Traditionally, Summer Solstice is celebrated at noon when the sun stands directly overhead and the full force of solar energy can be felt and drawn upon in ritual. One stands beneath the sun, for a while, absorbing the light and heat, and establishing a connection which can be drawn upon in rites later that night.

This is a time of purifying, of cutting through obstacles and drawing on the dynamic power of the God principle to manifest your own power. Lift up your hearts in celebration of the fertility and wonder of life and remember to give thanks for that which has been manifested for you since the last Sabbat.

Many traditions throughout time have celebrated the Solstices, from the times of the ancient and the indigenous people to present day. Bonfires are set on hilltops. People dance around the fires. In many places, after the fire has died away and only the hot coals are remaining, children will be lifted across the coals to be blessed and cleansed by the smoke.

The Summer Solstice is a time to be happy. It is a time to remove unwanted things from your life. It is a time to dance and sing and spread joy and be filled with love.

Celtic Celebrations

In the Celtic countries of Northern Europe the Solar Lord fulfilled the same function and in modern times, witches and pagans still honor the Lord of Light, invoking him to "put to flight the powers of darkness" and bring fertility and abundance back to the land and the people. This celebration is a joyous celebration, but at the very height of the Sun's power we also encounter the truth that whatsoever rises must also fall and so from this high point in the solar cycle, the days will begin to grow shorter and the nights longer.

In Britain this theme of transformation from one thing to another was reflected in the story of the Oak King, god of the waxing year and the Holly King, his twin, god of the waning year. It was at this time that the Oak King fell and the Holly King began his reign which would lead inevitably to the darkness of winter and the longest night of the year at the Winter Solstice at which point the Oak King would return. It was said that at the Summer Solstice the Oak King withdrew to the realm of the circumpolar stars, known to the Greeks as the Corona Borealis, to the Egyptians as ik-hem-sek, 'not-knowing-destruction,' and to the Celts as Caer Arianrhod. This region of the stars never disappears below the horizon, not even at the time of Midwinter.

In Ireland music, dancing and storytelling were all part of the Solstice celebrations. Before the celebrations could begin, prayers were recited while walking around the bonfire. Herbs gathered on the eve of Summer Solstice were most often used for medicinal purposes. Others were used for rites and divination. St. John's Wort, Elderberries, Yarrow and Vervain were a few that were used. Hazel branches were cut on Solstice eve and used to look for gold, water, and precious jewels. In order for this to work the branches had to be cut between 12 and 1:00 am.

Druids celebrated the Summer Solstice as the wedding of Heaven and Earth. The Goddess manifests as Mother Earth and God as Sun King. Bonfires were lit to celebrate the Sun at its height of power and to ask the Sun not to withdraw into winter darkness. Midsummer Eve festivals in the countryside of Cornwall, England would have firelight shinning from every hill and peak. Dancers adorned in garlands and flowers and young men jumped through the tall flames. This ancient Cornwall Summer Bonfire tradition has been revived during the 1920's and is still a popular festival.

The spiral is a symbol associated with the Solstices and creation by the patterns of sacred geometry. Ancient dances follow the Sun's movement like a spiral. People joined hands weaving through the streets, winding into a decreasing spiral into the middle then unwinding back out again. The Sun moving from contraction at the center of the spiral at winter solstice to expansion at Summer Solstice and back again.

Some call this Midsummer's Eve - one of the three spirit nights of the year, when the veils are thin between the worlds. The others are Beltaine (May Day) and Samhain (October, Celtic New Year).

Midsummer is truly a celebration of the primal creative force of the God at the peak of His powers and the Goddess in Her manifestation as the Mother - fertile and blooming with abundance as the seed of the God quickens within Her. This is a powerful and dynamic Sabbat, as the powers of the union of God and Goddess reach their peak.