

A u t u m n
W a t e r

Mabon



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The Season of Harvesting

The light is softening, the mornings are cooler, and cravings for comfort food begin. It is at this time of the year, that we pause for the Season of Harvest: Mid Harvest. Mid harvest celebrates the second harvest; the harvest of tree fruit like apples, pears, and nuts. It's also known as the Wine Harvest, the harvest of grapes, and the Witch's Thanksgiving.

This pause happens at the autumnal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, around September 22nd. Two days a year, at the equinoxes, the sun is directly above the equator and the Northern and Southern hemispheres receive the same amount of sunlight and darkness. The word equinox means equal day and night and is therefore a good time to honor balance. For after this day, the nights grow longer and days grow shorter. As we enter the dark half of the year, the earth's fertility begins to wane and the crops die, awaiting rebirth in the spring. The Great Mother has fulfilled the promise made and has fed her children. She is now is radiant as Harvest Queen but soon waning into a time of rest to begin the cycle of rebirth. This can also be seen as the Grain King's life waning. As the consort of The Great Mother, he fulfilled his duty to the fertile earth and her children. The Great Mother will mourn his loss when the wheel turns to winter.

This is also a time of thanksgiving, as it is when farmers knew the bounty of their summer crops. This determined whether their family would have enough food and, what livestock could be feed and kept over the winter.

Giving thanks at harvest season is a long standing custom to many cultures around the world, both past and modern day. Wiccan European traditions celebrate it as Mabon. The name comes either from Queen Mab of the fairies, or the from the Celtic or Welsh

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god named Mabon ap Modron which means "son of the mother," as in Mother Earth and has a similar story to Persephone and Inanna.

In the 1700s, the Bavarians began a festival that starts in the last week of September. They called this festival Oktoberfest which is still celebrated in Germany and around the world today.

Modern Druids' celebration can be called Alban Elfed (Autumn Equinox) and Meán Fómhair (September).

China's Mid-Autumn festival is celebrated on the night of the full moon closest to the equinox. It is a festival of honoring family unity and the moon's birthday.

In Nigeria, the Yoruba celebrate the yam festival with dances for their ancestors and fertility of crops for the succeeding year.

And in the fall, many American Indigenous groups gather together for the Corn Dance to give thanks for the ripening of grains.

In ancient Greece, Oschophoria was a festival held in the fall to celebrate the harvesting of grapes for wine. This festival was sacred to Dionysus, the Greek God of Wine. Men would carry grape heavy vines throughout the town in a procession, followed by drinking, singing and general merriment.

Perhaps one of the best known harvest mythologies is the story of Demeter and Persephone for the Eleusinian Mysteries. Demeter was the goddess of grain and of the harvest in ancient Greece. Her daughter, Persephone, caught the eye of Hades, god of the underworld. Hades took Persephone to the underworld and Demeter's grief caused the crops on earth to die and go dormant.

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While in the underworld, Persephone had eaten six pomegranate seeds, and so was doomed to spend six months of the year there. These six months are the time when the earth went dormant, beginning around the time of the autumn equinox.

Germanic groups honor the fall equinox as Fallfest or Haustablot which is the second harvest of the season. Traditional sacrifice to the the spirits of the land took place. Today, it's a sacramental meal or feast. Also called Haustmánuður (Autumn month).

Christians may see this as a time of death (and eventual resurrection) of Jesus as the embodiment of the earth dying and awaiting rebirth much like the Grain King. A Catholic tradition, Michaelmas, or the Feast of St. Michael, is observed on September 29 where a meal of goose and St. Michael's bannocks is traditionally served in parts of England and Scotland. The Michaelmas daisy, is seen this time of year and is the last remaining flower from summer.

Maybe even the oldest documented mythos associated with the waning earth is the story of the Sumerian goddess Inanna who is the incarnation of fertility and abundance. Inanna descended into the underworld where her sister, Ereshkigal, ruled. Ereshkigal decreed that Inanna could only enter her world if she stripped herself of her earthly possessions. While Inanna was visiting the underworld, the earth ceased to grow and produce. As she journeyed home, the earth was restored to its former glory.

Common names: Second Harvest, Michaelmas/Feast of St. Michael, Mabon, Oschophoria, Wine Harvest, Fruit Harvest, Harvest of Grapes, Harvest Home, Haustmánuður (Autumn month), the Witch's Thanksgiving.

Celebration Ideas

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

Midharvest is the time of the year to celebrate balance, reflection, and grace. Among the symbols used during this season are mid-autumn vegetables like squash, eggplant, pumpkin, and gourd; anything made from apples or pears like pie, cider, and sauce; baskets and harvesting tools symbolizing gathering of crops; and anything made of grapes, especially wine. Aside from traditional feasts, such symbols are also used to decorate homes and altars.

- One of the easiest ways to celebrate is decorating your home for autumn.
- Build a bonfire.
- Decorate your porch or entryway with traditional autumn touches.
- Count your blessings by writing down all your blessings on paper. Keep a basket of blank paper and a jar for the ones you've written down. Once you've filled the jar, read them aloud, make them into a garland, or use them to decorate the home in another way.
- Go apple picking
- Have a picnic
- Clean your house and get rid of stagnant or negative energy.
- Host a potluck dinner gathering with your favorite people to share your bounty. Or, host a food drive.
- Set up an Equinox altar by including seasonal decorations or with one-half dark and one-half light in honor of balance.
- Do apple magick.
- Tell folklore stories. A common theme in these stories is the cycle of death and rebirth, as seen in the planting season.
- Eat grapes or use them in a new recipe.
- Drink wine.

Sources

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...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.