

W i n t e r
E a r t h

The Beaver Moon



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The Beaver Moon

When the last bit of warmth begins to fade into the cold, misty mornings of winter, we move into the lunar cycle that the Indigenous of the Northern United States and Canada called the Beaver Moon.

It is also called the Snow Moon, Frost Moon, Fog Moon, Mourning Moon, The Moon When Deer Shed Antlers, Larder Moon, White Moon, and Freezing Moon. When November's full moon rolls around we know the nights are getting longer and colder.

Northern dwellers could expect a first snowfall and frozen waterways. For many, it was the last chance to prepare and store food for the winter, and to stock up on things to keep them warm like firewood and fur pelts. Today we can easily freeze food inside our homes, but only a few decades ago many people used old fashioned cisterns--an underground reservoir for water collected during rains, used like a well. Dairy and meat that needed to be kept cold would be lowered in a bucket into the cistern to be immersed in cool underground water. Some may have lived in a climate cold enough to bury perishables in the snow, others harvested iced or had it shipped for the icehouse.

Other forms of preservation like smoking, heat boiling, salting, and fermenting were very popular this time of year. Canning is a relatively modern form of food preservation but is no doubt useful. Our modern food processing technologies can disconnect us from our food source by separating us from the raw ingredients. Traditional food processing often took on the characteristics of a ritual. The chant and song has played an important role in traditional practices of food preservation and processing. Most work done in villages is done collectively so as to raise energy for people to feel nourished by the task at hand.

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When done collectively, the idea that you should work hard to get the job done for personal gain diminishes and what is left is the notion that you are nourished first, then the work flows out of your fullness. In short, you can't pour from an empty cup. Many tasks including farming, grinding grain, churning butter, washing clothes, dying wool and so much more are often accompanied by song.

During this moon cycle, other important duties had to be done including making soap and candles, drying herbs, putting up winter gardens, cutting enough firewood to last for months of cold weather, and stocking food for themselves and their animals. The bulk of a winter food stockpile was usually carbohydrates, especially grain. Seasonal vegetables and fruit were also important. Meat usually had a lower priority because game could still be hunted in winter, but as much as possible would be preserved anyway.

The Beaver Moon gets its name from Algonquin tribes who knew it was time to set their beaver traps before the swamps froze. Its calling card is white frost on the grass. In many places another prominent feature is dense ground fog, also white and chilly in appearance. During the time of the fur trade in North America, it was also the season to trap beavers for their thick, winter-ready pelts. Colonial Americans eventually adopted the Beaver Moon name too.

Perhaps the Mourning Moon is named so because this is when Mother Nature mourns the loss of her consort. The Morning Moon marks a time of cleansing and ridding ones self of baggage to make way for the return of light, warmth, and the birth of the holy son (or sun) at solstice time. It reminds us that we have inner and outer preparation and work to do. The outer light may be fleeting, the darkness long and deep, but the inner light burns brightly if we attend to it with reverence and care.

Celebration Ideas

This cycle reminds us to make room for what we want to accomplish and plant in the springtime. After discovering our shadows at Samhain, we are now invited to let them go and make room for our new year manifestations. It's also a time for preparations, waiting and resting until that time comes.

- Make beeswax tapered candles
- Do a ritual working to help eliminate a bad habit or to end relationships that no longer make your heart sing and soar.
- Share how you feel, from the heart, with a loved one or friend.
- Perform a new beginnings ritual on the new moon, and think about all of the possibilities that the future can bring.
- Think of this month's full moon as a spotlight pointing right at you. Use this month to focus on self-care and restore your emotions, clearing away all of the stress before the holidays arrive and the nights get long.
- Are you dealing with fears and worries? Are they holding you back and preventing you from reaching success and happiness? Get rid of them before they negatively impact your physical, mental, and emotional well being. Write them on a piece of paper, and then burn, bury, or banish them under the waning moon to purge them from your life.
- Ferment foods for winter or try a new fermented food. Here are a few cultures from other culture: Sauerkraut, Kimchi, Gundruk, Doqq, Nuka-zuke, Achaar, Kawal, Cartido, Poi, Rosel, Umeboshi, Sauerruben.

Sources

Sophia Center for Goddess Study Priestess Training Class handouts by Dr. Candace Kant, Professor of History

Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger for Connection by Jessica Prentice

Stepping Into Ourselves: An anthology of Writings on Priestesses by Anne Key & Candace Kant

The Old Farmer's Almanac

...and various other sources collect over 20 years. Some are printed, some are handwritten, while others are scribbled on a napkin. I've had many teachers over the years and many of my biggest inspirations came from simple conversations and gatherings rather than formal lessons or rituals. Because of this, I may not always have every source of information but if you recognize something, I would be happy to include and/or link to the original source.