History of Autumn Equinox from 2016 Celebration-by Jen

Two days a year, in mid-March and mid-September, the Northern and Southern hemispheres receive the same amount of sunlight as they do dark -- the earth is tilted at a right angle to the sun, and the sun is directly over the equator. In Latin, the word equinox translates to "equal night.” The days after autumn equinox will grow shorter, and the nights longer. We are right now in a time of balance, “equal night,” before this shift into darkness begins.

It is traditionally a time to celebrate the harvest, as people all around the world have done for millennia. In ancient Greece, Oschophoria was a festival celebrating the harvesting of grapes for wine. In the 1700s, the Bavarians started Oktoberfest which still today is a time of great feasting and merriment. China's Mid-Autumn festival, held on the night of the Harvest Moon, honors family unity. And all around us in nature this harvest is taking place, as the squirrels hurry to collect nuts, our tomatoes (hopefully) are setting one more crop, as they feel the cooling nights and shortening days. The last of the figs and blackberries have come and gone, it’s finally apple and pumpkin season, the last of the year’s fruits waiting to be picked and baked into pie.

Many cultures see Fall Equinox as a time of giving thanks. It's when you figure out how well your crops did, how fat your animals have gotten, and whether or not your family will be able to eat during the coming winter. While we celebrate the gifts of the earth, we also accept that the soil is dying. We have food to eat, but the crops are brown and going dormant. Warmth is behind us, cold lies ahead. It is a time to burrow in, to reap what we have sown, and nurture those last seeds we wish to see come to fruition before the wheel of the year turns.

Mabon is a modern naming of this celebration: there is no clear history linking this name to any ancient celebrations or Goddesses. Mabon was first used in 1970 by Aidan Kelly, in his book Crafting the Art of Magic. He wanted to assign traditional names to the 8 Sabbats. Autumn Equinox was only referred to as the second harvest, or mid-autumn festival, so he coined the name Mabon, perhaps drawing a name from the Legends of King Arthur, or the Welsh saint, Mabyn. We as your facilitators are not sure how we feel about a women’s celebration named by a man, although we do acknowledge that other ritual groups do include men.