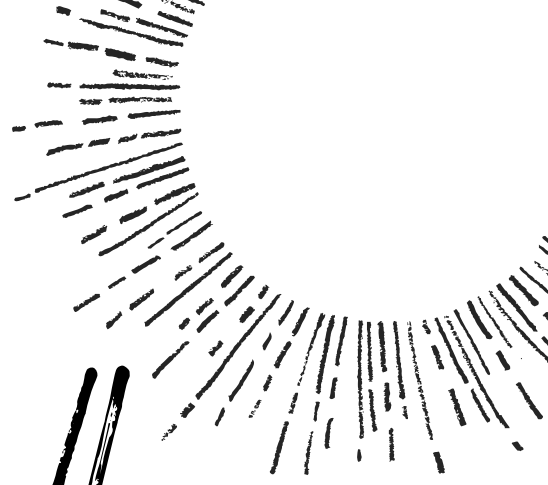


A u t u m n
W a t e r

Lughnasadh



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The Season of Harvesting

Welcome to the Shift into the Season of Water or the Season of Harvesting.

Just as soon as we celebrated the height of summer, we're now beginning to see the sun and daylight slowly wane. This is a time to honor sacrifice, death, and rebirth. The days are still warm and nights still long enough. Until now, most foods from the fields have been brought into to be eaten, preserving and grain storage will only now begin with this, the fourth and last Seasonal Shift of the agricultural year. This, the harvest of grain, is the first of three harvest festivals.

This Seasonal Shift celebrates the fruition of the year's work with the weaning of calves and lambs, the ripening of corn, and the first apples, pears, bilberries, blackberries, and grapes. An old custom was to pick the first apples and make them into a drink called Lammas Wool. A common day for this celebration is August 1st, but it would have been celebrated by the Celts on the nearest full moon.

In Celtic tradition, this time was honored with the harvest festival Lughnasadh, marking the end of the summer growth and the beginning of the autumn harvest. The name of this festival is Irish Gaelic for "Commemoration of Lugh". Although Lugh gives his name to this festival, it is also associated with his foster mother Tailtiu, who is said to have cleared the way for the introduction of agriculture in Ireland. The modern Irish Gaelic name for the month of August is Lúnasa. In Scottish Gaelic Lunasda means the 1st of August.

Other names include First Harvest, Harvest Home, Feast of the First Fruits, August Eve, Gwyl Awst, and Lammas from the old-anglosaxon "hlaef-mass" (loaf mass).

The Season of Harvesting

During this time of year we see Mother Earth step into her role as matron and grow with wisdom. She will soon be the Great Mother who births the Sun at Midwinter. But not before mourning the loss that comes with the Dark Half of the year.

This is a time of joy about the first fruits. It is also a time of respect for nature because the dark days of winter are coming nearer, but most of the harvest has not been brought in and stored away yet. It is tradition to give the first of the corn (which meant grain or any cereal) as an offering to the land before anyone else was allowed to eat.

In English folklore, John Barleycorn is a character who represents the crop of barley harvested each autumn. Equally as important, he symbolizes the drinks which can be made from barley—beer and whiskey. In the traditional folksong, John Barleycorn endures all kinds of indignities, most of which correspond to the cyclic nature of planting, growing, harvesting, and then death.

John Barleycorn (also seen as the Green Man), laid with the Lady in the woods at Beltane, has grown old, and now at First Harvest stands bent and bearded with a crooked cane. He looks to the Sun as he has changed from green to gold, and he knows that his time has come. His life will feed the people, and it is this sacrifice that is honored at Lughnasadh.

The celebration of Lughnasadh includes the cutting of the first grain and an offering thereof, making of a first meal and the ritual eating of it, as well as dancing.

Another Harvest celebration is Homowo, celebrated in Ghana annually between August and September. It is to commemorate that day when hunger was defeated, hooted at, and ridiculed. The traditional rulers and elders gather for rituals to good health and to usher in the new season amidst traditional music and dance.

Celebration Ideas

This cycle reminds us to shift for the Season of Harvesting.

- Make popcorn the old-fashioned way.
- make beeswax candles as this is the time when the last honey harvests are done.
- Eat, cook, and craft with honey.
- The weaving of grasses and grains such as wheat stalks.
- Making a kitchen Witch out of wheat stalks or native grasses from your area to protect your kitchen.
- Weaving and knitting in preparation for winter.
- Breadmaking, milling grains, or decorating with grains.
- Save the last stalk of wheat or seed from a harvest for good luck next year.
- Harvesting and drying herbs.
- Canning, fermenting, pickling, and preserving foods.
- Gather sunflowers or sunflower seeds.
- Do a home blessing.
- Toast at sunset to say thank you and farewell to the waning sun.
- Decorate a harvest altar.

Sources

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Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials: Lughnasadh

...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.