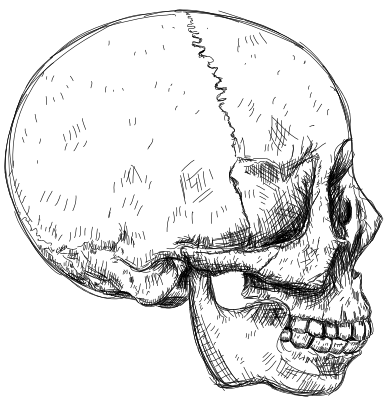


W i n t e r  
E a r t h

# Samhain



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# The Season of Resting

Autumn leaves cover the ground, leaving the trees bare. The fields are empty and may be covered in frost on chilly mornings. This time of year invites us to once more celebrate the cycle of death and rebirth. The last harvest, the harvest of vine fruit, or Samhain is the shift into the season of rest, or the season of Earth.

As the temperatures grow colder, we are forced to spend more time indoors. As we gather, the season of rest asks us to remember loved ones we no longer have. For it is at this time of year that many believe the veils between our world and the spirit world are at it's thinnest, allowing more interaction between humans and spirits, faeries, or departed loved ones. Many cultures around the world celebrate this season in remembrance. As the crops die down, we've made it through the seasons of planting, growing, and harvesting. The circle of the year has come to the final spoke in the wheel; the season of rest.

Now is when we see the Great Mother wane and begin to die down. We also see her as retreating into the darkness, resting and waiting to give birth to the sun at solstice time. Samhain (pronounced sow-win) is the Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter or the "darker half" of the year. It's traditionally celebrated from October 31st to November 1st. During this time of year hearth fires in family homes were left to burn out while the harvest was gathered. After the harvest work was complete, celebrants joined with Druid priests to light a community fire using a wheel that would cause friction and spark flames. The wheel was considered a representation of the sun and used along with prayers. Livestock was sacrificed and participants took a flame from the communal bonfire back to their home to relight the hearth.

# The Season of Resting

Because the Celts believed that spirits could cross into the human world during Samhain, they prepared offerings that were left outside villages and fields for fairies, or Sidhs. This would later become an activity called mumming in Ireland. They also practiced putting on costumes, going door-to-door and singing songs to the dead. Cakes were given as payment. These gave way to our modern custom of trick or treating. They also carved turnips into lanterns to scare off any spirits that may try to cause harm. That became our tradition of carving jack-o-lanterns. Much of the old pagan practices were adopted in 19th-century America through Irish immigrants bringing their traditions across the ocean.

In the 9th century, Pope Gregory reframed the old pagan traditions and declared All Saints' Day on November 1; a day to honor saints of the church. All Souls' Day would follow on November 2; a day to honor all souls.

In Mexico, Latin America and Spain, Dia de los Muertos (All Souls' Day) is a three-day celebration that begins on the evening of October 31st to honor the dead who, it is believed, return to their earthly homes on Halloween. [Click here to read about celebrations around the world.](#)

Other names: All Saints, All Hallows day, Hallowmass, Allhallows, Halloween, Winter Finding, Winternights, Elf-finding, Blood Month, Dia de los Muertos, Autumn Dziady, Oiche Shamhna, Sauin, Calan Gaeaf, La Festa del Ombre (Italian meaning shadowfest), Hop-tu-Naa, The Witches New Year, November Eve, Feast of the Ancestors, Third Harvest, Allantide, Third Harvest, Geimredh, Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos & Feile na Marbh), Feast of the Dead, Spirit Night, Candle Night, Nutcrack Night, Ancestor Night, Apple Fest, and Summer's End.

# Celebration Ideas

The last harvest, or Samhain, is the harvest of vine fruit such as pumpkins. During this time we're called to honor life and death, face our fears, banish shadows, and remember loved ones. As we shift into the season of rest, earth, or winter, we are called to go inward and retreat as we move into the dark half of the year. Many of our Halloween traditions are celebrations that connect us to our past, either through our ancestors, ancient traditions, or foods that have offered comfort and warmth for centuries.

- Carve a jack-o-lantern
- Eat pumpkin
- Honor your ancestors with an ancestral altar
- Cleanse the home for the new year
- Host a silent supper or Feast of the Dead
- Take a nature walk and collect items for decorating such as acorns and pinecones
- Visit a cemetery to pay your respects
- Divination
- Reflect on the past year and year ahead
- Write what you are releasing on fallen leaves and allow them to compost or burn
- Fire magick or Earth magick
- Pause and reflect
- Hold a séance
- Open a western-facing door or window and place a candle by the opening. "When the wind blows from the West, departed souls will have no rest" -The Wiccan Reed
- Make Soul or Spirit Cakes as an offering
- Share stories about ancestors
- Enjoy apple cider, dark wine, apples, pumpkins, pomegranate, nuts, spices, and other fall foods

## Sources

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Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health

The Center of Excellence: Master Herbalist

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Maud Grieve's A Modern Herbal

Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs

The Lost Book of Herbal Remedies

Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials: Samhain

...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.