

Wheel of the Year

The wheel of the year is the cycle of the 8 sabbats celebrated by Wiccans and Neopagans. There are 4 greater sabbats that break the year into quarters and 4 lesser sabbats that fall in between the quarters.

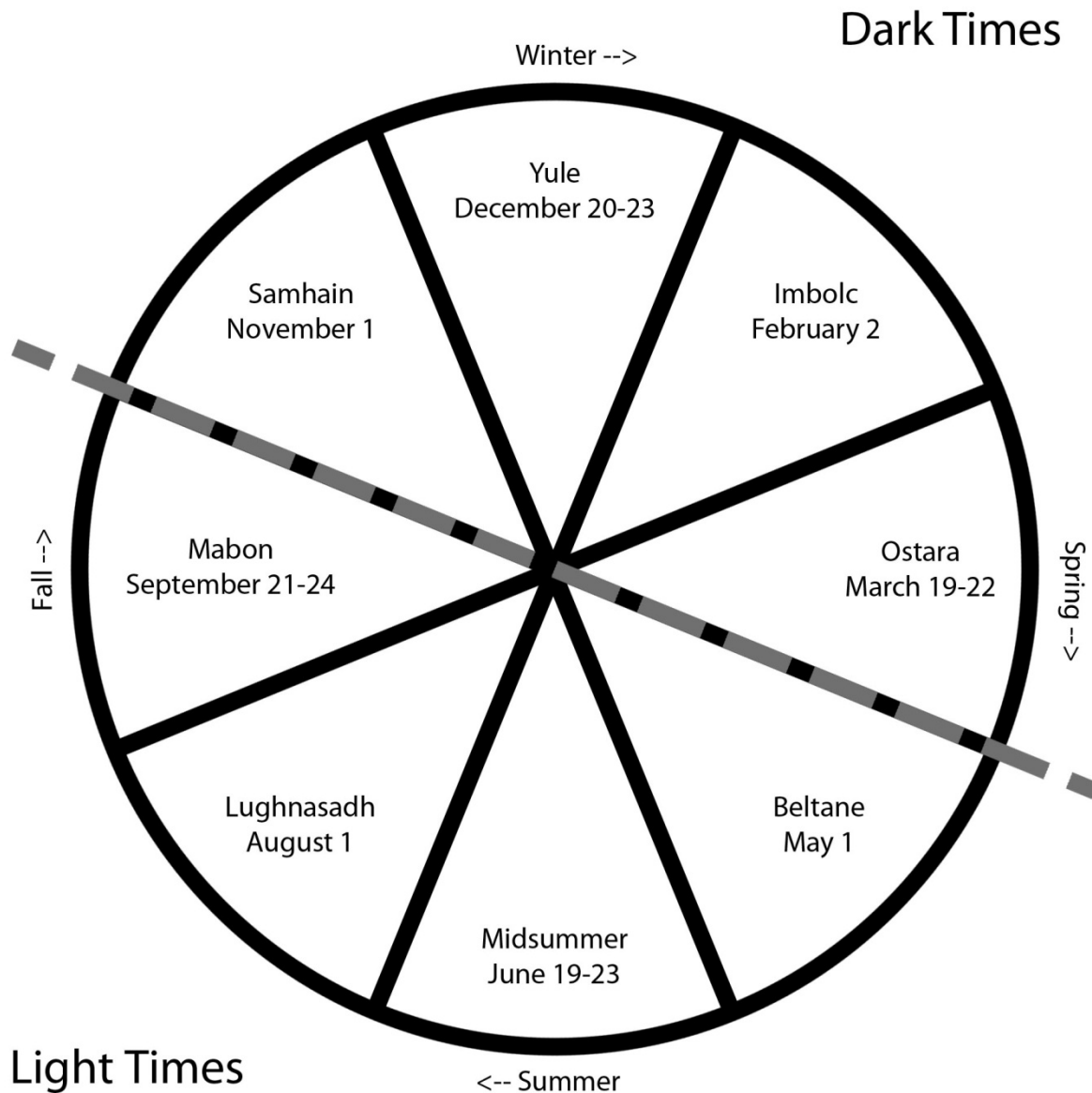
Greater sabbats fall on the Solstices and Equinoxes. They are often referred to as Solar Festivals. These dates vary from year to year, due to the solar calendar. The lesser sabbats are called cross quarter holidays or fire festivals.

The Greater Sabbats “Solar Festivals”	The Lesser Sabbats “Fire Festivals”
Yule : December 21-22	Imbolc: February 1
Ostara: March 20-21	Beltane: April 30-May1
Midsummer: June 20-21	Lughnasadh: August 1
Mabon: September 22-23	Samhain: October 31- November 1

All of these holidays work hand in hand to show the natural order of things. By paying close attention to them, one can use them to sync events in life. They can be used as a guide to start new ventures or even end current projects.

Each holiday has a different history and traditions that go back hundreds of years. Some have roots in Europe, Ireland and England. The wheel can be adapted and localized to better fit one’s lifestyle. Seeing as the wheel originally had deep roots in agriculture, and most people live a fairly urban lifestyle. Some still do small things, such as plant small gardens or house plants to imitate the crops.

The Wheel



The wheel is split up into two different times of year; the light times and the dark times. Beltane marks the beginning of the light times. Samhain marks the beginning of the dark times. Each sabbat in between has a different significance and meaning to pagans all around the world. Putting your own meaning into each sabbat is very important. Use this information as a guide to celebrating each of these festivals and remember that there is no “right” way to celebrate sabbat.

Any herbs marked with * are ones that we carry here at NUTZ.

YULE

Also known as Midwinter, begins between December 21st and 22nd (depending on the solar date) and coincides with the Winter Solstice. On this day the night is at its longest. This is the first sabbat after Samhain, the Witch's New Year. It signifies the birth of the solar god, rebirth of the great horned hunter god, and marks the time when the Old god returns to the underworld. It is common to decorate the home and altars with greenery such as holly, ivy, pinecones, mistletoe, and yew. Candles are lit to symbolize the light beating out the dark as the days will now grow longer moving towards the season of Spring.

Lunar Cycle associated with Yule:  New Moon

Deities: Sun King, Great Mother, Horned God, Oak King and Holly King, Balder (Norse), Apollo (Greek), Horus and Set (Egyptian).


Zodiac: The sun transitions from Sagittarius to Capricorn

Colors: Red, green, white and black.

Herbs: Holly, mistletoe, pine, oak, chamomile*, frankincense*, myrrh*, nutmeg, clove* and many more.

IMBOLC

This is the first cross quarter day following Yule. It is celebrated on February 2nd and signals the start of the thaw so the fields can be prepared for crops. At this time many Wiccans bless their candles. This is a great time to start planning your next step forward. Many new pledges and rededications traditionally take place on this day. In anticipation for Spring this is a time where many people start their “spring cleaning” leading up to Ostara. Reflection on what has been learned over the cold winter often takes place during Imbolc, as it is a time for enlightened awakening. Many Celtic pagans dedicate this day to Brigid. Altars can be decorated with rings of candles, grains and purification tools. Known to be a good time to bless the home and children.

Lunar Cycle associated with Imbolc:  Waxing Crescent

Deities: Fire/Solar Goddess, Brigid/Brid, Hestia (Greek), Freya (Norse) and Sekhmet (Egyptian)

Zodiac: Sun is in Aquarius

Colors: Orange, white, aqua, lavender and magenta.

Herbs: Heather, sage*, holly, pine, ivy, willow, clove*, nutmeg, almond, angelica root*, basil and many more.

OSTARA

Ostara begins between March 19th and 22nd (depending on the solar date), and coincides with the Vernal/Spring equinox. This marks the first day of spring and is associated with great fertility. Ostara means eastern star, the roots of it also mean “to shine” or “dawn;” it is also the goddess of fertility. She is associated with the hare and during this holiday it is common to decorate eggs (much like the Christian holiday Easter). The eggs are decorated to symbolize life and fertility (the hare also symbolizes fertility). During this time it is common to begin planting seeds. This is when the Earth comes back to life as the Earth Maiden awakens. Although the equinox is typically about balance, during Ostara we acknowledge the triumph of “light” over “dark” as the days begin to grow warmer. Altars can be decorated with seeds in pots of soil, colored eggs and red candles. Thoughts should be focused towards growing.

Lunar Cycle associated with Ostara:  First Quarter

Deities: Maiden Goddess, Ostara; Kore/Persephone, Demeter and Apollo (Greek); Horus (Egyptian)

Zodiac: Sun moves from Pisces into Aries

Colors: Red, white and black.

Herbs: All early spring flowers, alder, almond, clover, flax*, nettles, fern, rosehips*, dogwood, magnolia, sunflower seeds and many more.

BELTANE

Beltane one of the most well known pagan holidays, also known as May Day, is celebrated on May 1st and it falls between Ostara and Midsummer. Agriculturally it is marked as the beginning of Summer. Many people use this day to bless crops, livestock and even people. This day begins the official start of the “light” time of the year. It is common practice for bonfires to be lit on this day. Other rituals/practices include maypole dances, plantings and handfastings/weddings. This is a time of great fertility and growth, many welcome abundance during Beltane. Some also recognize it as a time of sexuality. Maypoles were erected to represent fertility (as they symbolize the phallus and the horned god) and when they are decorated they invoke fertility and growth. Beltane is a great time to start new projects and ventures of all kinds. Altars are decorated with wreaths of spring flowers, many candles and cauldrons for a small fire. Celebrations are typically started the evening before and go all day on the 1st of May.

Lunar Cycle associated with Beltane:  Waxing Gibbous

Deities: Young Fire/Sun god, young Green God/Man, Maiden; Pan, Apollo, Dionysus/Bacchus, Aphrodite (Greek); Balder and Freya (Norse).

Zodiac: Sun is in Taurus

Colors: Green, white and black.

Herbs: All May flowers, rose, heather, yarrow, rosemary, elder, almond, juniper and many more.

MIDSUMMER

Also known as Litha, Midsummer occurs on the Summer Solstice between June 19th and 23rd (depending on the solar date) and is the end of the planting season and beginning of the early harvest. This is the longest day of the year, and it is a time when the solar god's energy is at its apex and the maiden goddess is transformed into the mother goddess/earth mother. Many celebrate the sun, fire and the bounty of the land by rejoicing in the light of the sun during the solstice. Focus should be on bringing about abundance, prosperity and good fortune. It is easy to communicate with Fae on this day (ie: Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) as the veil between the two worlds is at its thinnest. Altars are decorated with statues of Goddess and God as a King and Queen figure, as well as statues of fae, flowers in bloom and crowns.

Lunar Cycle associated with Midsummer:  Full Moon

Deities: Solar/Grain god, Mother Goddess, Titania and Oberon, Odin and Frigga (Norse), Isis and Osiris; Horus and Set (Egypt).

Zodiac: Sun moves from Gemini to Cancer

Colors: Gold, yellow, green, brown.

Herbs: St. John's Wort*, mugwort*, heather, sunflower, lavender*, mint, thyme and many more.

LUGHNASADH

Also referred to as Lammas, Lughnasadh (pronounced LOO-NA-SA) is observed on the 1st of August. Many crops are ready for the first harvest of the season and plans that were set into action during Ostara and Beltane are also brought about by this time. Feasts are enjoyed, bread is often baked and many games are played at celebrations centered on Lammas. This is a time to be thankful for the life that mother earth has given us. Popular activities include picking wild herbs, flowers; picnicking and bonfires. Many people also use this day to honor death as an important part of all cycles of life. The circle of life is a main focus during Lughnasadh. Altars are often decorated with grapes, wine, fall flowers (corn flowers and poppies), jars of honey and loaves of bread.

Lunar Cycle associated with Lughnasadh:  Waning Gibbous

Deities: Solar God, Grain God, Sacrificed God, Earth Mother, Aphrodite and Adonis (Greek), Inanna and Tammuz, and Odin (Norse)

Zodiac: Sun is in Leo

Colors: Gold, green gray, and black.

Herbs: All grains (wheat, barley, hops, rye and corn), rosemary, frankincense*, sunflower, caraway, bilberry, oak, sage*, goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace, Comfrey*, Marigold, calendula and many more...

MABON

Mabon marks the first day of fall and coincides with the Autumnal Equinox. The date of this sabbat (depending on the solar date) and occurs between September 21st and 23rd. Mabon is often referred to as the Pagan Thanksgiving. It symbolizes the official end of the summer season. The changing of the seasons is here and it is time to celebrate the second harvest and the end of the growing season. This is time to collect the bounty of crops and prepare for the long winter. This is a time of balance before entering the darker days of winter. Many use this day as a day to give thanks, find your balance and focus on the blessings in life. Sacrifices are made to the dying god. Altars are often decorated with apples, grapes, cider and fallen leaves.

Lunar Cycle associated with Mabon:  Last Quarter

Deities: Child god/goddess, Earth Mother, Demeter, Kore, Persephone (Greek) and Rhiannon.

Zodiac: Sun moves from Virgo into Libra

Colors: Orange, bronze, gold, red, green, black, purple and pastels.

Herbs: All fruits and wines, apples, grapes, walnuts, passion flower, honeysuckle, myrrh*, sage* and many more.

SAMHAIN

Samhain (pronounced SAH-WIN) starts on the evening of October 31st to sunset on November 1st. Often referred to as the Witch's New Year, a time to finish ventures and projects and prepare for new cycles. It falls halfway between the Autumn Equinox and the Winter Solstice. It also coincides with Halloween and is one of the most well known pagan fire festivals. Samhain is the beginning of the dark times and people often light fires to help spirits find their way. During this time all of the remaining crops are harvested and livestock is slaughtered to be prepared for the winter to come. Altars are decorated with pumpkins, gourds, leaves, acorns, animal horns, crow feathers, plates of food, photos/mementos of ancestors, black candles and a scrying mirror.

Lunar Cycle associated with Samhain:  Waning Crescent

Deities: Death god/goddess, Horned God, Morgan; Pan, Hades and Persephone (Greek) and Osiris (Egyptian).

Zodiac: Sun is in Scorpio

Colors: Black, orange, scarlet and brown.

Herbs: Any poisonous and hallucinogenic herbs, apple, pomegranate, pumpkin, oak, ginger, sarsaparilla, mandrake, wormwood, mullien*, garlic and many more...

Everything in the information packet was put together by NUTZ employees. The information was gathered through personal research through many forms of text and internet resources. Ask employee for recommendations on additional books.