site—heavily decorated with garlands of flowers—where the power of life is celebrated with food, dance, and strong drink.

Another common floral symbol of spring is the lily. This lovely white flower was long ago appropriated as a Christian symbol of death. This is because in Rome, where the early church originated, it was customary to place lilies in the hands of the dead, a practice that continues in Europe and North America today. Through this they became symbols of death and mourning, yet the whole idea of giving lilies to the dead came from Pagan Rome and Greece, where they represented life and rebirth, adorning Ostara altars. In theatrical rituals enacted on Ostara day, it was common practice for young men playing the role of the young God to present lilies to the young women whom they were courting.

Rome even had its own Goddess of Flowers, the eponymous Flora, whose festival date fell sometime between Ostara and Beltane, the two major European festivals of spring that celebrate life and mating. The Floralia is still honored in many Pagan traditions by being incorporated into Ostara or Beltane practices. Wreaths, garlands, and headdresses of flowers are often woven together and used to adorn couples who portray the young God and Goddess of Spring and Rebirth.





In France and Spain several communal flower customs grew up around these flower festivals. The roots of these celebrations are firmly planted in the ancient Pagan festivals surrounding spring mating and sacred marriage, but the full understanding of the practice is cloudy due to its many changes over the centuries that have brought it down to us as a playful custom rather than a sacred act.

The Battle of Flowers as we see it today dates to approximately late sixteenth-century France and Spain, and centers around the custom of throwing flowers at potential lovers. Young people were encouraged at communal spring festivals to become hunters of mates. Armed with baskets of flowers, they would toss them at appealing potential mates while the targets tried—in vain or in fact—not to be hit. Whichever part of the body was hit with the tossed flowers determined that person's relationship with the hunter, and perhaps created social obligations throughout the coming year. Depending upon how each community interpreted the body parts, a hit on the feet meant the two had to attend a dance together, or a hit on the face might obligate the prey to give the hunter a kiss.

Vestiges of this charming festival come to full flower each April in San Antonio, Texas, where the ten-day-long Fiesta San Antonio concludes with the popular Battle of Flowers Parade. Local businesses and schools close for the afternoon of the parade so festivalgoers can line the parade route. Flower-bedecked floats created by local organizations, businesses, and charities wind through the downtown streets bearing riders who toss candies, trinkets, and flowers at the cheering crowds.

Spring Flower Magick

From the Middle Ages through the Victorian period, flowers developed rich magickal associations and meanings that are still employed in everyday spells. The following are some suggestions for using spring flowers in your own magick:

Rose • Used in love spells for centuries, the color of the rose often notes the precise meaning of the offering today. For example, red is for passion or romantic love, yellow is for friendship, white is for chaste love, and pink is for a budding romance or to say you like someone a lot. To draw his or her attention your way, strew rose petals over an area a targeted lover will walk.

Lilac • Lilacs can be added to oil blends that help you see your past lives. Anoint your temples and the area known as the third eye, just above and between your eyebrows, to get the best effect. Place them around your home to ward off evil spirits.

Primrose • Cultivate to attract spring faeries, and carry them to attract a highly charged sexual love.

Cowslip • This is another favorite of spring faeries: they will gladly come to live in a garden in which cowslip is growing. Use it in spells for seeking wealth and health, and place it near your front door when you wish to be left alone.

Violet • This early spring flower has many magickal uses. Add it to spells for protection, love, healing, and sleep. Place it under your pillow to attract a new lover to your bed.

Apple Blossom • Use in love spells and rituals that celebrate lifecycles. In Celtic mythology the apple is the symbol of the otherworld and of the goddess who has control of the rebirthing process.

Orange Blossom • Add to spells whose goal is not just love, but marriage. This doesn't have to be traditional mainstream marriage, but marriage as you see it is best for you and your partner. Carry at your own wedding to help make yours a sexy and sacred marriage in the image of the deities.

Daisy • Allow daisies to be a central feature of spells to attract love and lust. Don't forget the old folk custom of picking off the blooms of each daisy head while saying, "S/he loves me not, s/he loves me so" to divine whether someone you love loves you back.

Hawthorn • This is the ultimate faery plant, and in Ireland many people will not disturb a hawthorn bush in any way, knowing it is the home of faeries who can help or hinder. Tie wishing ribbons to hawthorn bushes so that friendly faeries can assist you in making them come true. Be sure to leave an offering or libation for them too.

Columbine • Add to spells for love. Wear them when you need to fortify your courage or willpower.

Crocus • Add in spells to attract love and use to adorn Ostara altars.

Jasmine • Use jasmine in spells for love, psychic dreaming, and to help find needed cash.

Daffodil • Use daffodils to honor the God and Goddess of Spring, to enhance both their fertility and your own. Use them also in wishing charms and love spells.

Flowering trees also have their place among the symbols of Ostara and Easter. The pink blossoms of the dogwood tree have been symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus, just like the lily. Apple blossoms speak of love and new life. Hawthorn blossoms begin to bud in England and Ireland around Ostara, and at Beltane they are collected as magickal and sexual talismans. In the Celtic tree calendar it is the alder tree—a tree connected with psychic and regenerative powers—that rules over the month of Ostara.

The natural foods craze has moved into the twenty-first century with edible flowers as its latest fad. I admit to having done little experimentation in this area, partly due to allergy concerns and partly due to a persistent conviction that I'd like eating most flowers as much as I would a mouthful of dry grass. Even though modern North Americans and western Europeans are just now discovering edible flowers, flower foods have a long history in China and southeast Asia, and they were also eaten by the Greeks and Romans.

The edible part of the flower, in these cases, is always just the blossoms or flowering petals. Flowers you plan to eat should never be purchased from a florist or nursery.

These are covered with pesticides and other chemicals that are toxic. It should go without saying that you should also not eat any flower that you cannot positively identify. Some of the most attractive and best-smelling flowers are poisonous, including daffodils, azaleas, lily of the valley, crocuses, rhododendrons, and oleander.



The flowers in the “edible” category are:

Pansy

Violet (sweet taste)

Rose (fresh and sweet)

Nasturtium (sweet and peppery)

Gladiola (tastes like lettuce)

Carnation (peppery)

Dianthus (clovelike taste)

Calendula (spicy)

Squash Blossom (sweet)

Lilac (lemony taste)

Marigold

Dandelion

Peach Blossom (sweet)

Plum Blossom

Orange Blossom

Hibiscus

Geranium

Bachelor Button

Snapdragon (can be bitter)

Jasmine (sweet and earthy)

Gardenia (sweet)

Angelica (spicy)

Candied Edible Flowers

Candied flower petals make lovely snacks all by themselves, or they can be used to decorate other desserts to make them look as if a pastry chef has worked night and day on them for weeks.

To make these you will need several well-beaten egg whites, a little real vanilla extract (optional), a bowl of granulated sugar, a flat paint brush about a half-inch wide, and some wax paper. Mix a few drops of vanilla into the egg whites. The vanilla will help flavor the flowers, but you may leave it out if you prefer.

Dip the paint brush in the egg whites and use it to coat the petals. Dip the petals into the sugar until they are evenly coated, then place the petals on a sheet of wax paper.

Allow the flower petals to remain on the wax paper until dry. This should take less than an hour. When the flowers are dry, carefully lift them from the wax paper and place them in a container. Keep them refrigerated until ready to use.



Blood Symbols

Blood is almost a universal symbol of life. The rich red of blood is as much a color of spring as any pastel. In Egypt and Asia many ancient death and rebirth rituals employed red-colored substances to mimic blood. In Egypt, bodies were entombed with fluids derived from metallic or stone substances that looked like blood.

In any Ostara ritual you do, you may wish to add some “blood” to the tools, wine, or other decorations you use. Using a drop of one’s own blood used to be popular, but with sanitation concerns and fears in group settings of passing disease, this is seen less and less.

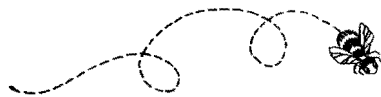
Making “Blood”

To make a fluid that will symbolize blood in your Ostara rituals, and contain spring and rebirth energies, mix together the following:

- 3 ounces liquid dragon’s blood
- ½ teaspoon powdered orris root
- 1 ounce milk

This will keep for about two weeks when stored with a tight cap. It should not be ingested. Dragon's blood will stain, but it is removable from some fabrics by using one of the new enzyme-based fabric cleaners as a washing pretreater. Dragon's blood is a plant extract that can be obtained at any occult shop, or see Appendix A for mail-order sources.

A bloodlike liquid can also be made from natural iron oxide, also known as red ochre or rust. It has been used to represent blood in rituals dating back 4,500 years to Egypt, when it was used to adorn bodies of the dead. The drawback to using red ochre is that it stains badly—not a red stain, as you might expect, but yellow.



New Clothing and Costumes

The modern Christian custom of donning new clothing at Easter comes from the Teutonic past. In old Germany it was considered the worst of luck to wear one's spring clothing before Ostara, and a bad sign for the coming planting season if winter clothing had to be worn after Ostara.

Folklore tells us that the Teutons would work through the winter in secret to prepare elegant finery for the communal Ostara festivities. Not only was it just as exciting as it is today to finally wear light clothing after the layers of winter wools, but it also fit the theme of rebirth—the idea of the old person repackaged for his or her day of renewal. The custom was kept alive during the Christian period because, no doubt, during the dark winters of the far north, this practice must have offered great hope for the future and a sense of excitement during the long, dark nights of winter.

As in other Pagan cultures, the entire community would gather together at Ostara for games, feasting, rituals, and to show off new clothing. If you wish to practice this custom in a nonsecular manner, consider having new robes, sashes, girdles, or waist cords made for yourself or your coven through winter and bring them out for your Ostara festivities. Look to the Ostara color archetypes earlier in this chapter for ideas on the best shades to use.

Costuming is part of many Pagan holidays. Though we think of this mostly in connection with autumn festivals such as Samhain (Halloween, October 31), there are costumed themes in spring as well. In chapter 5 we will explore the archetype of the Green Man and see how young men still dress up in his guise to personify the glories of spring.

Judaism celebrates a spring festival based on the story in the biblical Book of Esther. The story finds a Jewish woman, Esther, as the wife of the Arab King Mordecai. Mordecai's principle minister, Haman, hates the Jews and issues a decree that, on a specific date, Jews will draw lots to see who among them will be killed. The festival's name is Purim, meaning "lots" in the Aramaic language. Esther discovers the plot and petitions her husband to stop Haman. Horrified that his trusted minister would do such a thing without his knowledge, he orders the death of Haman.

On Purim (March or April on the Jewish lunar calendar), Jews celebrate their victory over death with communal parties, imbibing alcohol and dressing in costumes of the characters of the Purim story. Reform Jews often make or rent costumes as varied and imaginative as those seen at Halloween as the celebration moves out of any biblical frame and into the world of spring revelry for the sake of celebrating life renewed.

Feel as free to encourage costuming at Ostara gatherings as you would at Samhain. The act of costuming allows us to feel like someone other than ourselves and brings this already uninhibited festival to new heights. It can make for an unforgettable celebration.

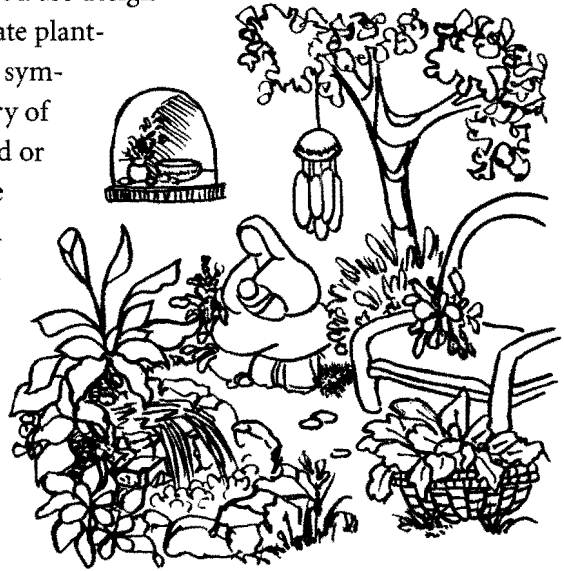


Seeds and Magickal Planting

Ostara marks the beginning of the agricultural season, and is a good time to consider planting a garden, both for medicinal and magickal purposes. If you don't have a yard, you can plant herbs in flower pots or window boxes. The plants they produce will be just as magickally and medicinally strong as those grown in a garden.

You will first need to decide which herbs, fruits, or flowers you wish to plant, based on your magickal needs and on which plants grow well in your area's climate and soil type. Local libraries and bookstores are usually well stocked with guides to preparing soil and planting special types of vegetation. If you find you really love gardening—as many do—you can probably find a gardening club to join. Gardens that grow healing or organic plants have become popular in the mainstream, so you needn't feel that magickal gardening is just too weird to be tolerated. You may just want to address the issue publicly as experimentation with folklore rather than as Witchcraft, if you are not fully comfortable with this disclosure.

You can be just as Witchy as you like while you are designing and planting your garden. You can demarcate planting areas in the shape of Pagan or astrological symbols rather than in rows. You can add a statuary of a deity to dedicate your garden to a specific god or goddess. You can use pinwheels that spin in the spring breezes to represent sun wheels, or you could add precious stones to both protect and to enhance the magickal energy of the herbs being grown. Two books that address magickal gardening that will give you more details for getting started are Scott Cunningham's *Magical Herbalism* (Llewellyn, 1982) and Patricia Monaghan's *Magical Gardens* (Llewellyn, 1997).



The Growing Wishes Planting Spell

To make a wish or desire grow stronger with your garden, select one plant or herb that best represents your end goal. If you're not knowledgeable in magickal herbalism or are uncomfortable relying on your own instincts, get a copy of Scott Cunningham's *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* (Llewellyn, 1989) or Paul Beyerl's *The Master Book of Herbalism* (Phoenix, 1994) for suggestions on which plant seeds to use.

Spend some time with your seeds before beginning the spell. Hold them, breathe on them, and mentally impress them with your desire. Also prepare your planting place, be it a small clay pot or outdoor area, by handling the soil while holding a clear visualization of your goal.

On planting day, rise with the sun and, using your hands as your only planting tools, place the seed appropriately in the earth.

As you cover it up, keep the visualization of your goal clear, and enhance the spell with a quatrain such as:

*Seeds containing all potential,
my need increases exponential;
I plant this day my great desire,
success grows stronger as this plant grows higher.*



The All-Season Broom

The broom is a symbol deeply linked to Witchcraft, even when that person recognizing the link has no knowledge of the deep symbolism of the broom in Craft practice. This connection is not just an accident of modern artistry; the broom has been a magickal tool and fertility symbol for many centuries.

Brooms are also seasonless, as much symbols of Ostara as any other sabbat. When it comes to Ostara, use your broom as is appropriate to the season. As with the robin's feather spell, use the broom to sweep the winter's psychic stagnation from your home, making it a clean, clear place for fresh spring magick to flourish.

You may also wish to ride your broom like a hobbyhorse around your garden, the way medieval women rode them around newly planted fields to ensure crop fertility. Though brooms are used as magickal tools by both genders today, the broom has been intimately associated with women as the traditional keepers of the home. By custom, Witch brooms were placed near the hearth of the home to guard the chimney, long viewed as the magickal entrance and exit point of the home. Witches were once believed to leave their homes via the chimney to go to gatherings with other Witches, and faery tales—such as the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, in which a marauding wolf is destroyed when he enters through a chimney—emphasize the importance of the chimney both as a source of protection and as a portal to other realms.

Use your broom to continue the idea of psychic spring-cleaning by make sweeping motions toward and up the fireplace flue. This tradition has been preserved for us in an English nursery rhyme that dates to the late Middle Ages. Note that most chimney sweeping is done from the top to the bottom, forcing the soot and ashes into the open hearth to be cleared away. Hence, this piece of Mother Goose nonsense is not talking about your average chimney cleansing:

*Sweep, sweep, chimney sweep,
from the bottom to the top,
sweep it up, my chimney sweep,
from the bottom to the top.*



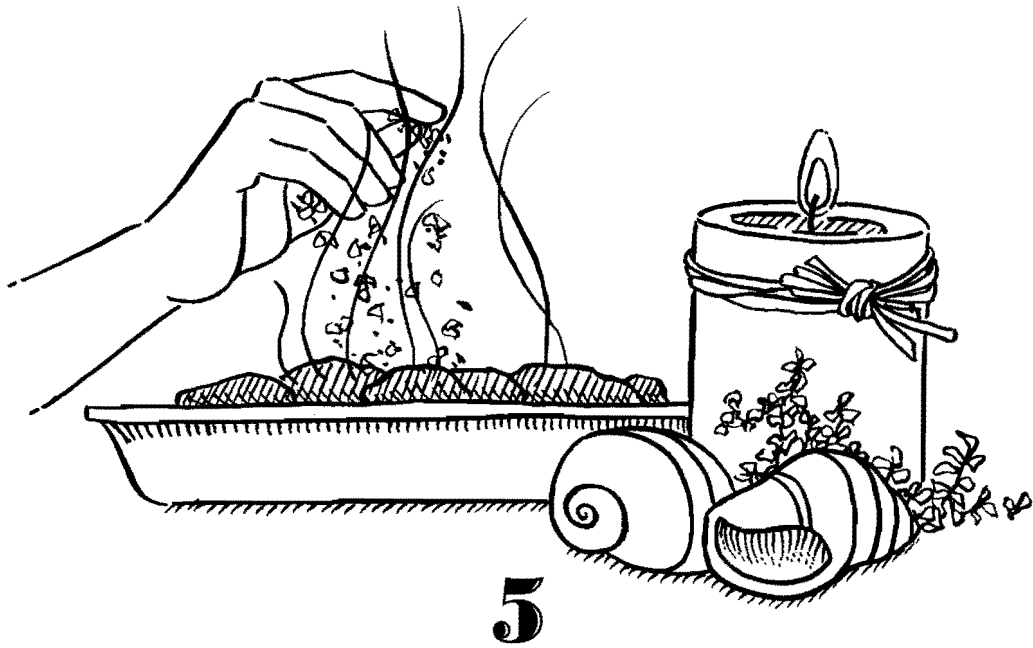
The Easter Basket

The vessel we know as a basket functions as a spring archetype the same way as the chalice or cauldron do. It is a place where spirit becomes whole and brings forth creation. It is a womb, a fertile hollow wherein the male and female aspects of the divine meet, unite, and spark new life.

At Ostara we call them Eostre's or Easter Baskets, and at Beltane we call them May Baskets. They are the same vessel. You may want to recite a blessing to the divine creators as you place eggs in baskets at Ostara to honor this sabbat of life renewed by remembering from where all new life flows.

Egg Basket Blessing

*The cycle of life again comes to pass,
I place in an egg all nestled in grass;
in a basket of straw, the Goddess's womb,
a place to meet God, who's returned from the tomb.
Life again is reborn this day,
in the womb of Eostre, in the basket of May;
female and male in the Great Rite balance,
new life is born from their spring dalliance.*

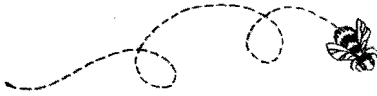


5

The God of the Greening Earth

Earth Goddesses are not the only deities of new life celebrated at Ostara. The God also has many representatives within the earth renewal archetype and he plays a leading role in the creation of fertility for the growing season. In ancient Ireland, the High King, as the earthly representative of the God, was so connected with the spirit of the land he ruled that any harm that befell him would also befall the land. Thus the Irish required that their Kings be whole and without blemish, for a damaged ruler would translate to a damaged land.

The God of Ostara has many other faces. In spring he is the warrior, the hunter, the master of the woodlands, the Green Man, the Lord of Misrule, the consort of the Goddess, the father of the coming harvest, and the resurrected God.



The God of Resurrection

The Story of Tammuz

Tammuz was a young Babylonian-Phoenician God of Vegetation and the Harvest. His great love was Ishtar, a Warrior Goddess of the Moon and Stars. At the harvest, Tammuz was killed by a boar—a goddess symbol—an “accident” for which both were responsible.

Ishtar was determined to go into the underworld and retrieve Tammuz. But the underworld was ruled by her sister, Eriskegal, and the two did not get along. Because the sister required those in her kingdom to be naked, Ishtar had to agree to be stripped of her clothing, jewels, and other finery as she descended into her sister’s realm, while the world grew barren and cold without its Vegetation God.

As the full moon waned to nothingness, Ishtar traveled deep into the underworld, giving up everything to reach her immortal lover. Because she did all that Eriskegal asked her, she was granted the right to take Tammuz back to the earth temporarily. Ishtar regained her clothing and jewels as she ascended to the earth, and the world grew fertile once more.

The process of resurrecting explicitly tells us that a new life or new phase of life has begun. It is the archetype of the most profound type of change that has captured our psyches in myths and legends since humanity began: the triumphant return of the hero from the otherworld.

Like the mythical phoenix rising from the burned ruins of the past, the archetype of the resurrected god is a strong spiritual image we still cling to today. Odin, Attis, Osiris, Dagda, Mithras, Orpheus, Tammuz, and scores of others all sacrificed themselves for the greater good of their people, only to be reborn. Even the Christian celebration of Easter celebrates the resurrection of a god from a sacrificial death that offers all its followers hope of achieving a renewed life.

Many modern covens celebrate Ostara with resurrection rituals. One member is usually chosen to portray a sacrificed or underworld god, whose name is chosen by the group depending upon the culture from which they adopt most of their practices and

mythology. This person reenacts the god's arising from the grave to offer his people renewed life. The ritual often begins with a solemn air and progresses to merry revelry by the ritual's end.

Incense to Honor the God of Spring

You will need a heat-resistant bowl or censor, and some matches and charcoal blocks specifically made to burn incense. Don't be tempted to use the charcoal chunks used for outdoor grilling, as these contain chemical accelerants to help the coals burn fast and hot. In enclosed spaces the fumes can be toxic, and they do nothing to add to the magick or atmosphere of Ostara rituals.

Light the incense charcoal and, on top of them, toss a combination of any of the following dried and crushed herbs:

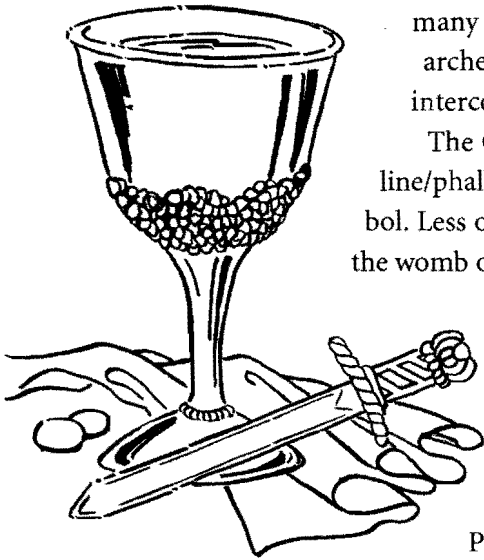
Cedar Chips	Ginger
Wormwood	Clove
Mullein	Skullcap
Poppy Seed	Cinnamon

Sacred Marriage: Connecting Earth and Sky

In the wheel of the year the God dies at Samhain, the date of our Halloween celebration. This opens the door to the otherworld and allows the passage of spirits from one realm to another. The young Goddess, though, is secretly pregnant with the God's son, the new God who will be born with the new waxing sun at the midwinter solstice, close to the date of the Christmas celebration that was adapted from this older belief. The young God grows stronger with the waxing sun until Ostara, when he and the Goddess are young and fertile, seeking to begin the cycle of life, death, and life renewal again.

The life, death, and life renewed cycle is celebrated at spring festivals, such as Ostara, Beltane, and ancient Greece's Anthesterion, through a symbolic ritual known as the Great Rite, in which the sacred marriage of the God and Goddess is celebrated and reenacted. The sacred marriage is not just a sexual union, but a repetition of the eternal spring mating of the two halves of creation from which all life must be born.

Though some couples prefer to skip the symbolic ritual and enact the Great Rite as a sacred sexual union of their own, it is still more common to see it performed



symbolically. This rite is enacted by groups, individuals, and by many couples worshiping together. The potent and deeply archetypal symbolism is employed even when actual sexual intercourse will also occur.

The Great Rite requires uniting in ritual the blade, a masculine/phallic symbol, with a chalice or cup, a feminine/womb symbol. Less often a basket or the earth itself is used as the symbol of the womb of the goddess instead of a chalice. The chalice represents the womb of the goddess, and is often filled with red wine during general rituals to symbolize the blood in which she incubates all life. The double-sided ritual blade, most often referred to as an athame, represents the phallus of the god.

Because this is a very sacred ritual to almost all Pagans, past and present, and because the act involves the energies of the deities, it is both customary and appropriate to prepare yourself and your ritual space with care. Even if you are not yet familiar with standard Pagan ritual format, you can still prepare your body by bathing, prepare your mind with meditation, and prepare your spirit by cleansing your work area with incense or smatterings of water from an earthen bowl. Be sure to have a clear visualization of your goal as you do this.

A Great Rite for the Solitary Practitioner

To perform the Great Rite, you will need a ritual blade and a chalice. For best effect you should try to arrange these items on an altar decorated for spring and illumined with two candles, one to represent each half of creation.

When you are ready to begin, go to the center of your workspace. Take a moment to center yourself; then, using the power of your mind, cast about you a perfect circle, one that contains the energy you will raise and keeps other energy out.

Starting at any one of the four cardinal direction points you choose, walk to the edge of your circle area and call upon that direction and its corresponding element to attend your circle to protect, join in, and assist. These directional-elemental correspondences vary slightly, depending upon the cultural basis of the individual or of the coven, but in general the Wiccan correspondences usually apply:

The God of the Greening Earth

North = Earth

East = Air

South = Fire

West = Water

A good quarter call does not have to be elaborate, calling upon every deity, spirit, and entity ever remotely associated with the directional quarter. Though you can find many that are written in this flowery language, you need only to address the spirits with respect, requesting their presence. Use the following format if you are a beginner.

*Powers of the north and earth,
sentient and nonsentient,
rulers and dominions who wish me well,
I ask your presence here at this circle
in this place that is all places and no place,
at this time that is all time and no time.
I ask your blessings and assistance during this rite.
Welcome, benevolent powers and spirits, and blessed be.*

Walk clockwise around the perimeter of the circle as you repeat this calling process at the other three directions. When you are finished you may return to the center of your circle to your altar area. Your sacred space has been established; you are now ready to perform the Great Rite.

Hold the chalice up with both hands, as if you are making an offering, generally aiming it toward the left side of the altar (left is usually perceived as the feminine direction). While holding the cup, ask the maiden goddess to bless it as a fitting vessel for her, a symbol of her virginal womb. Visualize the energy of the Goddess of Ostara merging with the chalice. You might even feel the chalice take on an energy of its own, something you can sense with ease once you've trained yourself to open your psychic senses to the otherworld.

When this is complete, set the chalice back down on your altar.

Next, hold up the blade with two hands. As you did with the chalice, do this in the manner of making an offering. Aim the blade toward the right side of the altar, right

being perceived by many traditions as the masculine direction. Ask the young Lord of Ostara to bless the blade as a fitting vessel to house his creative energy.

Transfer the blade to your right hand and lift the chalice with your left. Hold these up in front of you and offer your blessing over this sacred marriage. You can create your own verbal blessings, or use or adapt the one that follows:

*Goddess and womb,
Lord raised from the tomb;
fertile and youthful,
the divine ever-fruitful.
Lord and Lady, their union blest,
sacred marriage, sacred sex;
united again so all life can be,
from them to all, and from all to me.
Blessed be!*

Place the blade into the chalice and know that this is truly the God and Goddess, the two halves of divinity, uniting to create all life anew. You should be able to feel the infusion of pulsating life energy as you hold the united ritual tools, the same animating power that dwells in all living creatures. You should then be able to sense your connection to the deities and know you are part of them and they of you and all other life. If you don't feel these things right away, don't think you've done anything wrong. Just be patient, stay focused, and some sense of your achievement should be apparent.

When you feel ready to end the rite, place the united chalice and blade back on the center of your altar. Do not break their connection until your ritual is finished. If you have a permanent altar, you may keep the united chalice and blade sitting at its center throughout the spring season. This symbolizes the fact that the God and Goddess are united as a couple—two who are one—until the sabbat of Samhain (Halloween), when the old God dies and the Crone Goddess mourns him until his rebirth to her at Yule (Christmas). The ritual union of blade and chalice in the Great Rite also allows you to draw from their creative energy for any spells, meditations, or other rituals you wish to enact at this time.

If you can't think of anything else to do, but do not feel ready to step out of the ritual environment, you may dance, meditate, talk to your deities, make magick, sing, reflect on the meaning of Ostara and the meaning of creation, or do any other ritual you like, such as a seasonal ritual to honor the coming of Ostara. This is the season of creation, and creative inspiration may be at its best within your Ostara/Great Rite circle. You may want to bring into the sacred space paper, pens, art supplies, a musical instrument, or any other accouterments you use to create. Allow the union of male and female to spark your creative spirit into full flower.

When you are ready to end your ritual and close the sacred space, walk counterclockwise to each of the four cardinal directions, starting with the last one you called upon to open your circle, and thank these energies and beings for their presence and assistance. Do not order them to be gone, but let them know that you are closing your rites and that you are grateful for their attendance. If you are unsure how to begin, follow this general format:

*Spirits of the (direction) and rulers of (corresponding element),
thank you for your presence here at this most sacred of rituals.*

Blessed be all who come to celebrate the eternal union of our Lord and Lady.

You may depart at will. Thank you again, and brightest blessings.

So mote it be.

The "so mote it be" tag line, or something similar, is used at the end of most spells, rituals, and affirmations. In this case the phrase means "So must it be," in modern English. This seals the end of the spell or ritual with a stamp of "Yes, it is done as I will it and is now part of my reality." This sealing of the spell is seen even in the most mainstream environments. For example, it is the equivalent to saying "amen," which means "so be it" in Hebrew. It also keeps your wording in the present tense, which is a requirement of successful magick. You want the energies you set in motion to be a fact in the here and now, not at some unspecified point in the future. Always saying "will be" or "soon" in your spells will only serve to keep your magickal desires and ritual goals in the future, always just out of your reach.

The ritual is now over and the sacred space closed. You may now remove the items from your altar if you are unable to allow them to remain out, and continue on with your daily life.



The Green Man and the Great Horned God

A very old folk character in western European spring celebrations is the mysterious Green Man. The Green Man, also known as Jack in the Green, is the spirit of the woodlands, the personification of the greening of the earth, the Lord of the Animals, and the mischievous spirit of playfulness that comes with spring. He was probably a dressed-down version of the old woodland gods of Europe, in particular that of Herne or Cernunnos, the famed Horned God.

The Horned God is not a “devil” creature, as many church leaders and fundamentalist alarmists would have the world believe. The Horned God’s visage did not come from the Christian-Islamic Satan, but instead the image of Satan was built upon this prevailing image of the Horned God in Pagan Europe during the early centuries of the last millennium.

The name “Satan” comes from the Hebrew word *ha-satan*, a term that appears in what the Christian Bible refers to as the Old Testament. The word means “adversary.” It does not now, nor did ever, refer to any specific person or entity. The term was tapped

by Christian leaders around 325 c.e. as a name for the antigod as taught in Christian theology. This concept of an antigod as a separate force from, but with power equal to, the principle deity was also adopted by Islam, but it was never a part of Judaic beliefs or of those of the Pagan cultures of the prepatriarchal Middle East.

When Christianity sought to replace Pagan practices in Europe, replacing the local deities with its own vision of the divine, it met with more resistance than it expected. Adapt or diabolize were the only two courses of action open.

In most cases the church was able to adapt, using the same archetypes and mythic images on which all religions are built. They replaced Yule with Christmas; both are celebrations of the birth of the God who is the son of the God. They adopted Pagan symbols, such as the ones discussed in chapters 3 and 4, and attached to them



Christian legends. They offered belief in their deity as a means of renewing life. They built churches and monasteries on the sites of Pagan temples and worship sites, and replaced ceremonies of wine and cakes with a communion service. Where the church could not adapt, it diabolized, showing the antigod they named Satan as having the same appearance as the long-revered Horned God of Europe.

This Horned God, or Green Man, is the spirit of the earth, the forests, the fields, and is the God of the Hunt. The idea of a hunting god who looked like and identified game animals was an important icon to tribal people, who anxiously awaited the appearance of fresh game each spring and considered the reappearance of herds a gift from their deities.

In the secular Ostara celebrations of modern Ireland and rural England, the Green Man, or Jack in the Green, dances through the streets with the villagers, creating in his wake the spirit of merrymaking, of abandoning daily cares to take time out to revel in spring's pleasures. The youth chosen to make this portrayal is usually a young villager himself, usually one known widely for his randy and mischievous behavior. Dressed in green clothing and adorned with leaves and vines, he creates an atmosphere of revelry to usher in a celebration of spring that the deep subconscious minds of the local revelers recognize. Modern Pagan and Wiccan covens the world over reenact the celebrations of the Green Man returning to earth, mating with his Goddess of the Earth, opening the hunt, and blessing the creatures of the forest and the growth of greenery.

A very simple cake honoring the spirit of the Green Man can be made with commercial white cake mix and commercially prepared white frosting, some nontoxic leaves and local greenery, some twigs, and lots of green food coloring. A small tube of commercially prepared cake decorating icing is also useful.

Green Man Cake

- 1 white cake mix
- 1 can white frosting
- 1 tube cake decorating icing
- Green food coloring
- Leaves, twigs, and greenery to decorate

continued

Liberally blend green food coloring into the cake mix before baking; bake according to package directions. Once the cake is completely cooled, blend green food coloring into the frosting and ice the cake. Strategically arrange twigs and leaves around the outside of the cake to be the hair and beard of the Green Man. Use the twiggy ends of broken tree limbs to represent horns and the colored icing in the tube to make facial features. You can always use commercially prepared cake decorations to add to the facial features, but the outcome is much earthier without them. Use natural whenever possible.

Very simple, and very effective!



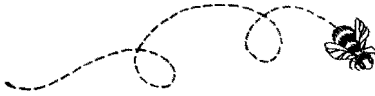
Eco-Magick

Like the Goddess of the Earth, the Green Man provides us with a focal point for our veneration of the earth as both the creation and embodiment of the divine beings who united to create all life. As we do with the energy of the Earth Mother, we center our magick on the spirit of the Green Man when we wish to preserve or help the Earth to be clean, healthy, and viable.

This magickal assistance of the Earth and her plants and creatures is known as eco-magick, an integral part of Pagan and Wiccan practice since long before modern ecology movements and Earth Day celebrations.

Green Man Eco-Magick Spell

Eco-magick is done to keep the Earth and her creatures safe and productive. To create a simple spell to help preserve the environment of which the Green Man is a part, gather some twigs, leaves, and stones from the ground. Mix these together in a small bowl with some patchouly oil and lavender, and bury in the earth to protect and bless in the Green Man's name.



The Goat-Footed God of Lust

The Horned God is often portrayed as a cloven-hoofed creature who is half goat, such as in the popular portrayals of another Horned God, Greece's mischievous Pan. The randy goat is a symbol of sexual arousal, and the mixture of his visage with that of the God of Spring is a deliberate connection that tells us to follow our leader into spring pleasures.

No matter how randy you may or may not feel each spring, all couples hit their lows in terms of their sex drive. Either they cannot get their desires in sync with one another, or they are just too tired doing everything else they have to do each day to feel like taking time out for sexual contact.

Fortunately, there are many spells and herbs that can be used to help bring the lustfulness back into your relationship. The following is one of them.

A Spell to Rekindle Lost Lust

For this spell you will need a red pillar candle and the oil of any three of these oils:

Rosemary	Damiana
Cinnamon	Jasmine
Clove	Bay
Sweet Pea	Thistle
Camphor	Vervain

Anoint the shaft of the candle with each individual oil. Use your finger to sweep the oil outward from the center point of the pillar. As you do this, you should keep in mind a strong visualization of the goal of your spell. If your partner can help you with this effort, all the better.

Burn the candle when you are ready for a sexual encounter with your partner. As you light it, consecrate your spell with a chant such as:

*Bright within us burns the fire,
we turn to each other with flaming desire;
the eternal passion of lovers refound,
in all-consuming desire we shall be bound.*

Extinguish the candle when you are finished but leave it out as a talisman to keep your sexual interest in each other strong and healthy.

A Spring God Anointing Oil

In a base of 2 tablespoons almond or safflower oil, place the following:

- 4 drops oak moss oil
- 2 drops cinnamon oil
- 1 drop bay oil
- 2 drops allspice oil

Seal tightly in a dark glass vial until ready to use. A single drop on the fingertip is all that is needed. Be aware that cinnamon may irritate the skin, so it's preferable to use this oil on candles.



Some Gods of Ostara

When researching male deities to honor or worship at Ostara, look for gods of woodlands and animals, hunters, resurrected gods, gods who sport horns, earth and vegetation gods that are not specifically gods of the harvest, and youthful deities and gods of love. Most of these archetypes fit into the symbolic and spiritual functions of Ostara and make compatible consorts for the Ostara Goddess.

If you're still unfamiliar with methods of Pagan research, or are unsure of your selection, try looking into the myths and legends surrounding any of the gods who conclude this chapter.

Aengus MacOg (Irish) • A youthful deity of love, romance, and music, who can be called upon to help you escape bad situations. He is the son of the Dagda, the God of Regeneration, and Boann, the popular Irish River Goddess of the Boyne River, who represents the feminine principle of the creator deity.

Akerbeltz (Basque) • Also called the "dark goat man," this is a horned god of all the male mysteries and the personification of the male principal of creation each spring.

- Attis (Anatolian)** • God of Vegetation and the Earth who is also a sacrificial deity resurrected each spring by his Animal Goddess companion, Cybele.
- Baal (Phoenician)** • A popular Earth, Vegetation, and Storm God whose underworld associations were exalted during his demonization by the early church.
- Basso Juan (Iberian)** • A Woodland and Game Animal God who never leaves the mountain forests and who dwells deep in caves, where he is protected by his animal totems.
- Cernunnos/Herne (Anglo-Celtic)** • These are the common names used by Wiccans for the Horned God of Europe. His visage, complete with a beautiful rack of deer antlers, is found in ancient artifacts. These and legends lead us to conclude he was a woodland, animal, and hunting deity, the first consort of the Earth Goddess of Spring, who mates with her to give birth to all living things on earth.
- The Dagda (Irish)** • Dubbed “the Good God,” the Dagda is a father figure who possesses a magical cauldron from which all could eat endlessly and into which slain warriors could be thrown and be regenerated to life again.
- Eros/Cupid (Greco-Roman)** • God of romantic love immortalized in modern Valentine’s Day greetings as the chubby winged cherub with the archer’s bow and arrow who shoots love into the hearts of hapless humans.
- Esus (Celtic)** • Worshipped as a God of Vegetation by some Celtic tribes on the European continent.
- Gad (Middle Eastern)** • A Goat God who was the consort of the Goat Goddess Gadda. They represent the two halves of the creator deity of spring. Also a deity of the woodlands, animals, and revelry.
- Ganymede (Greek)** • In Greek mythology Ganymede is the cupbearer to Zeus, the supreme deity. In archetypal terms, bearing the cup means to guard and keep the female principal of creation safe to protect the abundance of the land, and to ritually present her to the male principle when it is time for their sacred mating.

Gayomart (Persian) • Persia was the birthplace of world patriarchy, and one of the places where the bull cults flourished. This god was said to have mated with his great horned bull to produce all life. His son and daughter were the earth's first man and woman.

Gengenwar (Egyptian) • The Goose God who was charged with the safekeeping of the great cosmic egg from which all life sprang.

The Green Man (European/North American) • The Green Man is the essence of spring's new foliage when it reaches its richest point. His spirit dwells in grass, vines, ivy, trees, and other greenery.

Iasion (Greek) • In some myths, Iasion is the lover of Grain Goddess Demeter. Allusions are made to an agricultural fertility ritual concerning a thrice-plowed field. In many Pagan cultures, and in much modern magick, three is a sacred number representing magickal or ritual completion, and also relates to the potent Triple Goddess archetype of maiden, mother, and crone.

Kama (Hindu) • Similar to Eros or Cupid, this Indian God of Love is often depicted as a winged deity sporting the archer's bow and arrow, but without the Victorian plumpness added. He was the consort of Rati, the Goddess of Earthly Pleasures.

Kherty (Egyptian) • A ram-headed god with large horns who is often viewed as a God of Protection and patron of strongholds. The ram's visage links him also with other horned gods who represent sexual potency.

Khors (Slavic) • A hunter and hunting God of the Woodlands who is sometimes depicted as a large horse.

Laulati (Polynesian) • A Creator God; the male principle of the creator deity.

Lono (Polynesian) • A youthful God of Fertility and the Shoreline.

Mabon (Anglo-Welsh) • This youthful deity has the sabbat at the autumn equinox named for him, yet he also functions in archetype as a God of Horses, the Hunt, and Fertility. Like the goddesses Persephone and Kore, he retreats to the under-

world each winter and returns to it in spring. He is an excellent example of the male principle of the creator deity.

Marduk (Babylonian) • God of Vegetation, Fertility, and of the Spring Sun. He represents the sun as it reaches its balance with the night at Ostara, after which he grows stronger and stronger as Midsummer approaches. He has been named as consort of a variety of fertility and spring goddesses.

Min (Egyptian) • A Fertility God depicted with an impressive phallus.

Mixcoatl (Aztec) • A Hunting and Star God who is said to have a variety of mothers and consorts, one a Goddess of Spring Flowers.

Orion (Greek) • The supreme celestial archer who is the God of Hunting.

Osiris (Egyptian) • This famous deity has many archetypal correspondences that encircle the entire wheel of the year. In spring he is the God of Fertility and Vegetation. In autumn he is the God of the Afterlife and guardian of the underworld.

Pan (Greek) • Horned God of Nature, Woodlands, and Animals, whose name means “all.” He is also associated with sexual potency, playfulness, dance, and music.

Pinga (Inuit) • Like Osiris, this god is visible throughout the wheel of the year. In spring and summer he is God of Game Animals, in particular of whales, seals, and caribou. In autumn and winter he is the God of the Dead and ruler of the underworld.

Quiateot (Central American) • A deity of rain.

Seker (Egyptian) • Another god who represents fertility and vegetation in spring, and rules the underworld in fall and winter.

Sigu (South American) • God of Animals and the Woodlands. He protects and grants wishes to animals and, in the deluge myths, protects them in mountain caves. He also cut down the great Tree of Knowledge and planted its seeds in earth for humanity to discover.

Susanowo (Japanese) • God of Fertility, the Sea, Rain, and Storms.

Sylvanus (Roman) • The English word “sylvan,” referring to woodlands, is derived from the name of this Roman god. As his name suggests, he is the ruler of the woodlands and protector of its animals.

Tammuz (Babylonian) • A resurrected god whose myth is discussed earlier in this chapter.

Tekkeitserktok (Inuit) • God of the Earth, Hunting, and Deer Herds. Sacrifices were made to him before embarking on hunting expeditions.

Telepinu (Hindu) • Fertility god whose disappearance from earth leaves famine, similar to goddesses whose retreat to the winter underworld leave the earth cold and barren.

Telluno (Roman) • A God of Fertility and the Earth.

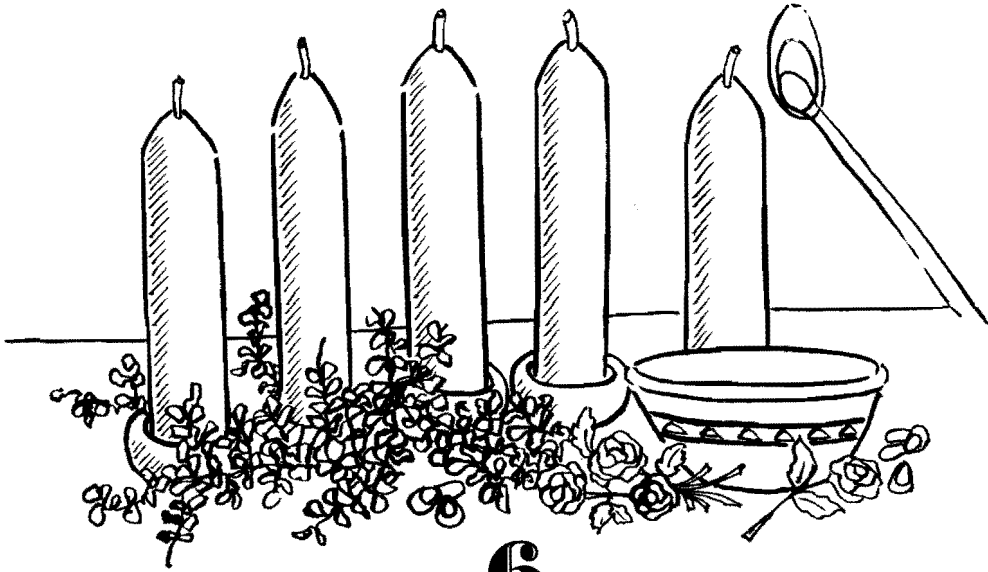
Thor (Scandinavian) • This popular Teutonic god of gigantic proportions was the ruler of the sky and of thunder. He possessed a great magical hammer named Mjolnir, which was used to break up ice and clear away winter when spring arrived, and also to bless spring marriages. Myths about him are numerous and easy to find. In some he travels in a chariot pulled by goats.

Tsul Kalu (Native North American) • A Hunting God and protector of game animals in the southern Appalachian Mountains.

Volos (Slavic) • God of Animals, protector of sheep and cattle.

Xyipacoc (Central American) • The male principle of the creator deity who created all life.

Yarilo (Slavic) • God of Sex, Love, and Fertility, to whom young woman gave bouquets of spring flowers to assist them in their quests to become pregnant. This Spring God died at the end of each summer, his demise coordinating with the first harvest.



6

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

The concept that the Goddess reawakens or returns to the face of the earth in spring is part of a mythology so old that it predates the written word. In the ancient Middle East and in Greece and Rome, some of these oral teachings were eventually put on paper and come to us today as the legends of the goddesses Inanna, Kore, Hera, and Persephone.

The premise of these myths is that the youthful or virgin Goddess, who represents the active earth cycle of spring and summer, is either abducted or chooses to go into the dormant underworld during the inactive earth cycles of fall and winter. Since she is the embodiment of the earth's fecundity, she takes with her the ability of the earth to be green and fruitful. In spring, usually at the time of the vernal equinox, she is either

returned or chooses to return to her people, and the earth once again turns green and fertile. Upon the return of the Goddess to the face of the Earth, renewed life is experienced both literally and figuratively by all living things. This archetypal concept of life renewed plays heavily in the symbolism of Ostara.

Once the Goddess has awakened from her winter slumber, she brings fertility to both the land and to its animals and people. The Spring Goddess is the Earth, the incubator of all that is, who offers her earth-womb as the fertile soil for planting. As her metaphoric pregnancy advances, she becomes the mother-to-be of the harvest in the autumn, offering plant life so that humanity can live through another winter without her. This idea is seen most clearly in the Greco-Roman myths of the Grain Goddess Ceres, from whom our modern English word "cereal" is derived. Once awakened in spring, she was believed to go from field to field at Ostara blessing the newly sown crops. This blessing was reenacted during the Middle Ages by having fertile women ride hobby horses over freshly plowed fields to offer the blessings of the goddesses of sex, creation, and abundance, such as Ceres.

The Story of Persephone

Persephone was the daughter of Greek deities Zeus, King of the Gods, and Demeter, Goddess of the Earth and Agriculture. When the Underworld God, Hades, fell in love with her, Persephone's parents argued over giving consent to the union. Frustrated at the stalemate, Hades decided to take action on his own. He kidnapped the young goddess and carried her off to his kingdom in the underworld.

Persephone's parents were distraught, particularly Demeter. She longed for her daughter and began a journey in which she walked the entire Earth searching for her. As she searched without end, the world grew cold and the land barren. The people became restless and afraid, and the deities feared there was nothing to be done for them.

When Demeter finally discovered where Persephone was hidden, Zeus sought out Hades. With a combination of pleading and diplomacy, he persuaded Hades to free his daughter for at least part of the year. This way she could visit her broken-hearted mother and temporarily restore the land to warmth and fertility.

Not wishing to hurt the people Persephone loved, Hades agreed, but with a provision of his own. Before he released her he required that she eat a pomegranate seed. By consuming this traditional food of the dead, Hades knew Persephone would be compelled to spend half the year in the underworld with him.

The famous Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece were built around Persephone's myths, with temples and rituals to honor her. Many modern Pagans still honor Persephone at Ostara.

Ritual to Honor Persephone's Return to the Earth

For this ritual you will need to create an altar area on which you can safely place several candles in spring colors. The number and colors of these are up to you. Leave the candles unlit as your ritual begins. You will also need some matches, some dried pomegranate seeds, and a heat-resistant bowl or censor. It's nice, but not required, to have some spring flowers or fresh greenery on your altar to help the energies generated there to better connect with the energy of Ostara.

Try to bring spring into your working area as much as possible and find ways to connect yourself to the earth. Work outdoors, open a window, be barefooted, or have a small bowl of soil nearby.

Allow yourself to be open to the energies of the awakening earth. Raise your arms to all four of the directions and feel them flood you with the new life aspect of their respective elements. Feel Persephone's presence growing stronger as you return to face your altar. Offer a blessing to the returning goddess, such as the one shown below, lighting the spring-hued candles at intervals. Visualize each new flame representing a new life being birthed into being by Persephone's growing strength.

*Blessed be the coming of spring,
the spring of Persephone,
who blesses the earth with life.
I feel you, Persephone, nearer and stronger,
your love for your land and your people
blessing and restoring us once more.
The pull of the pomegranate weakens
and you are with us again.
I feel you, my virgin goddess,
and welcome you home again.*

Toss the dried pomegranate seeds into the heat-resistant bowl and light them with a match. See them as symbols of Persephone's imprisonment; you are burning away the last hold that the underworld has on her. As the last of the seeds disintegrate, know that the goddess is now with you. You may speak to her and praise her as you choose before ending the ritual.

When you have finished the ritual, return the pomegranate ashes to the underworld by burying them.

Incense to Honor the Goddess of Spring

You will need a heat-resistant bowl or censor and some matches and charcoal blocks specifically made to burn incense. As mentioned previously, don't be tempted to use the charcoal chunks used for outdoor grilling, as these contain chemical accelerants to help the coals burn fast and hot. In enclosed spaces the fumes can be toxic, and they do nothing to add to the magick or atmosphere of Ostara rituals.

Light the incense charcoal and, on top of them, toss a combination of any of the following dried and crushed herbs:

Clover	Lemon Verbena
Vervain	Sweet Pea
Hibiscus	Jasmine
Briony	Myrtle



Awakening the Earth Mother

In western Europe, in particular in England and Scotland, communal rituals and folk festivals surrounding the awakening of Mother Earth have a long history. These customs may date back to prehistory, when such acts were obligatory in a community and considered a vital component of maintaining the balance of the earth and life as our distant ancestors knew it. Like so many ancient spiritual rituals, it eventually became a folk practice in many European communities and is still observed today in small towns throughout Scotland and Cornwall.

Whuppity Scoorie in Scotland and the Borrowed Days in Cornwall fall in early March, and they have been observed since the Middle Ages. Both of these communal

events involve lots of noise and merrymaking, eventually giving way to sexual license. Communal fires are often lit to warm the earth and serve as a gathering point for revelers, who will wander over hills and woods banging pots and pans, drinking, and shooting firearms to welcome spring. Naturally, the Earth Mother awakens for them, for who could sleep through all that noise? And that, as they say at the end of all didactic folk tales, is the point.

Ritual to Awaken Mother Earth

For this ritual you will need a staff. It can be a cane, walking stick, rain stick, ritual staff, long wand, etc. If you don't have anything at hand, please do not pull a branch off a living tree to obtain one. Rather, go out and find one by walking in an area with lots of trees and allowing the trees to sense your need and lead you to the gift of a fallen branch that will work perfectly for you. Just make sure that if you are wandering in an isolated area you will be safe.

If you can't find a suitable staff you might consider making a purchase of a four-foot wooden dowel at your local hardware store. Get one at least an inch in diameter so it feels sturdy in your grip. You can decorate it to taste with paint and empower it as a magickal tool to use over and over again.

Take your chosen staff and walk out onto the face of Mother Earth on Ostara morning. Feel the beat of your feet on her, like a mantra of a pounding drum whose faint rumblings are beginning to stir the Earth Mother from her slumbers. Connect with her spirit through your feet and with thoughts of welcome.

When you feel ready to awaken her, stop and tap the staff three times on the earth, saying:

*Mother Earth, it's Ostara and now is the hour,
time to awaken and green and flower.*

Go to another spot, and then another, and repeat this process three times. Three is a sacred number among the Teutonic and Celtic peoples with whom these types of rituals originated. It represents completeness and is often employed in the modern magickal arts. You may want to employ the number nine, the natural multiple of three times three.

When you have made the last of your three or nine wake-up calls, leave something behind as an offering to the earth, such as a stone, a coin, or food for her animals. As you return home, chant or sing your praises to the awakened Goddess.



The Labyrinth

Another symbol of the Goddess's return from the underworld is the labyrinth. A labyrinth is often confused with a maze, but they are two distinct types of playgrounds. A maze is a puzzle in which the seeker must find his or her way to the center and out again by attempting various routes that may or may not result in a dead end. They were undoubtedly derived from labyrinths and, as amusements, were extremely popular in England during the Elizabethan period (1558–1603).

By contrast, a labyrinth has only one pathway to its center and only one pathway back out. Often the two paths are the same. The winding motion in and out of the labyrinth corresponds to the spiral imagery used in many meditations to connect with the divine. Today we know it is also representative of the winding strands of cell matter known as DNA, the genetic material on which life is constructed. The Pagan term “spiral dance” encompasses all these unconscious ideas that are today being proven by science as legitimate connections. Walking the labyrinth is the ultimate spiral dance through which we can travel to the underworld and back again, mimicking the journey of the Goddess of Spring.

The labyrinth has emerged from ancient times as a deeply spiritual symbol. As tools for spiritual reawakening they have been used in Greece, Rome, Ireland, Scandinavia, Saxony, England, and in parts of Africa. In some of these cultures the standard labyrinth pattern has barely changed in over 2,000 years.

When you enter the labyrinth, you enter a ritual space not unlike the sacred circle cast by Witches and other Pagans for their rites. It is a place that is no place and used in a time out of time—something that exists between all known worlds and places, where you are clearly in no specific realm of being. In such an environment all worlds are open to you and you stand at the entryway to all of them, able to blend their energies and draw knowledge and create positive change for yourself and others.

The Celtic people of western Europe found great power in such places in between places because it put you both in your own world and in that of the deities and spirit

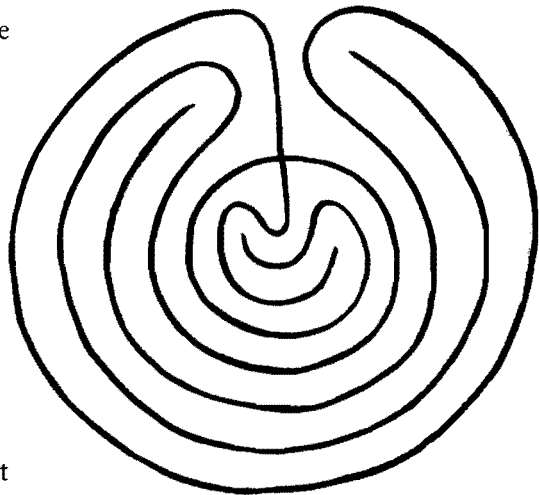
with whom you were seeking to connect. In magick, these in-between places make the energy flow easier—it makes the visualization of magickal energy entering the unseen world and returning to you in the seen world seem easier because both worlds feel more accessible.

Labyrinth rituals are often enacted at the two equinoxes, one to embrace the awakening of the Goddess, the other to honor her as she enters her time of rest in the underworld for the dark half of the year.

Creating a physical labyrinth for an Ostara ritual need not be a complicated undertaking. Certainly if you have lots of room and a big gardening budget, you can plant hedgerows outdoors that will make your labyrinth a permanent ritual space. This is a great project for groups, such as covens, who have some land at their disposal. Labyrinth rituals are quite effective within coven settings, and individuals can use them effectively with some advance planning. After all, the spiritual experience is ultimately a solo one.

Most of us don't have the luxury of land and money to spare, but it should not stop you from making a less elaborate labyrinth for personal ritual use. If you have some open space, either indoors or outdoors, and want to make a labyrinth, simply mark off the pathway with rows of rope, tape, candles, rocks, or ribbons mounted on garden stakes. This will allow you, and others who may be joining you in this ritual, to walk the path as you would if you used a classic stone or hedgerow labyrinth.

If you try and try and still find you have no room for a physical labyrinth, then it's time to remember the power of your mind. This is where all magick is ultimately born and from where it is eventually manifested. All you need to do in advance is carefully study your chosen labyrinth pattern until you can call up every detail in a nanosecond. Once the pattern is clearly in your mind, it can be ritually walked by you in deep meditation and is every bit



as effective as walking the physical labyrinth. In some cases it can be more rewarding because in your mind you can create the perfect environment for your labyrinth and not have to worry about mentally shutting out the neighbor's barking dog, street lights, and other annoyances of modern life. Also, the mentally created labyrinth can have special effects that aren't available to you in the physical world. You can add magickal creatures, guardians, starry skies above, magickal phenomena, etc., as the spirit moves you.

Whether enacted in your mind or on the physical level, all rituals of transformation require personal cleansing or purification to prepare the body and mind for the task ahead. These preparations have been prominent in rituals for Ostara. Spring has always been viewed as a time to purify the body and spirit as they move into the outdoor world after a winter retreat. Purification can be done mentally, with a bowl of water, with incense, by anointing with oils, or in a ritual bath. There are few rules in Pagan spiritual practice, but it is a given that you always go into any inner-world spiritual ritual purified in both mind and body so that you're in a receptive and respectful state of being for connecting with the deities.

Pre-Labyrinth Ritual Bath

For this ritual you will need somewhere to bathe alone for at least fifteen minutes. This can be a lake, river, pond, bathtub, or anywhere else private where the addition of some herbs or oils will not harm the drains or mechanisms such as those found in most hot tubs or jacuzzis. For the sake of both privacy and safety, a bathtub is recommended. You will also need a few drops of purifying oil such as sandalwood, lavender, vervain, hyssop, or rosemary. You may also add or substitute dried herbs. If you will be using herbs in a tub attached to household plumbing, please tie them up in a small bag of cheesecloth first to keep them from making an expensive clog in your drain. Nothing looks less pure than watching a \$100-an-hour plumber pulling the gunky remains of your ritual from a dirty drainpipe.

As you run the water in the tub, or as you are standing at a riverbank or shoreline, focus on the goal of your ritual. Allow yourself to connect on all levels of body and mind with the energies of purification. Add the herbs or oils to the water while making an affirmation, such as:

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

*Herbs of earth and water and fire,
make me holy and pure as I desire;
cleanse away the film of harm and shame,
so that I may be fit to utter the deity's name.*

Step into the water and allow yourself to soak. As you do, visualize the grime on your body—the physical, mental, and spiritual—being pulled out of you and flowing into the surrounding water. As you either drain the water from your tub or watch it flow downstream, know that these unclean things are being taken away from you, leaving you pure and in the right spiritual frame of mind for walking the labyrinth.

Inner-Labyrinth Ritual

Try to keep the time between your ritual bath and your walking of the labyrinth to a minimum. Remain in that right frame of mind as you approach the labyrinth. Remember you are seeking to mimic the Goddess's journey into the underworld and back again, imitating on the microcosmic level a macrocosmic event that has been an important part of people's lives for thousands of years.

Step up to the entry point of the labyrinth and announce that you are now entering a world outside all worlds. As you step into the opening of the first spiral, you should feel the ordinary world of the everyday slip away. As you slowly wind your way to the center, think of yourself as traveling into the deepest part of the wintertime underworld. If you are doing the ritual correctly, by the time you reach the center, you should be completely unaware of any world outside the confines of the labyrinth.

In the center of the labyrinth you will want to have several candles and some matches awaiting you. As you arrive at the center point, be aware that in your reality it is now deep winter, and you are standing in the deepest and darkest point of the underworld. All around you is cold and still and you feel the presence of death and a sense of dormancy. It does not make you feel a sense of hopelessness at all, for you sense that somewhere in the cold and silence life is waiting to be renewed.

Spend a few moments contemplating all these things, then apply your mind to the turning of the sun. Imagine that it is the morning after the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, and the sun now—almost imperceptibly, but so truly—starts to wax again.

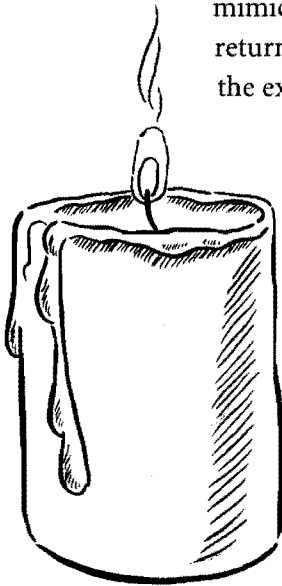
Light a single candle to represent the beginning of a return to light. As you do this, say:

*Deep in darkness the young woman sleeps,
the hope of her people held in her keep;
now stirred by a light, dim and far though it burns,
she stirs from her dream world and begins her return.*

Mentally start to trace the travel of the sun away from darkness. Slowly it moves toward spring, gathering strength little by little as it travels. As you do this, begin slowly walking the path that leads out of the labyrinth. You are now the young Goddess or, in some cases, the young God, and you are returning to your people as Ostara day approaches.

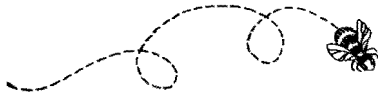
If you can do so safely, have candles outlining the path of the labyrinth. Each candle can be lit as you pass it on the way out, representing the growing light of spring and the imminent return of the Goddess. (Caution: If you are in a dry grass area, at home on carpet, or are wearing long, flowing robes, this is not a good idea. Either use globed candles, luminaries, or flashlights, or else give up the idea entirely.)

As you approach the end of your journey, allow your pace to quicken, mimicking the quickening of life at Ostara. Know that springtime has returned to the earth with you. Life and warmth are all around you. Feel the excitement grow within you. You may chant or sing songs in praise of spring if you like.



As you see the exit point of the labyrinth appear, sense that the world pulsates with movement, and new life is scurrying around you. When you reach the opening of the labyrinth and step out, the goddess will be restored to her people, free of the hold of the underworld. It is Ostara!

*Blessed be all creatures this Ostara day,
as God and Goddess come together to play;
in a world that's light and green and fresh,
life begins anew, by the deities blest.*



Lady Day

The celebration of Lady Day in Wales and Cornwall has been known since at least the late Middle Ages. The observance incorporates weddings and motherhood, and is an obvious carryover from older festivals honoring Ostara's virgin goddesses and the sacred marriage of the God and Goddess. When Pagan practice was forced to hide so its adherents could avoid being persecuted and executed by the ruling church for practicing Witchcraft, they substituted festivals that kept all the rich Pagan symbolism while vaguely alluding to its Christian replacements. Thus, the birth of Lady Day.

Lady Day is still a popular celebration for modern Wiccans, especially by those who practice Welsh traditions. Lady Day is usually observed on or around March 25, which by coincidence or not is also the date of the old Roman New Year. Lady Day customs that show the celebration's connection to Pagan festivals honoring the return of the young Goddess to the earth include burying eggs to make the land fertile and decorating homes and bodies with flowers.

Even more telling is the custom of having a young man from the community blow a call or three on a ram's horn. As discussed in chapter 3, this symbol of the virile young God is phallic and is both a wake-up call and a mating call to the maiden Earth Goddess. Modern Lady Day customs tell us this is to chase away the bonds of winter, which is exactly the same as awakening the earth at spring.

In Cornwall, mothers who give birth on Lady Day were thought to have a close link with the Lady, often conceptualized in modern times as Christianity's Virgin Mary or as a local saint, and their babies were considered to have special gifts. During the Middle Ages, afterbirth collected from a Lady Day birth was taken by the mother or grandmother to one of the ancient standing stone formations and laid at the base as an offering to the local deities and faeries.

The connection of Lady Day to the mating of the God and Goddess in sacred marriage in spring is still seen in Welsh and Cornish folk customs, and is wholly embraced in today's modern Pagan and Wiccan Lady Day rites. For example, a traditional Lady Day circle dance from Cornwall has all the unmarried young people in the community form two circles, with the men's circle inside the women's. Music is played as the two lines move in opposite directions, women counterclockwise and men clockwise. When the music stops, the person opposite the person in the next line is your partner for the

next dance. Naturally, there is often not a gender balance and some fun-spirited grabbing and snatching of partners is an expected part of the spectacle.

Lady Day was in all probability developed over time to house these Pagan associations, but still came under suspicion by the ruling church, who attempted to diabolize its observance. In some areas the date was moved to early or late April. April 4 is one such date, which is also St. Mark's Day. A Cornish folk belief tells us that if you sit inside the door of a church facing the street at midnight on St. Mark's Day, you will see the specters of all those in the community who are fated to die before next St. Mark's Day pass by in a line walking east to west. Again, the church could only do so much eradicating. Since west is the direction of the Celtic otherworld, the people were able to accept this as yet another way to preserve in the open—hiding another Pagan belief.



Goddess of the Woodlands and Animals

The archetype of the hunter, the woodland deity who rules the animals and who is appeased before the hunt, is seen in both gods and goddesses, especially at spring. Unlike some male deities of the hunt, who represent its darker archetype—that of gathering souls to take back to the underworld—the goddess usually represents the abundance to be found in spring game. She is the nurturer who provides food for the community to renew its strength after the barren winter has ended. She is usually a patron of the animals, very sexual in nature, independent, and able to take care of herself in all circumstances.

Possibly the most famous of the hunter goddesses are Artemis and Diana, the latter being the Roman version of the former. These archer ladies fulfill the Ostara archetype of the huntress to perfection. They are connected with sexual liaisons, love matches, the woodlands and game animals, and they are virgin goddesses.

The term “maiden” has been used in place of “virgin” in modern Paganism, which causes it to lose much of its original meaning in defining the youthful female archetype. The word “virgin” comes from the Latin *virgo*, meaning “intact or whole.” The virgin label, when applied to young women, came into popular culture in reference to the female hymen, the fleshy covering to the opening of the vagina that most women are born with and that is torn away during first intercourse, if not before through



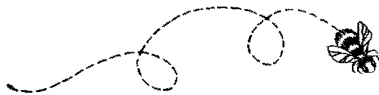
other strenuous physical activity. The hymen became a gauge for judging the value of a young woman for marriage, and it is still customary in many cultures to prove a woman's virginity after the wedding night by displaying evidence of bleeding when the hymen is torn. In some places she faces being ostracized or even killed if she fails this test and cannot preserve the so-deemed "honor" of her family.

The original meaning of "virgin" had nothing at all to do with sexual abstinence. To the contrary, the virgin goddesses and female temple servants, such as Rome's famous Vestal Virgins, were highly sexual beings. To be a virgin, or to be intact, meant these women were whole and complete unto themselves. They were intact, needing nothing and no one else. They fed and clothed themselves, served their spiritual communities, became the vessel of the Goddess during rituals of sacred marriage, and needed no one to take care of them. They came very close to symbolizing both male and female by representing the totality of creative energy embodied in one being. They were also free to take any and all lovers they desired, and in that way were anything but virginal in the Victorian sense of the term.

As goddesses of the woodlands and the animals that fed the populace, the hunter goddesses had huge temples erected to their honor. An example is the one to Artemis near the ancient city of Ephesus, which contained a massive statue of her, depicting a strong, capable female not unlike the image of *Xena: Warrior Princess* as portrayed on television. Her rituals included sexual license, orgies, wild dancing, and mock battles, all presided over by her virgin priestesses and eunuch priests.

Young women celebrating Ostara for the first time might want to begin experimenting with connecting to this powerful archetype. Being intact and whole is what makes a good Witch—or Pagan, Wiccan, etc.—and this makes an excellent training ground for the warrior queen you will someday want to be.

Totem animals most closely associated with these archer goddesses are deer and bear, and occasionally the hare discussed earlier.



The Goddess of Sovereignty

Another archetype of the Spring Goddess is the Goddess of Sovereignty. She is almost always a woman of stunning beauty who inspires love, devotion, and discord, and who is always at one corner of an eternal love triangle. At the other two points stand the two men in her life: two gods or kings, one older and one younger. The Goddess of Sovereignty equally loves the two men, but must ultimately choose to give herself to the younger one. This eternal cycle of changing partners is necessary for the continuation of the deity's lives; it is the foundation of their sacred marriage and their ability to produce new life for the land and its people. This triangle turns the wheel of the year.

The most famous, and often most misunderstood, myth of the sovereign goddess is reflected in the Arthurian legends, which most modern people are acquainted with, even if only by hearsay. In the myths, the lovely Guinevere, Princess of Lyonesse, is ordered to become the bride of the young King Arthur of Camelot. At first the two young rulers fear being thrown into an arranged marriage, but soon find they are well suited to one another, and they marry in love.

Their marriage and the kingdom they rule are both happy and carefree until, as in all sovereignty myths, a youthful challenger to the king arrives. In one popular version of the myths, Arthur's young challenger is one of his own knights, Sir Lancelot of Brittany. (A version more true to the original mythology comes to light when Arthur's

challenger is his own son/nephew, Modred. Studying all the Arthurian tales in their many incarnations is a perfect way to study the entire scope of the sovereignty archetype at work.)

Arthur is still a good king, but he is aging and growing weaker. The ancient Celts found this type of ruler unacceptable, perhaps more so than in any other culture who ever inhabited the earth. Celtic kings, such as Arthur, were inextricably linked to the land they ruled by their bonds of sacred marriage. They represented the physical or God aspect of that sacred union, just as the queen represented the spiritual or Goddess aspect. So much were the land and king one that whatever befell the king would also befall the land. Therefore Celtic kings were required to be physically perfect, as any blemish or weakness would be inflicted on the land they ruled.

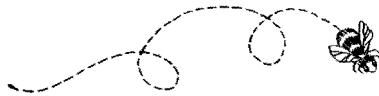
The Goddess of Sovereignty is the means by which a weak king is ousted for a younger, stronger model. She represents the gift of legitimate rulership, the bestowal of the divine right by which kings today still claim their thrones. The goddess gives this right by offering herself in sacred marriage, linking the king to the land for the remainder of his life. It is her duty to make sure she is always mated with the strongest, wisest, and most wholly unblemished contender.

The sovereignty archetype is further complicated by the fact that the older and the younger king are, in fact, no more than two aspects of the same man/god. In archetypal terms, Lancelot is Arthur's younger self. On the wheel of the year, Lancelot rules the Ostara season, while Arthur rules the season of the autumnal equinox. This corresponds to the seasonal life cycles of many gods.

For example, in modern Wicca these life cycles are a central component of the sabbat celebrations. The old God dies at Samhain (October 31) and is reborn to the Goddess at Yule (winter solstice). He becomes a strong child by Imbolg (February 2), but is interested in child's play and is not paying much attention to the virgin Goddess mother who will become his mate in a few weeks' time. The God comes into the full sexual vigor of young manhood at Ostara, and pursues his desire for mating with the Goddess. By Beltane (May 1) they are joined in sacred marriage, and by Litha (summer solstice) it is clear that the Goddess is pregnant with the God's son, who is also his younger self. The pregnancy is also seen as the nurturing of the coming harvest, and the first harvest festival falls on Lughnasadh or Lammas (August 1). At this time the God shows signs of aging and weakening, corresponding to the waning strength of the

sun. By Mabon (autumn equinox), he is an old man and the youthful challenger has appeared. Unable to survive the challenge, the God dies again at Samhain to be born again at Yule, and the cycle begins again.

When Guinevere chooses to ally herself with Lancelot's armies against those of King Arthur, she has in effect declared that it is now Lancelot who has the right to rule the Kingdom of Camelot, with her as his queen. Arthur has no choice but to face this challenge to his kingship, and eventually must lose the battle and die to make way for his younger aspect to rule.



Goddesses of Love and Beauty

Many spring goddesses have had their sovereignty aspects lost in time so that only their associations with love and beauty remain. The fact that love and beauty are strong magickal themes at Ostara belie the sovereign origins of these deities.

The two goddesses who most readily leap to mind as deities of love and beauty are probably Aphrodite and Venus. They are in essence the same goddess, with Venus being the Roman version of the original Greek Aphrodite.

Aphrodite's name is synonymous with romantic love and awakening sexuality. It is from her name that we derive the word "aphrodisiac," referring to something that incites sexual arousal. Venus is thought of more as a goddess of a less intense love and beauty, but this differentiation has been the result of the interpretations of popular culture and has nothing to do with the original mythology of either goddess.

People the world over have a clear image of the ever-beautiful Venus thanks to the famous painting by Italian painter Sandro Botticelli known as *The Birth of Venus* (1485), easily the most popular attraction at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. In it we see Venus coming to life in the full flower of her young womanhood. She stands at the edge of the sea—water being archetypically linked to death and new life, and to the feminine aspect of deity—on an open clam shell. Her long blonde hair is wrapped around her curvaceous body, which helps cover her as she faces the earth for the first time with a demure modesty. In the mid-fifteenth century, she was the epitome of all that was desirable in a woman.

Spells to enhance personal appearance have been around for a long time. Many of the modern versions call upon the energy of Aphrodite and Venus. No matter what your personal vision of beauty is, it can be boosted by the following spell.

A Goddess Beauty Spell

For this spell you will need a bowl of water for washing your face; four green candles (green being Venus's characteristic color); one small, green covering for the candles; and a small, round mirror just big enough to hold the image of your face.

Place the mirror on your altar or dresser with the four unlit candles behind it. It is best to start this spell on a full moon and in as much darkness as is practical.

Begin the spell by using your hands to wash your face. This is not a scrubbing event, but one to purify and clean the canvas on which you will be painting your new visage.

When you are done washing, stare at your face in the darkness for a few minutes, envisioning it as you want it to look. At any interval that seems comfortable to you, light one of the candles to draw in the beauty energies of each of the four elements. From water you get youthfulness and purity; from earth you get both wholesomeness and sex appeal; from fire you get passion and a warm glow; and from air you get the power to communicate your desired new look to the world and have the world respond to your siren call in return.

When all the candles are lit and your image in the mirror is clearer, you should still be able to see the face you want to have the world see. This visualization gets harder as your working space is better illuminated, but the better you hold your desired image, the more strongly it will be projected to others.

Before you extinguish the candles and shut down the spell, draw an imaginary clockwise circle around your face in the mirror and seal your efforts with words such as:

Like mighty Aphrodite, I am lovely to behold;

beauty like a magnet, drawing young and old.

Enduring beauty cannot be dimmed

as years shall come and go,

eternal, like Venus, my beauty always shows.

When you are finished, cover your candles and mirror with the cloth and renew the spell on each full moon to come.

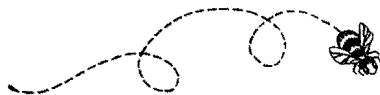
Aphrodite Love Talisman

To make a simple talisman to help attract love into your life, you will need a small piece of twine and some rosemary oil. Spend as much time as you can interacting with the twine, visualizing it as the power that draws and locks love into your life.

When you feel the twine has absorbed all the magical energy you can give it, tie it around your left wrist. To seal the action of the spell, place a single drop of rosemary oil on the knot and say:

*Rosemary to call and twine to bind,
love seeks me out, though love is blind.
Eyes that see with love shall land on me.
In love ever after shall we be.*

You may take the twine off when necessary. Tie it back on your wrist whenever you can, especially if you'll be out where you might meet a new love. Renew the goal of the spell by placing a single drop of the rosemary oil on the knot each time you wear the twine love talisman.

**The Goddess of Knowledge and Tools**

Inanna, an Earth Goddess from ancient Sumeria, is one of the oldest deities whose name is still known to us. Extant shrines to her date as far back as 4500 B.C.E. In Sumerian mythology it was Inanna who brought the four seasons to the earth by undertaking a treacherous trip into the underworld, where she was stripped of all her divine powers and imprisoned for three days and nights in a state of death. Her consort, the Vegetation God Dumuzi, followed, and was imprisoned in her place so that each spring she could return to grant renewed life to her people.

The renewal of life implies that agricultural tools, and the knowledge to use them, were at some point given to humanity. In the Sumerian myths it was Inanna who gave these things to her people so that they could tame the harsh land that is now dubbed the Fertile Crescent, the site of the earliest known civilization.

Inanna was said to have wanted to offer her loving people all she could to improve their lives. She knew they needed two things: knowledge and tools. These things were

in possession of her father, Enki, the God of Wisdom. She set sail for his palace, where she was greeted with a grand feast. Enki was so delighted to see her that he offered her anything she wanted. When she asked for his book of knowledge and the one hundred sacred implements of culture, he could not refuse her, and she returned to Sumeria triumphant, bringing these gifts to her people.

While modern Pagans tend to have a love-hate relationship with many of the values of "civilization," we must acknowledge that tools and the knowledge to use them are valuable commodities. On Inanna's special day we can honor her with a special ritual to honor her gifts to humanity.

Thanksgiving Ritual to Inanna for the Gift of Tools

The following ritual is written for the solitary practitioner, but it is easily adaptable to group use. Aside from the usual ritual tools that regularly adorn your altar, you will need to have on hand several implements of civilization, one each that can represent the four elements, and any nonfiction book. The book, representing Inanna's gift of knowledge, will also serve as a symbol of the element of spirit, the unifying force that shows us how to use the other tools you will have on the altar. The book should occupy the center of the altar.

The other tools you choose are purely a personal choice and you can probably find all that you need around your own home. Take a look around and be creative. For example, a hammer from your toolbox might be a good representation of earth; a power drill could serve as the symbol of air; an electric space heater might be a civilized symbol of fire; and paint brushes would function well as water representations. The only stipulation for the items you choose should be that they will fit on your altar and that they can be lifted easily. The following is a list of some of the other common household items that might function well as representations of elemental tools of civilization:

FIRE	WATER	EARTH	AIR
Fire Irons	Water Pumps	Shovels	Electric Fans
Matches	Divining Rods	Hoes	Bellows
Light Bulbs	Toy Boats	Sewing Items	Radios/TVs
Oil Lamps	Cleaning Fluids	Distaffs	Pinwheels
Lighters	Bowls	Shovels	Ionizers

Set your chosen items on the altar next to each of your normal ritual tools, and place the altar inside your circle so that you will have room to move around it without having to break the circle to move outside of its perimeter.

Cast a circle and call your quarters, as described in chapter 5. After your sacred space is ready, call upon Inanna. Feel yourself connecting with her infinite power and, in a clear voice, call out to her:

*Blessed Inanna,
beloved of the heavens and the earth,
patroness of humankind,
I open my heart and my circle to you this day.
Join me now as I honor the gifts you
unselfishly made to us, your human children.*

If you are moved to do so, you may ritually “cut” a doorway in the circle so that Inanna may enter, but rest assured that divine energy is able to cross the boundaries of your circle and that it does so regularly. The cutting of the doorway in this rite is merely a ritual gesture to honor Inanna. In either case, when you feel her presence with you, offer her words of welcome.

Return to your altar and, starting with any direction you choose, lift one of the items you placed there. For instance, if you are beginning with the south, stand on the south side of your altar facing north. Lift the item representing the south/fire and carry it to the southern edge of the circle. Offer your thanks to Inanna in words appropriate to your chosen item. In the example of selecting a space heater to represent the mastery of fire, you might use these or similar words:

*Thanks be to Inanna,
giver of the implements that allow us
to control the element of fire.
Through this gift we have heat when we are cold
and hot food and water whenever we want it.*

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

*We have matches to strike on a whim,
 electricity and gas to power machinery,
 and we still have fireplaces
 in which to gaze at the miracle of fire
 that we now can harness through these gifts
 you so generously gave to us.
 Blessed be, Inanna, bestower of civilization,
 who harnessed for us the fire
 and gave us the knowledge to use it,
 bequeathing it to us forever.*

Moving clockwise around the altar, take up the next item and walk with it to the corresponding edge of the circle. Address your thanks to Inanna in words similar to those for fire. For example, using water:

*Thanks be to Inanna,
 giver of the implements
 that allow us to control the element of water.
 Through this gift we have clear, clean water
 to drink, bathe, or wash in.
 For centuries we have used the power of water
 to turn our mills, transport our goods,
 and we still have ponds and streams
 in which we can swim or simply gaze
 at the loveliness of water,
 which we now can harness through
 these gifts you so generously gave to us.*

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

*Blessed be, Inanna, bestower of civilization,
who harnessed for us the water
and gave us the knowledge to use it,
bequeathing it to us forever.*

Similar words of thanksgiving for mastery of the element of earth might be:

*Thanks be to Inanna,
giver of the implements that allow us
to control the powers of the element of earth.
Though we have not always used the earth wisely,
we are still grateful that so many
of her attributes are ours to use.
Through this gift we have homes to shelter us,
work to occupy us, crafts to satisfy us,
and food for ourselves and our animals.
Through you we learned to cultivate the Mother Earth;
like midwives, we assist her to bring forth her yearly bounty.
From her minerals you taught us to fashion the tools
with which we built our world.
Blessed be, Inanna, bestower of civilization,
who harnessed for us the bounty of Mother Earth
and gave us the knowledge to use it,
bequeathing it to us forever.*

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

Lastly, here are suggestions for offering thanks for the gift of mastery of the element of air:

*Thanks be to Inanna,
giver of the implements that allow us
to control the element of air.*

*Through this gift we are cooled in summer's heat.
For centuries we have used this gift to power our ships,
lift our planes, and we still cherish the
scent of a gentle breeze on a warm day.
Blessed be, Inanna, bestower of civilization,
who harnessed for us the power of air
and gave us the knowledge to use it,
bequeathing it to us forever.*

When you have given thanks for each element, return to the altar and lift the book at its center. This represents the wisdom Inanna gave us along with her tools, the gift of knowledge enabling us to use the one hundred implements of civilization. Like the element of spirit it symbolizes, the book also is a uniting force, one without which we could not use the representations of the other elements.

You may hold the book to your heart, your forehead, or above your head as you thank Inanna with these or similar words:

*Thanks be to Inanna,
who not only gave us the tools,
but the knowledge to use them.*

*Without knowledge, our species, and the animals in our care,
would have long ago perished from the earth.
Our tools would have lain lifeless in our hands,
our fields would have been in ruins,
and no shelters would exist appropriate to our needs.*

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

*I pray that for the sake of my brothers and sisters
we learn to use all our tools with compassion and concern for all.*

*Blessed be, Inanna, bestower of civilization,
Queen of Heaven and the Underworld,
who brought us knowledge.
May the wisdom of Enki,
which you brought to earth,
someday be ours too so that
we may use your gifts with wisdom,
respecting all life in harmony with the living earth.
So mote it be!*

You may thank the elements and close your sacred space whenever you are ready.

A Spring Goddess Anointing Oil

In a base of 2 tablespoons olive oil, place the following:

- 1 drop cedar oil
- 6 drops lavender oil
- 3 drops rosemary oil
- 3 drops cypress oil
- 4 drops vanilla oil
- 1 drop patchouly oil (optional because it's strong!)

Seal tightly in a dark glass vial until ready to use.



Some Goddesses of Ostara

When researching female deities to honor or worship at Ostara, look for ladies of the woodlands, archers, virgin or maiden goddesses, goddesses of flowers, goddesses who return to the earth from the underworld in the spring, goddesses of love and romance, patrons of the planting season, and goddesses of the earth and vegetation who are not specifically connected with harvest energy. These goddesses are numerous, so don't expect to get on intimate terms with them all. Try discovering what you can about those who appeal to you most, and branch out later. After all, Paganism and Witchcraft involve never-ending learning.

Also for Ostara, seek out goddesses of game animals, in particular those with hare or deer aspects. Avoid selecting goddesses for Ostara who are associated with dogs, as these tend to be linked by archetype with death messengers from the otherworld, and work better in autumn at Mabon or Samhain when death, as opposed to life, is the focus. Other than these, most animal goddesses are associated with spring and summer.

If you're still unfamiliar with methods of Pagan research, or are just not confident enough yet to feel comfortable making your own selection, try looking into the myths and legends surrounding any of the goddesses who conclude this chapter.

Aakuluujjusi (Inuit) • The female principle of the creator deity.

Acla (Incan) • A maiden Sun Goddess and Goddess of Beauty whom young village maidens were required to personify for communal sacrifices.

Aeval (Irish) • A Faery Goddess who represented and lived within the land. When she determined that the sexual needs of the women of her region were not being satisfied, she ordered that the local men give the women the sexual performances they were demanding.

Amalthea (Greek) • The goat-visaged nanny who suckled Zeus and other Greek deities. Her magickal teats never ran dry. She is associated today with the constellation of Capricorn.

Anna Perenna (Etruscan) • Goddess of Fertility and Vegetation.

Aphrodite/Venus (Greco-Roman) • The Goddess of Beauty, Sexuality, and Romantic Love, though not a deity of sexual fidelity.

Ardwinna (Welsh) • An archer Goddess of the Hunt.

Artemis/Diana (Greco-Roman) • Archer Goddess of the Hunt and the Moon, who rules the woodlands.

Artio (Celtic) • A Bear and Hunter Goddess of the Continental Celts.

Atalanta (Greek) • Woodland Goddess of Animals, Sexuality, and the Hunt, who was raised by bears. She had many lovers, including her husband, with whom she was never content.

Bebhionn (Irish) • An Amazonian goddess who resided on the Isle of Women in the sea to the west of Ireland. A Goddess of Earthly Pleasures.

Blodewedd (Welsh) • Goddess who was created from flowers and forced into an unwanted marriage. She took a lover and found a way to trick her unwanted mate into being killed. Like Guinevere in the Arthurian myths, Blodewedd represents the virgin cycle of the wheel of the year in which the dying and weak God of Winter is replaced by his youthful counterpart at spring to rule for the year to come.

Clytie (Greek) • Companion of the Sun God, who was transformed into a flower by engaging in sexual intercourse with the sun.

Cybele (Roman) • One of the world's most well-known Creator Goddesses. Cybele is associated with passion, love, the earth, the mountains, and new life.

Eostre (Germanic) • Goddess of Spring and Fertility, for whom the Ostara sabbat is named.

Eos (Greek) • Virgin Goddess of the Dawn who had a strong sexual appetite and sometimes kidnapped desirable men to service her. In Greek mythology, her great love was the Archer God Orion.

Epona (Celtic) • A Horse Goddess who rides to the earth plane at various times of the year. In ancient Ireland it was customary for the kings to symbolically mate at Ostara with horses, who were representatives of the Goddess of the Earth, who then gave her consent to his right to rule.

Flidais (Irish) • A Hunter Goddess of the Woodlands and protector of animals.

Flora (Roman) • Goddess of Flowers often honored at spring sabbats. The Romans gave Flora her own festival day, Floralia, which falls in between Ostara and Beltane.

Freya (Scandinavian) • This popular Nordic goddess was connected with both life and death, and had a voracious sexual appetite and many lovers. She would abandon the earth in winter and return to restore it each spring.

Gadda (Middle Eastern) • A Goat Goddess who was the mate of the Goat God Gad. Together they represent the two halves of the creator deity of spring.

Gaia (Greek) • The original goddess who was present before time. Depicted as having ponderous breasts that could suckle all of creation, she is the Earth itself and it was she who formed all creatures and other living things, including her lover and consort, Uranus. She also created agricultural tools.

Guinevere (Welsh, Cornish) • Queen to the legendary King Arthur. She legitimized his right to rule, which was taken away when she left him for his youthful counterpart, as is required by the sovereign goddess of the land if she hopes to renew life each spring. She is a virgin goddess who is often represented with the white hawthorn flower, associated with the faery world and with spring deities.

Hebe (Greek) • A young Spring Goddess who is cupbearer of the cup of immortality to the deities of Mount Olympus.

Hertha (Germanic) • Goddess from whose name comes our word "earth."

Kore/Persephone (Greco-Roman) • As discussed earlier this chapter, these are the young goddesses who spend the winter in the underworld while the land grows cold and barren. They return each spring, bringing with them the greening of the earth.

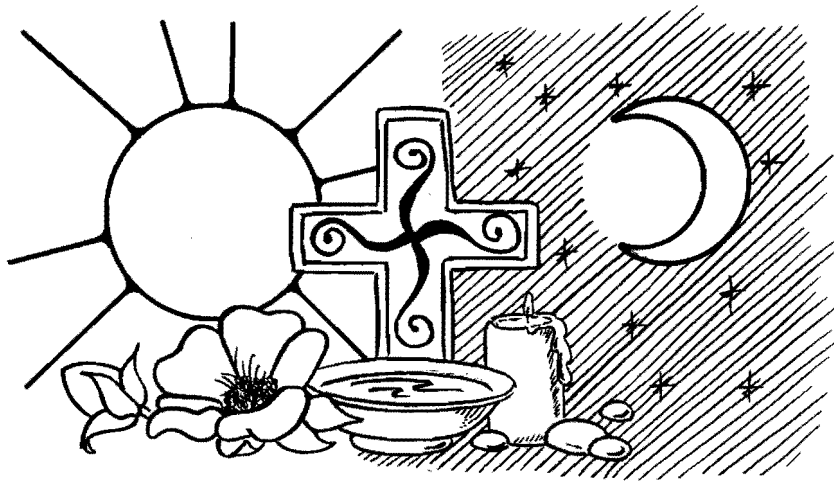
- Libera (Roman)** • A Goddess of Vegetation who is part of a triple deity of agriculture. She personifies the return of fruitfulness to the earth and is honored near Ostara with her own festival, Liberalia.
- Maia (Greek)** • Goddess of Spring, Childbirth, and Flowers, for whom the month of May is named.
- Oniata (Native North American)** • Goddess of Beauty, Sexuality, and Flowers.
- Penelope (Greek)** • Like Queen Guinevere, Penelope is a sovereign goddess who both owns and is the land, giving her mate the right to use and rule it.
- Proserpina (Roman)** • A maiden Goddess of Agriculture.
- Rafu-Sen (Japanese)** • Goddess of Spring, personified in plum blossoms. In contrast to most deities of spring, she is also a Goddess of Chastity.
- Rana Neida (Saami)** • A Goddess of Spring whose task it is to turn the grass green. According to one source, her followers would decorate her altars with spinning wheels—symbols of the ever-turning wheel of the year—that were covered in blood.
- Rati (Hindu)** • The Goddess of Earthly Pleasures, who is the mate of Kama, the winged God of Love.
- Renpet (Egyptian)** • Youthful Goddess of Spring whose symbol is a newly sprouted palm tree.
- Umaj (Russian)** • Goddess of Childbirth who is thought to reside in the placenta and who controls the fertility of all people.
- Vila (Slavic)** • A maiden Goddess of the Woodland and Animals, horses in particular. She had the ability to converse with animals and could shapeshift into their forms at will, causing local hunters to fear killing her by mistake and wreaking havoc on the new life of the land.

The Goddess of the Awakening Earth

Yayazachuri (Japanese) • This youthful goddess is beautiful and is embodied in the cherry trees of her native island. Unlike most Spring Goddesses, she would not mate at the height of her beauty and strength, but waited to take lovers until her blossoms faded and fell.

Zemyna (Lithuanian) • Creator Goddess who is honored and offered libations during childbirth.

Zorya (Slavic) • A Triple Goddess of the Dawn, Dusk, and Midnight.



7

Rituals for Ostara

Ritual is part of all spiritual expression, both public and private. Ritual patterns allow us to connect to archetypal patterns in the collective unconscious . . . which in plain language means that repeated gestures, words, and patterns trigger our subconscious to move in a specific direction and allow us to accomplish the goal of the ritual, whether it is magick, connecting with the deities, or simply spending time opening ourselves to communion with nature.

The rituals presented in this chapter are written for solitary practitioners, meaning they are intended to be enacted by one person. In a beginning-level book such as this one, it can be assumed that the student is not yet connected to the larger Pagan spiritual community and has no one else with whom to perform rituals. Those who have

others to work with probably have access to a group leader who possesses at least the minimal skills needed to help the group create and work through ritual.

Most rituals are interchangeable from solitary to group work and back again. All the rituals presented here can be adapted for use by groups by someone who understands group ritual format. By “group,” I mean two or more people. A coven does not have to comprise the traditional thirteen people, but needs only two who want to work together on a regular basis and who are able to successfully blend their energies to the same end goals.

Thirteen is a mythic number that is often hard to achieve, and probably always was. There are many theories put forth as to how this became the traditional coven member number, but the best is probably that this number corresponds to the roughly thirteen lunar months in the solar year. Another plausible theory is that thirteen allows for three people to represent each of the four elements—three being a magickal number in many European-based traditions—with an extra to be the leader who directs the energy.

Though thirteen people to a coven is traditional, it may not be optimal. A great many covens feel they need a balance of gender, an equal number of men and women, to be successful, and this would preclude thirteen people from participating. Some covens feel they need a core group of males and females plus a high priest and high priestess. Again, this makes thirteen participants awkward. Other groups want smaller numbers to foster intimacy, and still others want to be part of large teaching circles who embrace many smaller covens within their ranks.

Being a solitary practitioner can have some advantages over being part of a coven, and in some respects the opposite is also true. Don't be in any rush to join a group or you may end up in one that is wrong for you (not *wrong*, period, just wrong for you). Learn to enact successful and fulfilling rituals on your own first, and you will later bring a depth of experience to a coven that will enhance those group workings ninefold.

Understanding the Purpose and Form of Pagan Ritual

The importance of ritual in Pagan or Wiccan spiritual practice cannot be overestimated. Ritual is used not just for major worship times, like the sabbats—similar to how churches and synagogues practice on weekends—but is practiced by individuals on an almost daily basis to allow its adherents to be their own priests and priestesses, to

connect with or petition their deities, work magick that is enhanced by the ritual setting, do special meditations, to celebrate a season or phase of the moon, to observe and celebrate a life cycle event, or to serve as a framework for a daily devotion that begins each day.

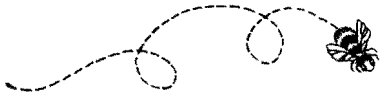
Pagan ritual can be as simple as a few gestures and words that follow a specific pattern before launching into the ritual's main purpose, or it can be a complex process with accouterments representing each of the four directions and their elements who are ritually called upon when a circle area is cordoned off between the world of form and the world of spirit.

The purpose of ritual is to bring together the conscious, subconscious, and super-conscious areas of the mind so that they work in harmony—all energies heading in the direction in which you desire them to go. By its very nature, ritual requires large amounts of repetition. This is so our deep minds recognize these cues that are telling us a ritual is beginning. The more the repetition, the quicker the mind realizes what you want from it, and the quicker it can go into a state receptive to the working of successful ritual. It can be a challenge sometimes to keep ritual fresh, which is why it never hurts to occasionally toss in the unexpected just to keep your mind sharp and interested.

Unlike worship within the mainstream religions, in Pagan practice we are *all* participants, rather than only observers, of ritual. We all contribute to the end goal, which is why learning ritual basics early on is important to future success. It is fair to say that without ritual, magick would not happen. Whether a spell is ritualized or not, it is still those mind triggers that lull the brain where you need it to be for making magick. For the rituals in this chapter you will not need elaborate tools or special circle-casting skills. The skills will only come with practice. You will need only a few simple items—catalysts upon which to focus your ritual intent—and the ability to clearly visualize what currently exists only in your mind. This is where magick, ritual, and all things that will manifest are first given form so that they might gain substance. Never underestimate the mind's power.

Don't be fearful of making ritual mistakes if you are new at the process. The rituals in this chapter do not call upon elemental beings or require elaborate visualizations needing to be carefully controlled. They do not have such unusual end goals that they require the skill of having to gauge when the building of the energy to be released to

that goal has reached its peak. In other words, these simple but effective rituals are a good place for beginners to start experimenting with ritual thought and practice without worrying about keeping up with too much imagery and too many accouterments.



Balancing and Centering at the Equinox

Ostara falls on an equinox, one of the two points in the solar year when day and night are of equal length. This makes them about balance. Balance can mean something given equal weighting, or it can be a metaphor for internal processes and feelings.

Going back to chapter 4, we see that the equal-armed cross or the crossroad functions as a symbol of Ostara. On Ostara you should think of yourself as standing in the center point of a great cross. Further visualize that one arm of the cross is day and the other is night, with Ostara representing the center point where the two lines intersect. On Ostara, when you are in the middle of your ritual space, you stand at the center point of the universe. From this image we can construct an effective balancing and centering ritual.

The purpose of balancing and centering is to psychically and emotionally prepare yourself for something to come. In many cases this will be a larger ritual for which you need to be in a calm yet expanded frame of mind. Other times it is used to relieve daily stress by allowing the one doing the ritual to feel in control of their thoughts and feelings once more.

When you finish the balancing and centering ritual, you should feel similar to the way you feel after a very restful night's sleep or after you've just overcome some hurdle that you can now put behind you. You should feel a sense of accomplishment, and you should feel both rested and restored within a pleasant patina of inner calm. This balance will help you face new challenges in a frame of mind that allows for clear thinking, and will have the added bonus of helping relieve illness-inducing stress.

The Balancing and Centering Ritual

You need no special items for this ritual, only a private area where you can stand and turn while leaving at least two to three feet of space around you. You don't want to feel your ritual space is too hemmed in or you will find the "center of the universe" feeling harder to achieve. If you are able, you may want to draw an equal-armed cross on the area you will be standing in so you can better visualize yourself at its center. Whether you actually draw the cross or not, try to align each arm so that it is facing one of the cardinal directions: east, south, west, and north.

To begin, take a few deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth to get a positive air flow. Now take a few deep breaths, hold them, and relax as you slowly blow them out again. Visualize all tension and worry being forced from your body as you do this.

Step to the center of the equal-armed area, facing any direction you choose. Hold your arms up slightly to help you feel as if you're blending with the essence of the balance represented by your center point. Continue with steady, rhythmic breaths.

Visualize one of the arms of your cross as light and the other as dark. It doesn't matter which one is which, this choice is yours. Some practitioners see the east-west cross as dark because west is where the sun sets, while others see it as light because east is where the sun rises. Some view the north-south arm as dark because the sun never travels to the northern sky in the northern hemisphere, and some feel it represents light because south is the place where the noonday sun reaches its peak.

Facing any one of the directions, visualize the energy of light or dark—however you've chosen to separate them on your cross—flowing into you, filling you with its energy. Think of all the positive aspects of light or dark that you can. For instance, for light you may think of sunlight, warm days, renewed vigor, clarity of thought, or rising passions. Dark has its positive aspects too. Contrary to popular belief, the dark is neither negative nor evil. In metaphysics and magick it represents what is hidden. It is used to absorb unwanted energies, it is employed in magick to uncover the unknown or to repel negative forces, and it often represents the feminine aspect of deity. It may represent to you dreams, sleep, a chance to unwind, to make magick, or just to be alone with yourself while the world sleeps.

When you're ready, turn clockwise to face the next cardinal direction. The point of this arm will be the opposite of the one you were just facing. For example, if you were drawing in the light at the first point, you'll be drawing in the dark at the second. Again, think of all the positive aspects of light or dark you can while you visualize it flowing into you.

Continue in this manner until you've made a full clockwise circle back to your starting point.

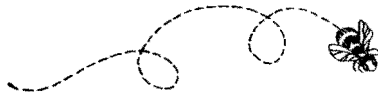
You have now balanced yourself with all the directions, but you still must center yourself in the often overlooked directions above and below, which represent spirit and its connection to matter. To do this we will employ a popular icon of centering imagery, the tree.

Begin by raising your arms and visualizing them as branches of a large tree. Sense that your body is the tree's trunk and your feet are its base, with roots that continue down far below where you stand. Imagine that you are the mythical World Tree, the entry point to all other worlds and the axis point on which many cultures believed the universe turned. See your branches reaching high into the eternal heavens and your roots growing deep without end into Mother Earth.

Stand still in this position for a few minutes, knowing yourself to be at the center of the universe, with its full aspect meeting in you in equal proportions. Think not only of the up-and-down vision of the tree, but of the circular one of the elements as well. This should feel both empowering and humbling. Lower your arms when you feel this is complete. Seal the ritual with a chant, such as:

*Above, below I connect like the tree,
a perfect center meets in me;
south, east, north, and west,
all I am is balanced and at its best.*

Now mentally take note of how you feel emotionally. If any tension or negative thoughts remain, allow them to flow from all parts of your body and mind where they have collected and into the palms of your hands. When you feel it is all there, lean over and place your hands palms-down on the ground, and visualize all that upheaval and confusion flowing from you to be safely grounded in Mother Earth.



Rituals of Purification

Another common feature of Ostara rituals is purification rites. When spring rolls around and the air is lighter and we move outdoors, we naturally get a sense of wanting to shake off the wintertime oppressions of heavy clothing, mental stagnation, and physical inactivity. Most of us are possessed at spring by the impulse to clean ourselves and our environment.

Much of this urge stems again from genetic memory encoded in us. Fact is, it was hard to clean the body in the winter before indoor plumbing made hot water readily available. In winter, sponge baths or the occasional tub of fire-heated water served as all the bathing that could be done. When the weather turned warm in spring it was easy, even desirable, to immerse oneself in a lake or river and feel the winter dirt and general ickiness flow away.

Consequently, rituals of purification have become a staple of spring equinox spiritual practice. These purification rituals can be used before doing other rituals so that the mind, body, and spirit feels cleansed and fit for the presence of the deities, or whenever you feel you or your environment has absorbed negative energies that need to be purged.

The Threefold Purification Ritual

This is a personal purification ritual embracing the number three. Many believe these types of rituals have Celtic roots since three and its multiples were sacred numbers to that culture. These threefold-style rituals, often referred to as “blessings,” are commonplace in Pagan and Wiccan practice. They seem to meet our archetypal needs of connection of the self to a power greater than ourselves that is both indwelling and outdwelling, fully a part of us but still something separate and worthy to strive to obtain. This knowledge and connection to what is often termed the “Godhead” or “Source” is the *raison d’être* for spiritual practice.

For this ritual you will need a small bowl of water into which a bit of salt has been added. As with all personal rituals, you will need to find a place where you can be undisturbed for the duration of the ritual. You will need to wear loose clothing that salt will not ruin, or you may be skyclad.

“Skyclad” is a term used for the very old practice of ritual nudity. Some Pagans feel the energy flows better through them when they are not encumbered by clothing. In group settings it makes some people feel the energy flows better between them, allowing them to work as one and reinforcing their ritual vision of one another as incarnations of the Goddess and God. Keep in mind that energy flows just fine to and from you if you are in a high-rise apartment building with lots of electric wiring and concrete too, so it is doubtful that clothing makes much difference in the success of your ritual. Ritual robes are the choice of many Pagans. This makes them feel they are engaging in ritual merely by donning their spiritual clothing. It also makes them feel deity-like, since many gods and goddesses of the past are shown as robed figures. The choice of dress is yours. Do whatever is most comfortable to you, for this is the only way your ritual will work.

As you stir the salt into the water with a clockwise motion of your hand, think about the mixture as a meeting point for form and spirit as symbolized by the elements of earth—the salt—and the element of water. Both water and earth are elements often used to cleanse, ground, and purify. Dedicate the mixture to the cleansing spirit of the universe as symbolized by these elements.

Dip your fingers into the bowl and collect some of the water. With your wet fingertips, bend over and touch the tops of your feet, saying:

Blessed be the salt.

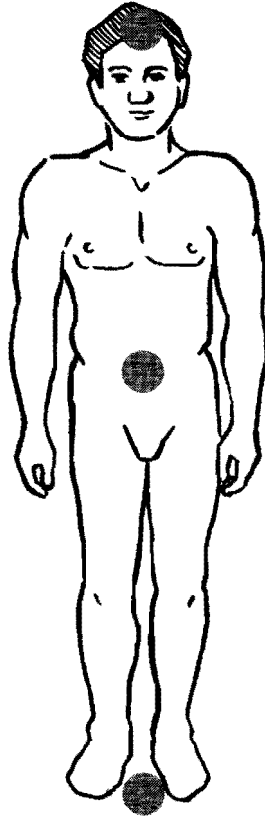
Blessed be the power of light.

Blessed be the light, the sun, and the God.

*Purify me that I might be cleansed
and whole in mind, spirit, and body.*

*May I always find grounding when I need it,
and may my feet walk the path of the blessed purity
all the days of this life.*

Take some more of the water and place it on the top of your head, saying:

**ANOINTING POINTS FOR THE THREEFOLD PURIFICATION**

Blessed be water.

Blessed be the power of dark.

Blessed be the night, the moon, and the Goddess.

*Purify me now that I might be cleansed
and whole in mind, spirit, and body.*

*May the mysteries of the universe and those things
hidden find me fit to know their secrets,
and may I think and feel with blessed purity
all the days of this life.*

Take some more of the water and place it at your center, around your solar plexus area, a few inches above your navel, saying:

Blessed be earth and water.

Blessed be light and dark, night and day, sun and moon.

Blessed be balance and purity, which meet in me now.

*May I always be in balance of mind, spirit, and body,
purified and whole as I enter this spring season.*

*By the God and the Goddess and by my will,
so mote it be!*

A Home Purification Blessing Ritual

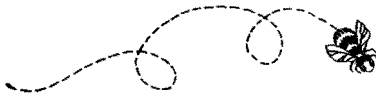
The dubious thrill of spring-cleaning—that irresistible need we have to clean out and clean up our dwelling places when the weather warms—is another manifestation of our ancient impulse to purify at a time when we feel the need to connect with the concept of rebirth and renewal.

For this ritual you will need a small bowl of water into which some oil has been placed. You only want to add a single drop or you will risk staining household fabrics. Oils whose magickal energies are associated with the energies of purification include olive, cinnamon, lavender, peppermint, or rosemary. Olive oil may be the easiest and cheapest to come by since it is already stocked in many pantries for use in cooking. It also has an ancient tradition of being used in purification rituals dating back to the Middle East for nearly 5,000 years. A stick of purifying incense, such as sandalwood, frankincense, or cinnamon, is optional.

As you did for the personal purification ritual, take a small bit of the water on your fingertips and flick it around the room you're in. This is often called aspurging when done in religious practice. As you move through each room of your house doing this, chant something like:

*Blessed and pure may this dwelling be,
peaceful, sacred, and safe for me.
Gone be bane and banished ill will,
this is done as I chant the spell.*

You may follow this up by taking the stick of incense from room to room to add the clearing power of air to the spell. If you feel you have a particularly bad problem with negative energies or people in your house, this dual purification ritual may be useful for making sure your ritual goal is achieved.



Seasonal Ritual and the Ostara Sabbat

Rituals to honor the eight sabbats are standard features of Pagan and Wiccan practice. In general, these are considered the “high holy days” of the spiritual year, similar to the way Easter, Yom Kippur, or Ramadan are perceived in mainstream religious practice.

The ritual printed here is a very basic Ostara ritual that will allow a ritual beginner to learn how to connect with seasonal energy and to honor the spirit and deities of the sabbat. It is not long and not complex. The imagery is easy to follow. Don’t worry about making mistakes. If you enact the ritual in a positive frame of mind with your sole goal being to connect with spirit of the festival, you really can’t go wrong.

If you already have some ritual experience, you may want to use this ritual as a framework for expanding your personal Ostara ritual with more formal circle casting or by adding other words or ritual tools. The majority of books on basic Paganism and Witchcraft include texts or outlines of sabbat rituals for both individuals and groups to use or adapt. Please look to the References appendix in the back of this book for suggestions about texts that can provide you with some more ideas for expanding your seasonal rituals, including Ostara.

An Ostara Sabbat Ritual for One

For this ritual you will need two small chalices or cups of water or wine and, if you're working indoors, you will need two bowls in which to pour the liquid. You will also need two candles and some matches. A ritual blade or wand is optional.

Place these items on a small altar, table, or other flat surface. In a pinch I've used the top of my dresser as an altar, and even the small stand on which I keep a portable stereo. At other times I've had no trouble using a flat rock or even the ground itself.

Arrange the candles so that one is to the extreme left of the altar and one to the extreme right. Place the chalices of water or wine beside the candles. If you are working indoors, place the bowls on the ground on either side of the candles.

Begin by offering prayers of thanks to the God and Goddess for the blessings of Ostara. List aloud each one. Go slow. Be thorough. As you do this, dip your fingertips in each chalice alternately and flick the water around your immediate area to impart those blessings. Use caution if you are indoors or, if you're using wine, go through the motion of aspurgung without actually touching the liquid.

Focusing on the candles, think about them representing the winter behind you—the time of year with the greatest darkness—and say:

*I stand at the center and balanced be,
the change of seasons meets here in me.
From wintertime's dark and lonely nights,
to summertime's warm and lively light.*

(Take the matches and light both candles.)

*Now at the center at Ostara am I,
not light or dark to dominate the sky;
but a time of lengthening light and day,
as we pass from balance to summer's days.*

(Extinguish one candle to represent the balance of light and dark.)

Take the chalice to your right and hold it up, saying:

*God of the Sun and Lord of Light,
I honor your spirit in which I delight.*

Pour the water or wine onto the ground to your right or into a bowl to be poured onto the ground later. Then take the chalice to your left and hold it up, saying:

*Goddess of the Earth and of the night,
I honor your spirit as the earth turns light.*

Pour the contents of this chalice onto the earth or into the bowl.

You may spend as much time as you want at your altar, speaking with your deities, meditating, or just contemplating the meaning of your ritual and of Ostara. When you are ready to stop, extinguish the candle with a private word of thanks to your deities. Take any water or wine collected in the bowls and pour it outside onto the face of Mother Earth to complete your offering to the deities.



Rebirthing Rituals

The concept of life renewed extends to everything at Ostara. It is not only a time for thinking of physical rebirth, as symbolized by the renewal of plants and crops, but also for contemplating the rebirth of the spirit. This spiritual renewal or rebirth is what the resurrection cults of the Middle East were striving to achieve when they reenacted their myths of resurrected deities who were restored to earthly life periodically to offer new life to others.

- The Christian savior God, Jesus, serves this archetype every bit as well as the more well-known Egyptian God, Osiris. An interesting side note to ponder concerning Jesus is that he was often referred to as Jesus of Nazareth, even though he lived his life elsewhere. Two mystical spiritual sects known to have been thriving within Judaism around the reputed time of Jesus (approximately 30 C.E.) were the Essenes and the Nazarenes, the term Nazarene also applying to those who lived in the city of Nazareth. Their spiritual goal was the same as all religions and their subsects: to seek union with the creator. Among their practices to achieve this end were resurrection rituals in which one member was put into a trance state so close to death that, in those days

without modern forensic science, the casual observer would have assumed death had occurred. The person was laid to rest as if he were dead and then, when the drugs causing his near-death state wore off, he would arise again, bearing knowledge from his sojourn into the otherworld.

Resurrection rituals within modern Paganism are more often referred to as rebirthing rituals. They are popular at both the Ostara and Yule sabbats, and during initiation rites when someone is publicly dedicating themselves to the Craft for the first time. These rituals serve three functions:

- To symbolically allow the person being rebirthed or initiated to have a sense that they are entering a whole new existence.
- To mentally mark in time and space a major turning point in one's life.
- To assist the person undergoing the ritual to travel to the otherworld realm and back again, bringing with him or herself knowledge gleaned within that part of the otherworld they were visiting.

There are many images to draw on for rebirthing rituals, and many ways to enact them successfully. The following ritual is written in a loose format so that several suggestions can be offered for tailoring it to fit your vision of how a rebirthing ritual should progress. Allow your instincts and imagination to guide you. As long as you feel the end result offers some type of spiritual renewal, then you're on the right track.

Solitary Ostara Rebirthing Ritual

The best time to begin this ritual is just before dawn on the day of the spring equinox. This will allow you to employ the imagery of the sun awakening in balance on this sabbat of new life, and into your own spiritual renewal. The ritual tools you will need depend on which mental imagery you prefer and how you wish your rite to proceed. It is always best to keep the number of accouterments in a range from none to minimal. To get the most from your ritual, you don't want to be keeping track of the symbolism of each tool you have on hand. You want to be as much like a newborn baby as possible, coming into your new world with your only possessions being the blessings of the spirits, family, and friends who love you.

No matter how you choose to proceed, as you enter into the womb or otherworld state of mind at the ritual's beginning, visualize yourself as being with the deities in the

otherworld or underworld. Imagine yourself an embryo, floating in a sort of nonexistence between lives. You are about to enter the rebirthing phase. Your soul-mind, the eternal part of your being, is mulling over all that has been learned during the winter slumber from experiences and beings it met while in the otherworld. What is recalled now will be what you will be able to draw from and use in your new life. Allow your mind to drift and try to catch these random images. Don't try to make a lot of sense of them now. Save that for contemplation when you reawaken.

As you emerge from the imagery you have chosen for your rebirthing ritual, feel yourself growing physically stronger and mentally alive. Feel in yourself a joyous spiritual renewal. After you have been reborn, remain in your ritual area and try to do things that show or say how you feel about your rebirth experience. Think about the meaning of what you have done and why it will be important until you do this ritual again next Ostara. Think about how you might change or not change, or how you hope to change before another year passes. Again, don't force things to come to mind. Allow your mind to flow in a ritual state of consciousness and make its own discoveries.

Read over the following suggestions for ways to use imagery in your rebirthing ritual and choose or adapt one to fit your needs. Next year you can always try another.

Using a Sheet • Use a sheet to loosely cover yourself while you cradle into a fetal position. This is a symbolic womb in which you are warmed and held while awaiting your rebirth.

Using Legs • If you have someone to assist you in your ritual, you can ask to use their parted legs to crawl through to symbolize rebirth. A coven I once belonged to used this method of rebirthing imagery during coven initiations, and it was very effective.

Using Water • Water is symbolic of death, life, and the blood of the womb, which is one of the reasons this type of initiation into new life is still used in Christianity (as baptism by immersion) and Judaism (taking a mikvah, or ritual bath). This can be a harder ritual to do than other rebirthing rituals because it requires you to find a safe, private place to immerse your entire physical body before reemerging to your new life. On the other hand, the rebirthing qualities of water are so deeply ingrained in our collective psyche that, if you are able to find the perfect spot, you may have a powerful spiritual renewal in store for you.

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Using a Kiva, Cave, or Cellar • A kiva is an underground ritual chamber, designed to be used for spiritual rites. The earth is the womb of the Mother Goddess, and is a perfect metaphor for the period of incubation prior to rebirth. It's a potent archetype easily interpreted by the subconscious as being both a beginning and ending point. When a kiva is not available and you really want to use an underground place for your rebirthing ritual, a good substitute can be found in the mouth of a cave or cavern known to be safe, or even your cellar, if it's not too dirty and cluttered.

The Ostara Sun Glory Ritual

The sun is usually thought of as being reborn at the winter solstice, when it reaches the end of its waning phase and begins to wax again, but this image is often carried over into both Imbolg and Ostara. Ostara is certainly a time to celebrate the young sun in the glory of its balance as it overtakes the moon of the night and propels us into the lightest quarter of the year.

For this ritual celebrating the sun's gathering strength you will need several small mirrors and a place outdoors where you can work undisturbed for at least thirty minutes. The more mirrors you can find to use, the more effective this ritual will be.

At midday on Ostara, go to your working space and draw or cast a circle about you, making sure you mark it off using a clockwise motion so that you're moving with and not against the sun. Stand in the center of your circle area and face the sun. "Face" is a figurative term. Don't gaze directly at the sun, or semidirectly at it, or you'll destroy your eyes. Just turn your body in its general direction and raise your arms to symbolize yourself opening to the sun's glory. Honor the sun by making a blessing to it, such as:

*Blessed be, young Sun God in the sky,
blessed be your golden blaze riding high.
Striking a balance, then running full force,
carrying us to summer in your glorious course.*

Pick up the first mirror and fiddle with its positioning until it catches and reflects back to you the sun's image. Be aware that this reflection will be so bright as to be blinding, so be careful with your eyes.

Set the mirror down along the outside perimeter of your circle area. If possible, prop it up on something so you can see it continuing to reflect back to the heavens the light of the midday sun no matter where else you are within the circle area.

Continue this fiddling with the positions of all the mirrors you have as you place each around the perimeter of the circle, always continuing to move clockwise. If you like, you may continue to chant the sun blessing as you do this to help you keep in tune with the energy of this solar ritual.

When all the mirrors you have on hand are outlining your circle and reflecting the sun's golden glory, you may stay within its parameters and sing, dance, or offer praises to the sun. You should by now feel energized by and in tune with the sun. You may also want to use this time to do other Ostara rituals that require the sun's image.

If You Break a Mirror . . .

Whatever you choose to do, make sure you don't step on any of the mirrors and injure yourself. If one of them does happen to break during the course of your ritual, be sure to clean up the shards as completely as possible so that no one else can come along and be hurt by the glass.

Save the broken shards and place them in a glass jar to use as a window protection talisman in your home. Allow them to reflect negativity and ill will by tossing off the sun's rays they have captured in your ritual. As you place the jar, chant something like:

*Jar of sun with fire's light,
guard this dwelling day and night;
reflecting back all harm and bane,
blessings shower from my window pane.*



Personal Devotions

Many Pagan and Wiccan practitioners devote some portion of their day to getting themselves in balance with their deities and in harmony with their inner selves before starting the day or before going to bed. This can be done at an altar, at your outdoor shrine, or even while sitting in front of an open window sipping your morning coffee or bedtime tea.

Morning Devotions

Begin by visualizing yourself as the center pole on which the axis of the universe spins. Allow your everyday consciousness to fall away as you take a few deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow the freshness of spring to breeze through you, blowing out all the stresses and concerns you face in your daily life.

At this point you should be in the right ritual frame of mind to make a devotion to your deity. These words will usually be a combination of those recited every day, and those unique to each day's events or circumstances. The following are words of devotion you might offer upon rising.

Blessed Lady Persephone, queen of the springtime earth.

*I remind myself again, though I face a difficult day,
that I am not alone. I always have you
and your eternal love to comfort me.*

*You walk with me and sit with me throughout the day,
guiding my decisions and illuminating my path.*

I bless you and thank you for this, dear lady.

*I praise your goodness and your devotion
to those who love and follow you.*

*Yet, do not allow me to forget that
it is not you who serves me, but I who serve you.*

*Help me to live my day as the sort of child
a mother can be proud to call hers.*

*I wish to honor you by being the best person
I can be all through this day.*

*Bring me home safely here to this place
where the spirit of home-love dwells.*

Thank you, Persephone. So mote it be.

A devotion that you recite in the evening would sound similar, but you might ask for protection throughout the night, guidance through dreams, and to awaken in a balanced frame of mind.

Devotions are very personal, and you'll find yours varying from day to day depending upon your personal circumstances and the amount of time you have for devotions. Try not to make this a time to request one favor after another of your patron deity, but use it as a time to balance your body and mind, to offer your thanks for blessings already received, and to rededicate yourself to the service of your patron.



Spring Weather Spells and Other Ostara Magick

Ostara magick takes us outdoors. Even our indoor magick is often performed in front of open windows, as we let the fresh air and sunshine of the reborn world into our lives once more.



Creating the Outdoor Shrine

Many people—including followers of all religions—enjoy having a small shrine or worship center outside of their home. It's not uncommon to find lawn statuary at Catholic homes depicting one of the popular versions of the Virgin Mary or of Jesus with his bleeding heart. Pagan homes are no different—the outdoor sacred areas are

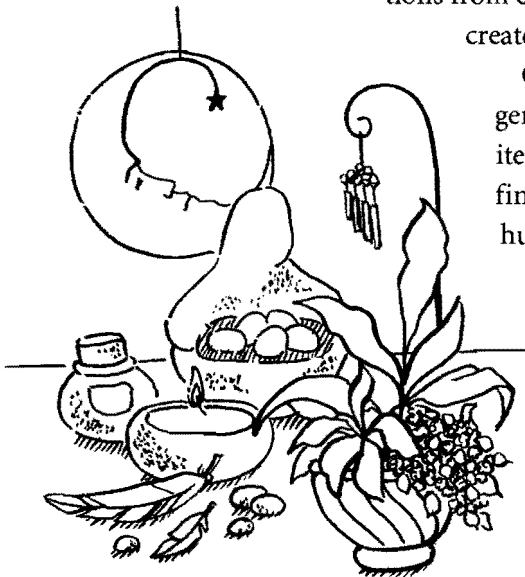
often more subtle in appearance, but still manage to praise the glory of a particular deity or season. If you would like to have something like this available to you at your home, Ostara is a great time to create the sacred area so that you can use it through the year until Mabon, when the weather turns cool again.

You don't need lots of space to create a shrine. It will probably be used for meditation and personal devotions and, depending upon your visions for the shrine, the area in which you live, and the size of your outdoor space, it will not contain lots of items or take up lots of space. To the uninitiated eye it may look like any other garden decoration, with statuary, stone, birdbaths, etc.

You can place the shrine in a garden, on a back porch, near or behind a hedge or shrubbery, on the outside wall of the back of your house, in a window box, beside a porch, at the base of a tree, or anywhere else you feel moved to create a place of worship.

Before gathering items for your shrine area, consider how you want the area to function. Is it to be a general meditation area, a shrine to a specific deity or season? Will it honor the sun or moon, perhaps? Do you envision this as sacred space in which to honor and praise your patron deity? Will you use it on a regular basis for seasonal and other solitary rituals? A book that may help stir your imagination and help you determine what you want is Pauline and Dan Campanelli's *Circles, Groves and Sanctuaries* (Llewellyn, 1995). This book is comprised of photos, letters, and suggestions from covens and individuals the world over on how they created their sacred spaces.

Once you have the answer to these questions and a general idea of your intent, you can begin gathering items for the shrine area. If you're not sure where to find some of the items you want, remember that the hunt is half the fun. It's one part game and one part spiritual quest, in which your inner self guides you on a mythic journey to find the perfect item, perhaps one you did not even know you were seeking. Look in antique stores, craft and hobby shops, hardware stores, garden shops, or in the Resources appendix in the back of this book for the items you seek.



The following is a list of possible shrine decorations to jump-start your own creativity. These are items I might consider using, but you should not be slavish to them or you might overlook the perfect item for yourself.

SHRINE DECORATION IDEAS

Statues of Deities

Statues of Gnomes, Faeries, or Other Nature Spirits

Statues of Animals

Animal Feeders

Wind Chimes

Plaques of Nature Spirit or Green Man Images

Star, Sun, or Moon Statues or Plaques

Stone, Marble, or Concrete Candle Holders

Offering Bowls

Ceramic Planters

Clay Pitchers

Feathers

Stones

Semiprecious Stones

Seeds

Coins

Flowers and Greenery

Birdbaths

Ribbons

Wands

Altar Space

Kneeling Bench

Comfortable Place to Sit or Lie Down

Heat-resistant Bowl or Censor

Even when your shrine is complete, don't feel it's so perfect the way it is that it can never be changed. It's natural to want to make seasonal alterations, such as bringing in wildflowers in summer or the fruits of the harvest items in fall. Let your shrine be like a beating heart, as alive as the spiritual pulsations inside you that led you to create the sacred space.

Consecrating the Outdoor Shrine

When you are finished putting together your shrine, consecrate it to sacred use by aspurgung some water around the area with your fingertips and invoking the blessings of the elements. Walk clockwise around the area as you say:

By the power of water,

I bless this as sacred space.

By the power of earth,

I bless this as spirit's dwelling place.

By the power of air,

I dedicate this as a holy shrine.

By the power of fire,

I consecrate this place to the divine.

By above and below, by the moon and the sun,

all time and space in here are one.

By the power of three times three,

by my will, so mote it be.

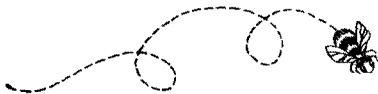
If your shrine will also function as a place to honor a patron deity you should let it be known, and follow up the dedication with an offering such as a coin, stone, or seeds. The precise words of your dedication will depend on which deity you have chosen to honor and your relationship with that god or goddess. For example, a patron deity you have worked with and served for years would be addressed more informally, perhaps referring to the last hurdle the two of you leapt over together. For another example,

woodland deities have a different character than sun deities, and the flavor of the area dedicated to them will be different. Woodland deities are more playful, and sun deities exude a forceful power. Learn all you can about your chosen deity and then let your words of dedication come from the heart.

The following is an example of a dedication that might be offered for a shrine erected to honor the Green Man from someone who does not have a long-standing relationship with this god already.

*By the power of earth, water, air, and fire,
who bring each of us what we desire,
this blessed space on which I trod,
I dedicate to the honor of my god.
Blessed Green Man, sprite of spring,
I offer you this place, your blessing to bring;
spirit of the woodlands, the animals and vine,
accept my offering of this humble shrine.*

Your dedication does not have to rhyme; it need only be sincere. I prefer working in rhyme because it makes words easier for me to remember. You may choose any words that feel right to you.



Spring Weather Magick

I grew up in the American Midwest, where gentle spring rains are common. Unfortunately, so are more violent springtime weather patterns. In many parts of North America, weather conditions can change fast in spring. They wreak havoc with our outdoor planning, but these varied weather systems can be a great boon to Ostara magick.

Caution must always be used whenever violent weather threatens, but less severe storms are the events in which you find Witches and other magicians scrambling to put a spell together before the peak energy of the storm passes. Think about the gift you're being offered for the taking. During an electrical storm you have a powerful torrent of all four elements from which to draw energy into your magick. You have the

force of water in the rain, the passion of fire in the lightning, and the energy of air in the rushing wind. All these forces are pounding on the earth, which is also changing and absorbing that energy as the storm progresses.

Even during these less severe storms, don't let your common sense desert you in your rush to weave a powerful spell. Stay indoors and work or, if you feel you must be outside, stay low to the ground, away from trees or other natural lightning rods, and don't randomly lift metal working tools such as your athame into the sky, inviting a bolt of lightning to fry you. A dead magician is a very unmagickal commodity indeed.

Anti-lightning Magick

There are several magickal means available to protect your home from lightning strikes during violent spring weather.

- Plant rosemary bushes on all four sides of your home, a popular piece of folk wisdom in northern Mexico and southern Texas.
- Bury a knife or other sharp object at the precise cardinal points on all four sides of your house. This is a popular method of lightning deflection in the southern Appalachian mountains. It is believed the sharp-edged objects will split the storm in half and send it around your home.
- Tie an anti-lightning talisman as high up inside the house as possible. Include in it any combination of the following: holly, rue, broken glass, sardonyx, patchouly, bistort, or leeks. As you put it in place, chant a line or two to seal its purpose, such as:

*Little talisman of earth foretelling,
no lightning bolt may strike this dwelling.*

Morning Dew Youth Ritual

Gather dew on an oilcloth each morning from Ostara to Beltane and use it for washing your face first thing in the morning. This will help you keep a youthful, dewy complexion. As you pat your face dry with a big fluffy towel, say:

Spring Weather Spells and Other Ostara Magick

*March and April morning dew,
gives to me a look that's new;
skin so soft with a youthful glow,
I walk in beauty wherever I go.*

When you remove the towel from your face, look into the mirror and smile. See the face you want to see and the rest of the world will see it too.

The Tornado Cleansing Spell

The cyclonic motion of a tornado is counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere, which means it moves naturally in the direction associated in Western magick with decrease, banishment, or slowing. This image can be successfully harnessed to purify and cleanse the home or body.

This is done by first balancing and centering yourself, as was taught in an earlier ritual in the last chapter, then doing an intense visualization of a large white tornado descending from high above you and slowly coming down to engulf your entire home or yourself. See it slowly pass through, turning from white to black as it picks up mental, physical, and emotional debris. Visualize all these impurities being taken away as the tornado passes on into the earth below you, to ground the unwanted negativity it has absorbed.

Rainwater Houseplant Blessing

Rainwater is not the pure, clean water it once was. Due to the pollution our modern world has pumped into the atmosphere, rainwater is no better or worse than water from any other source. However, in terms of magickal potency, water that is freshly fallen from the sky carries with it an archetypical association with blessings from heaven.

Your houseplants generally have to enjoy the spring weather through windows. To bring these blessings indoors for them to take advantage of, you will need to place a clean, empty bucket outside during a gentle rain. Watch from a dry location as the bucket slowly fills. Envision it as an offering from the deities to you, and from you to your house plants. Mentally project into it the energy of growth, strength, health, and long life.

Spring Weather Spells and Other Ostara Magick

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Retrieve the bucket from the rain before it spills over, as this tends to spoil the gift imagery and turn the water into something that is an expendable commodity. As you water your houseplants with the rainwater, offer the plants a blessing, such as:

*Water of life, a gift from above,
I offer it to you with hope and love.*

Gentle Rain Purification Ritual

Is there anyone who occasionally doesn't have the urge to go out and play in the rain? Has it ever been said of you that you don't have the sense to come in out of the rain?

Lucky you.

Sometimes our wiser side spills out into our "normal" lives, causing us to be dubbed eccentric at best. But these impulses harken back, as they so often do, to the lessons passed on from our long-gone ancestors. They believed without reservation that rain was a blessing from above. It caused their crops to grow, it filled lakes and streams, cooled hot days and nights, powered mills, and sometimes was just fun to play in.

Next time you have the chance to play in the rain, why not do it with the same joy shown in the famous movie musical *Singing in the Rain*, in which actor Gene Kelly danced and sang himself into cinematic history as he tapped his feet in a joyous rhythm on the wet pavement of the streets of New York City? As you play, raise your face upward and allow the rain to wash you with its blessings.

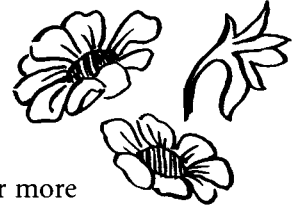
Wind Spells

The famous March winds can be used in a wide variety of magickal applications. They employ the element of air, which is related to communication, intellect, and travel. But, depending upon the direction the wind is blowing, the wind can be used to assist in a spell for almost any goal.

Only one word of caution is necessary: fickleness. The wind can be unpredictable, often changing direction without any reason or warning. This can affect the effectiveness of your spell or send it off into an unexpected direction. The wind can also wreak havoc on magickal accouterments. For example, candle flames don't hold up to wind very well, and the capricious wind could use the flame to spread dangerous fires. So

use both caution and common sense when experimenting with wind magick. Begin by trying any of these, or by concocting some wind spells of your own.

- Blow powdered rosemary into a west wind to call a new love into your life.
- Toss flowers into a west wind to bring peace and harmony to your home.
- Blow powdered rue into an east wind to make your employer more appreciative of all the hard work you do.
- Blow glitter into a south wind for assistance in getting a raise or bonus from your employer.
- Whisper a message to a distant loved one into an east wind and follow it with some good old-fashioned bubble blowing to carry it cheerily on its way.
- Face down a roaring north wind to instill courage and strength. Shout into it your intention to remain standing long after it's gone, then follow through.
- Blow cinnamon or damiana into a south wind to encourage passion and lustiness.
- Toss clumps of moist earth into a north wind to ground yourself when you feel frazzled.
- Blow powdered dill into a north wind to protect your home or yourself.
- Tie small bells onto the frame of open windows to bring the wind's blessings and protection into your home. Or, use traditional wind chimes charged to this end. Seal the intent as you hang them, with words such as:



*Charms that tinkle in the wind,
I seek protection as my goal's end;
wind that causes your music to play,
blesses this home by night and day.*

- To increase your psychic powers, place a single drop of lilac or sandalwood oil on the center of your forehead and on the palms of both hands. Stand facing a west wind, holding out your arms to embrace it. Visualize your psychic powers strengthening, and experiment with trying to receive psychic impressions from distant times and places. Keep this up until the wind ceases or changes directions.
- Help yourself get a restful night's sleep by anointing yourself with lavender oil on an evening when the wind is blowing from the northwest.
- To instill in yourself a passion for learning, or to boost your interest in a subject you are finding tedious or hard to learn, try studying when the wind is blowing from the southeast. You might also want to blow some rosemary into the wind while visualizing your goal.
- Blow skullcap, daisies, or chickweed into a northwest wind with the assistance of your domestic partner to strengthen the promise of fidelity that binds you.
- Blow a blend of rosemary and nutmeg into a northeast wind to gain clarity of thought or to help you find a solution to a problem.
- Induce prophetic dreams by blowing jasmine into a west or northwest wind.
- With a friend, blow sweet pea or turmeric, or toss small carnelian stones into a northeast wind to strengthen your bond with one another. Carnelians are usually a rich orange color, and orange is a color associated with the energy of attracting friends.
- Shout your frustrations about any recent discord into a southwest wind, then toss sugar into the wind to help bring an end to an argument or ongoing friction between you and someone about whom you care deeply.
- Plant herbs or flowers in your magickal garden when the breeze blows from the south to ensure they grow to their full magickal potency.
- Make love in a northwest wind to increase fertility.
- Blow yarrow and orris root powder into a west wind to call a lasting love into your life or to strengthen the feelings of love with your current partner.

- Hang some allspice, goldenrod, Irish moss, vetivert, or blackberry in an open window on any windy spring day to blow in the magick of riches and abundance.
- To call up a wind on a calm day, whistle for it three times and stir the air around you until it's audible by wielding a whip or rope overhead. This takes practice to achieve with regular success, but it is an old magickal trick from the Witches of old Europe.
- If you need to save the wind for later, hold up a magickally charged cord and tie knots of wind into it while chanting your purpose over and over. You can release the wind energy later when it is needed. This is another old trick of European Witches, who often sold these cords to sailors who feared being stuck at sea with no wind to fill their ship's sails.



A Potpourri of Spring Spells

We'll end our romp through the Ostara season with a catchall selection of spells that have a spring flavor. As with all magick, you should think of a printed spell—and printed rituals too—as blueprints rather than orders. They can and should be altered to suit your specific needs and tastes. They can offer inspiration that leads you to create your own spells and discard the printed ones altogether, and they can spur your creativity to try making magick for unusual goals or for the needs of others who ask your assistance.

Spring is time of newness, and a perfect season to experiment with new magick.

Love Sachet

For this spell you will need several layers of inexpensive lace, and a needle and thread. You may also want some colored ribbon to make the sachet attractive. Other items needed are love-attracting herbs such as vervain, lemon verbena, columbine, or rosemary. Add a little mint if you're trying to summon a passionate lover.

Mix the herbs well while visualizing the type of love you want to have come into your life. Place the herbs in the lace and sew it closed. Add the colored ribbon for decoration or to add the impact of color magick. You might choose red for passion, pink for romance, or blue for fidelity. Carry the sachet in your pocket or purse to attract new love.

Lust Magick Incense

To make an incense that will create sexual passion between you and your partner, you will need a south wind blowing into your home, a heat-resistant bowl or censor, and some matches and incense coals. While the south wind is blowing in, toss on the coals a mixture of a small amount of dried herbs. Use caution that the wind will not carry sparks out of the censor where they can cause a fire.

Remember that magickal incenses don't always smell the best. Some of them are downright horrible, but they usually get the job done. Try any of these nontoxic, lust-creating dried herbs:

Cinnamon	Celery Seed
Damiana	Hibiscus
Lemongrass	Rosemary
Mint	Parsley

As you toss the herbs on the coals, say:

*South wind, fan the fires bright,
ignite the flame of passion this night.*

Home Protection for the Open Window Season

We all know how much we look forward to throwing open our windows on the first pleasant day of spring. The warm breeze invigorates our souls while banishing the winter stuffiness from homes that have been shut tight against the winter cold for months.

Open windows feel wonderful in spring, but can make us uneasy too. They can be an invitation to thieves and other harmful opportunists. Even though most of us would never leave our homes unattended with the windows open, we sometimes worry about how safe we are with open windows while just sitting in our living rooms with all the lights on watching TV. This spell will help ward, or protect, these vulnerable entry points into your home.

You will first need to make a sage wash. To do this, find a small bucket or medium-sized pan and fill it about half full with purified or spring water. Next, take six parts dried sage and one-quarter of one part mugwort, simmering them for about ten min-

utes on the stovetop. Remove this from the heat and strain out the herbs, pouring the remaining water in with the purified water. As you do this, be sure to keep a strong visualization of the wash being a mechanism for warding your home from unwanted intruders. You may also wish to make a request to the Roman God of Boundaries, Terminus, to bless your efforts.

With a clean sponge, wash each window of your home, buffing it to a shine with a clean towel or wadded-up newspaper sheet. Again, keep your visualization going strong to infuse the spell with all the energy you are able to give.

With a forefinger, make a large X or pentagram, a five-pointed star with its apex pointing upward. These are both potent symbols of magickal protection. As you do this at each window, seal the spell with words of power.



*Through fair and foul and storms that rage,
I'm protected from harm by water and sage;
open or closed, this portal is charmed,
warded from thieves and stalker's harms.
In vigil it's standing to turn away bane,
I invoke my magick on this window pane;
imbued with the blessings of Terminus' might,
who guards this portal by day and by night.*

Home Protection Talisman for When You're Away

Before you leave for that spring break bacchanal, tack up this simple talisman of protection over the main entry point of your home. This is usually the front door, but many people routinely enter and exit their homes via a back door or garage entrance. Your talisman can either be placed on the inside or outside of the entry, but don't get in the habit of always making it visible outdoors whenever you're away or it will be as much a sign that you're not home for an extended period as would be leaving newspapers or mail piling up. Always remember that magick works best when backed up in the physical world with commonsense efforts.

To make your talisman, you will need only a small piece of gold or white cloth, these being traditional colors associated with magickal protection. You will also need a felt-tipped pen, some string or thread to tie the talisman shut, and small amounts of items known to be catalysts for protection.

The easiest catalysts to use are dried herbs, and there are a great many associated with both physical and psychic protection. Choose at least three from among this list if you are unsure where to begin.

Nettles	Oak Bark
Bay	Anise
Basil	Linden
Pennyroyal	Valerian
Wormwood	Broom
Angelica	Yarrow
Calamus	Hazel
Hawthorn	Mistletoe
Myrrh	Thistle
Meadowsweet	Garlic
Flax	Clove
Cumin	Frankincense
Cinquefoil	Black Pepper

You might also want stones in your talisman, especially if they can be obtained on your own land. Among the stones associated with magickal protection are:

Gold Pyrite	Malachite
Cat's Eye	Tiger's Eye
Topaz	Amber
Mica	Quartz Crystal
Red Zircon	Flint
Beryl	Bloodstone

When you have made your herbal selection, mix them together with any other items you feel will help strengthen your talisman. Items often chosen are a few drops of your own blood or urine, needles or pins, cactus needles, ashes, salt, or small mirrors.

Tie all these together. On the outside of the talisman make several large X figures with the felt pen, then place the talisman over the main entry point of your home and seal the spell with words of power.

*This dwelling is never empty,
 though I be not at home;
 I leave behind a talisman
 to protect it while I roam.
 No intruder great or small
 may gain entry past this line;
 protected, sealed, and warded,
 by my will, safety be mine.*

Safety Spell for Children

If you've felt cooped up all winter, imagine how an energetic child must feel. Seeing small children rush out to play on the first warm day of spring fills most parents and adult caregivers with at least a modicum of apprehension. They know there are dangers enough outside the confines of the home, and that the possibility of running into them is only exacerbated by the exuberance of the very young enjoying the freedom of the outdoors for the first time in months.

If you are raising your children in a magickal home, or are charged with the care of magickal children during the day, teach them to do a simple self-protection spell before leaving the house each day. Make the routine simple and fun, just the way mainstream parents teach bedtime prayers.

Have the child choose what he or she wants to do as a gesture before walking out the front door. They might choose:

- Clapping loudly or stamping.
- Knocking three times on the door frame.
- Spinning clockwise three times at the threshold.
- Touching a charm or icon you have hanging near the door that is already used as a talisman of protection.
- Calling out the name of a deity of protection three times.

These are only suggestions. You can utilize any simple gesture that appeals to the child and in some way symbolizes the energy of protection to both of you.

Children are fond of small poems they can memorize, as the parent of any kindergarten knows who has had their child come home after the first day of school only to recite some dirty ditty rather than their ABCs. With the child's help, try creating one that is both simple and fun. Kids love nonsense words that appeal to their sense of whimsy. An example of such a chant might be:

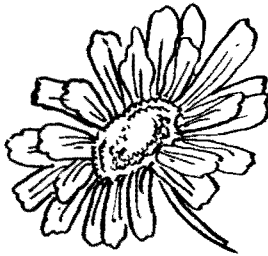
Spring Weather Spells and Other Ostara Magick

*God and Goddess, puddle and sprout,
bless and keep me while I'm out;
keep me safe from harm this day,
mud pie and froggy toad, I do play.*

Follow up their magickal efforts by assisting them with your own visualization in which you see them as being encased in a warm, protective white light that appears around them in the shape of an egg.

Now follow those kids outdoors and enjoy the Ostara season!





Appendix A

Spring Festivals

Feast of Isis (Egyptian) • Celebrates the Goddess Isis, who is venerated as the mother of all life and all other deities.

Feast of Cybele (Italian) • Celebrates the Goddess of Earth, Vegetation, and Fertility. Burying a tree in the earth was a way of honoring her energies.

Lady Day (English/Cornish) • Honors the Spring Goddess and young motherhood.

Aphrodite Day (Greek) • Honors the Goddess of Sexual Love and Beauty.

Festival of Astarte (Persian) • Honors a Middle Eastern Mother Goddess, whose name is sometimes translated as meaning “womb.”

- Feast of Inanna (Middle Eastern)** • Honors the rebirth of Inanna from the underworld in much the same way as Persephone's and Kore's rebirths were celebrated in the Greco-Roman cultures.
- Festival of Athena (Greek)** • Honored the Goddess of War, and the women who care for their homes and families.
- Hilaria (Roman)** • A celebration of laughter and merriment.
- Feast of Anna Perenna (Roman)** • Celebrates the goddess who is conceptualized as turning the wheel of the year.
- Feast of Bacchus (Roman)** • The famous Bacchanalia, a hedonistic celebration of all life's earthly pleasures.
- Feast of Libera (Roman)** • Festival of freedom named for the Roman Goddess of Freedom, Libera.
- Feast of Minerva (English)** • Celebrated Goddess of the Land and Sacred Wells, who was brought to England by the Romans.
- Ostara (Teutonic/Greek)** • Popular name under which many cultures of western Europe have observed the old Pagan holiday of the spring equinox. Also used as a common term for the festival in much of North America today.
- St. Mark's Eve (English)** • As was done with many Pagan festivals in Europe, the early church attempted to refocus the symbolism of Ostara onto the Feast Day of St. Mark. Instead of being a festival of rebirth, the St. Mark's imagery was concentrated on death and martyrdom, through which Christian rebirth is attained.
- Summerfinding (Scandinavian)** • Celebrates the turning of the year from dark to light. Northern Germanic equivalent of the southern Germanic Ostara.
- Brittania's Day (English)** • Honors the Goddess of Sovereignty and of the land for whom Britain is named.
- Whuppity Scoorie (Scottish)** • Celebration for awakening the Earth from her winter slumber.

Li Chum (Chinese) • Celebrated on the new moon that falls after Chinese New Year, it celebrates the coming of spring.

Vaisakha (Indian) • Celebrated on the new moon closest to the spring equinox, this festival marks the beginning of the Indian New Year.

Kalacharka (Tibetan) • Taking place around March 15, this festival celebrates the renewal of the spiritual year.

St. Patrick's Day (Irish) • The Christian legend of St. Patrick marching into the Pagan Irish stronghold of Tara on an Easter morning is considered the rebirth of Irish spiritual practice. St. Patrick's legends supplanted those of the goddesses of spring.

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