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Beltane (May **1)**

The women purify with feathers or cedar, and the meditation directs them to think of love, what love is in the fertility of their lives. The circle is cast, invoking the spring and blooming aspects of each goddess and direction, and using a green branch for an athame. The candle in the cauldron or the bonfire is lit, and the Maypole is the center of the circle. In the spirit of weaving, of Spider Woman’s creation of the universe, each woman wears *garland* of fresh flowers in her hair and the weaving of these can be made a part of the ritual.

Each woman carries a percussion instrument in one hand, some­thing that takes only one hand to play. Bells, rattles, shakers, tam­bourines and castanets work very well. Each selects her ribbon from the pole and they stand inside the cast circle. The high priestess of the evening says,

This is the time when sweet desire weds wild delight, the greening of the year. We weave this web of Spider Woman and of Ishtar to affirm life, to honor desire, to rejoice in the spiral. We meet in the time of flowering to renew the earth with our dance."

The women begin the May dance, twining and weaving the Maypole by their movement, singing and making music. Alternate women **move** clockwise, the others counterclockwise: they become two circles moving in opposite directions. As she passes her sisters in the dance, each woman goes under and then over her sisters' ribbons. When the **pole is** twined from tip to ground, they stop, and go to the Beltane fire, still singing,

Weave, weave, weave, weave,
Women weave the web of life.
Weave, weave, weave, weave,
Women weave the web.

The mood of delight continues at Beltane, the adolescence of the goddess year. The Equinox small child Is almost grown, and is discover­ing her budding sexuality. In the Hopi Road of Life, there are no spring ceremonials. Planting time Is too busy for them *and* Is ceremonial enough. May—(Uimuya —is the planting moon.") In the Ishtar-Tammuz cycle, the time is one of courtship and pursuit, frankly sexual and full of play and fun. The god chases the goddess in a green scarf dance, and she eludes and tantalizes him, allowing him finally to catch her." Persephone and Demeter play a similar game, and lovers play it every­where, portraying the fire and fertility of the earth's Joy.

Beltane or Summer Solstice is the time of the Sacred Marriage in the Craft, and this is enacted symbolically or truly in some covens' rituals. Also are the customs of dancing sky clad in the growing fields on Beltane night for the fertility of the grain,' 2 and of jumping over the Beltane fire. For Shekhinah Mountainwater, Beltane Is first menstruation, the celebration of women's blood. The object of all of these is honoring Ishtar's (or manna's or Demeter's) sexuality, the life-giving fertility of the blooming planet. Sexuality at Beltane is an affirmation between woman and woman, between woman and man, between each and the goddess.

The women of the coven dance the weaving of life **as a** Beltane ritual. Each brings a roll of colored ribbon, and before the ceremony begins, they build **a** Maypole outdoors. Using **a** wooden laundry pole, they attach a one- to two-inch wide ribbon at the top for each member present, the ribbons half again longer than the pole. They dig a hole deep enough to support the pole at the bottom, bracing it with large rocks. A Beltane fire is in readiness to one side of the Maypole, **far** enough away from the dancing but within the circle to be cast. This can be an actual bonfire, a small charcoal grill placed close to the ground, or a cauldron with a candle inside. It is not lit before the ceremony. As at Spring Equinox, there are flowers everywhere.

The fire is stoked, and women jump over the burning flames, moving in

*88 / The Woman's Spirituality Book-The Wheel of the Year—II: The Sabbats* circular clockwise procession for luck. As each leaps, she gives to the Beltane fire something she wants banished by love: any form of loneliness, discord, or disharmony. On her second turn, each woman draws a love wish from the fire’s energy. They jump and wish several times, direct the rising cone of power, and sit on the earth to ground the energy they’ve raised.

After opening the circle, the women share cakes and wine, honey and grain cakes for the fertile season. They toast marshmallows in the fire and admire the Maypole, a woven work of rainbow art that stands in the circle all summer long.

Frank Waters, *Book of Hopi,* p. 235

"Janet and Stewart *Ferner, Eight Sabbats for Witches* p 88-92

Ibid. p. 86.

' 'Adapted from Starhawk, The Spiral Dance. A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess. p 176-177

*Note: This is the best I could do with converting this document with the text recognition software I have. The program guesses what the words are when its scanned.*