

VERNAL EQUINOX

The warming, waxing sun of March melts the Onion Snow and coaxes daffodils to bud. Sheep in shaggy winter wool are ready to be shorn, and lambs, black Suffolks and white Dorsets, explore their fresh new world. Hecate, the Flying Witch weathervane, squeaks a rusty swell and burst, inviting bees that have just awakened from their winter sleep. And silence is to be broken by a sound that has not been heard since autumn—the song of birds.

To Christians around the world, the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox is Easter Sunday, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. But for thousands of years before the Christian Era, the Vernal Equinox signaled the beginning of the season of rebirth, the resurrection of nature and of many an ancient Pagan God.

Webster's Dictionary defines resurrection as a return from the dead. One of the first stories ever recorded of death and resurrection is the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris. In this story of eternal love, the Goddess Isis and the God Osiris ruled an ancient land in peace and bliss, until Set, brother of Osiris, murdered him in a fit of jealousy. Set cut the body of Osiris up into fourteen pieces and scattered them around the world. Heartbroken, Isis wandered throughout the world, mourning her beloved and gathering the pieces of his body. When the pieces had all been collected, Isis, with the help of Anubis, Lord of the Underworld, brought Osiris back to life. Through the union of Isis and Osiris, Horus the Sun God was born.

Far from the Valley of the Nile, in the ancient land of Sumer between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, a similar tale was being told. Tammuz, the God of Grain, was the beloved of Ishtar, the Goddess of Love and Beauty. When Tammuz was killed, Ishtar, driven by despair, pounded the gates of the Underworld demanding to be let in. Allatu, Queen of the Underworld and sister to Ishtar, allowed her to enter. At the first gate, she was told to remove the crown from her head, "as that is the custom of Allatu." At the second gate, she was told to remove the pendants from her ears; at the third, the chains from her neck; at the fourth, the ornament from her breasts; at the fifth, the girdle of birthstones from her hips; at the sixth, her bracelets and anklets; and at the

seventh, the garment from her body. Allatu held Ishtar captive in the Underworld. Because of her absence from the world of the living, all fertility ceased among plants, animals and people. When the great God Ea saw this, he sent a message to Allatu to release Ishtar. She was sprinkled with the Waters of Life, and as she passed through each of the gates, her garments and her jewels were returned to her. The fate of her lover Tammuz is not known because the last tablets of the text are missing. However, a Babylonian version of the same myth suggests that because of Ishtar's intervention, not only is Tammuz resurrected, but also that all the men and women who had ever died, "may rise and smell the incense."

Once again, as with Isis and Osiris, it was the love of a Goddess that brought a God back from the dead.

Ishtar was known as Astarte to the Phoenicians, and by the Greeks she was equated to Aphrodite, the Greek Goddess of Love and Beauty. Ishtar's consort, Tammuz, the resurrected Grain God, was called Adonis by the Greeks after the Semitic word "adoni," meaning Lord. There was a temple to Adonis in the city of Bethlehem, but the center of his worship was on the island of Cyprus.

Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione. She fell in love with the beautiful youth Adonis, and hid him in a box so that no one else could see him.

She gave the box to Persephone to hide for her, but Persephone opened the box. When she beheld the beautiful youth Adonis, she too fell in love with him. Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, refused to return Adonis to Aphrodite, who could not be consoled. As the Goddess of Love and Fertility mourned the loss of her beloved, the land became a barren waste. When Zeus saw this, he tried to intervene, but Persephone loved Adonis as much as Aphrodite. At last Zeus decreed that Adonis would spend a third of the year with each Goddess, and spend a third of the year alone. Each spring, Adonis returns to Aphrodite, and each winter he dwells with Persephone in the Underworld.

From the ancient land of Phrygia, not far from the fair islands of Cyprus and Cythera, comes the myth of Cybele and Attis. Attis was conceived when his mother placed an almond in her lap to admire its beauty and was impregnated by its magickal power of fertility. The Mother Goddess, Cybele, fell in love with the beautiful youth, but he was caused to marry another. Upon discovering the couple, Cybele flew into a rage and destroyed the entire town. Attis then castrated himself under a pine tree and died from the self-inflicted wound. Where drops of his blood fell, violets sprang up. Cybele gathered the violets and adorned the pine tree with them in remembrance of her beloved Attis. Cybele implored Zeus to bring back Attis, but Zeus agreed only to preserve the body from corruption.

It was in Rome that the cult of Cybele flourished; there, at the time of the Vernal Equinox, the eunuch priests of Cybele performed spring rites that lasted almost a week. On the first day of the festival, a pine tree whose trunk had been wrapped with white cloth (like a shroud) and adorned with violets was carried into the temple. (This sounds remarkably like a description of the May Pole, traditionally a pine tree with all but its uppermost branches removed, entwined with red and white ribbons and bedecked with flowers.) On the second day of the festival, trumpets were sounded. On the third day, the high priest slashed his arm, allowing the blood to fall on the pine tree. In a ritual of mourning for the dead Attis, there was frenzied music and dancing. On the last day of the festival, mourning turned to joy because the god had risen, promising his followers their own triumph over death.

In all of these myths, the element that is the cause of the resurrection is love—in each case, the love of a Goddess for her consort. But in the myth of Demeter and Persephone, it is the love of a mother for her daughter that brings about the return from the dead. Persephone was the beautiful daughter of Demeter, the Goddess of Grain and Vegetation. (To the Romans they were known as Proserpina and Ceres.) Persephone was gathering flowers one day when she was beheld by Hades, Lord of the Underworld. He loved her instantly, and carried her off in his chariot to rule beside him as Queen of the realm of the Dead.

When Demeter realized that Persephone was missing, her grief was so great that she would not eat or drink the nectar of the Gods. After nine days she learned from the Sun where her daughter had been taken. Demeter left Mount Olympus to roam the earth in search of her daughter, disguised so that no one could recognize her. Because Demeter had left the realm of the Gods, all vegetation ceased to grow and the earth became a cold and barren waste. Zeus, who was particularly concerned for the welfare of human life, sent a messenger to Hades, telling him that he must allow Persephone to return to her mother. He promised that he would free her, but nevertheless Hades ensured her return by tricking her into eating a magick pomegranate seed before she left the Underworld. Demeter and Persephone were joyfully reunited, and Demeter of the Corn-Ripe Yellow Hair allowed the Earth to blossom forth once more, and taught them to plant corn. Each year thereafter, Persephone descends into the Underworld with the coming of winter, and returns each year in the spring.

Demeter established the center of her worship at Elusis, where during her quest for Persephone she had been shown kindness by a stranger. The mysteries of her religion taught men to live joyfully and to die with hope, because "Blessed is he who has seen them, his lot will be good in the world to come."

Often associated with Demeter, the Goddess of Grain, is Dionysus, the God of Wine. The most recent of the Greek Gods, Dionysus was born at Thebes. His father was Zeus, King of Heaven, but his mother was Semele, a mortal princess. Zeus loved Semele and he promised to do anything she asked of him. But Semele, who was pregnant with Zeus's child, asked only to see him in all his radiant splendor as the God of Gods. Zeus knew that no mortal could witness this sight and live—and yet, despite his warning Semele of the consequences, she insisted. Upon Semele's death, Zeus took the child from her body and hid it within his own, until the time came for Dionysus to be born. Dionysus was raised by nymphs, but when he grew to manhood he travelled to distant lands, performing feats that proved his godhood. Yet this young God of Joy and Wine, known to the Romans as Bacchus, longed for the mother he never knew; and so he descended into the Underworld to find her. When he had found Semele, he defied Death itself and escaped the realm of the dead with her. At last he brought her to Mount Olympus, where she was allowed to dwell among the Gods.

Once again it is love, in this instance the love of a son for his mother, that is the force behind the resurrection.



Two Views of an ancient Bird-Headed Goddess.

Although the worship of Dionysus is relatively recent (circa 800 B.C.E.), it has an air of a far more primitive religion about it. His mythological followers, the Meanads, worshiped not in temples, but in wild forests and hidden valleys. The "blood feast" that was part of the Meanads' rites seems to have its roots in the very early shamanistic religion of the hunter-gatherers of pre-history. The actual worship of Dionysus took place not in the temples nor in the wild places, but in the theaters; and the plays that were the acts of worship were the forerunners of today's "Passion plays."

Dionysus was killed, hacked to pieces—some say at Hera's command. But, because he had overcome death when he had previously descended to the Underworld, he rose again. As the God of the Vine, he dies each year, and each year he returns from the dead. Like other gods of resurrection, his rites were held in spring, when the vines put forth new shoots. His worshippers believed that death is not an end—the soul lives on forever.

Far to the wintery north, another tale was being told of another God who would be resurrected. He was Balder the Sun God, the Shining One, son of Odin and Frig. He was loved by everyone because he was as kind as he was beautiful. As a youth, he was warned by a prophetic dream that he would be killed, so his mother made every creature in nature—every animal and every plant, every stone and every element—promise not to hurt him. Every creature in nature, that is, but one: the mistletoe, which was too young. So invincible did Balder appear because of these promises that it became a sport for the other Gods to throw their weapons at him. Then one day, Loki the mischief-maker—who not unlike the Egyptian Set in that he, too, was driven by jealousy—disguised himself as an old crone to learn from Frig the secret of Balder's protection. Frig told Loki that the one creature that could do Balder harm was the mistletoe. Loki then cut a shaft of mistletoe and tricked Hoder, the blind God of Winter, into throwing it at Balder. Balder was struck, and he died of his wounds. The Gods were horrified! Balder's body was given a magnificent boat funeral, while his spirit went to the ancient Norse Underworld "Hel." Odin sent a messenger to Hel to ask what could be done to bring Balder back from the dead. The messenger was told that Balder would be resurrected if every creature in nature and every God wept for him. All of the Gods and all of the creatures loved Balder so that they wept bitterly—all except Loki. And so, Balder was doomed to stay in the Underworld until Ragnarok.

Ragnarok, often equated with the Christian's Judgement Day, is the end of the world, the Twilight of the Gods. It is a time when Fenris, the monster child of Loki's, will devour the world. But for the meantime, Fenris is kept in check, bound by magickal chains forged by the Gods themselves. In the Ukraine and other countries of Eastern Europe, it was

also believed that there was a monster that would devour the world, and that it is bound by magickal chains. The monster is not the embodiment of evil, but the natural processes of death and decay. It is also believed that the magickal chains that bind the monster are strengthened in direct proportion to the number of the Pysanky, the famous Ukrainian Easter eggs, made each year. These ancient rites to strengthen the magickal chains maintain a balance between the forces of nature: the forces of death and decay, on the one hand, and the forces of birth and resurrection on the other. Without death there can be no resurrection.

Ragnarok, then, is not the end, but a new beginning. In the final words of the myth of Balder:

"Surely the earth will rise up green and fair out of the sea, and plants will grow there where none were sown. . . There, too, shall come the sons of Thor, Moody and Magne bringing with them Thor's hammer. After these shall come Balder and Hoder from Hel."

Like the Celtic Gods, the Oak King of the waxing year and the Holly King of the waning year, Balder and Hoder are the Gods of Winter and Summer, locked in an eternal cycle of Birth, Death, and Resurrection.

ELEMENT	DIRECTION	SEASON	TIME OF DAY
AIR	EAST	SPRING	SUNRISE
FIRE	SOUTH	SUMMER	NOON
WATER	WEST	AUTUMN	SUNSET
EARTH	NORTH	WINTER	MIDNIGHT

And so, at the Vernal Equinox, Christians are joined in celebration by Pagans throughout the world. Having rediscovered the mythologies of our own ancestors, modern Pagans also celebrate the universal principle of Resurrection at the Equinox—which is, after all, named for Eostre, a Pagan Goddess.

Eostre or Ostre is the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring to whom offerings of cakes and colored eggs were made at the Vernal Equinox. Rabbits were sacred to her, especially white rabbits, and she was believed to take the form of a rabbit. The Christian scholar Bede also claims that she is the Goddess of the East, and this fits with the Pagan tradition of the East being the direction of rebirth. Eostre, then, is the Goddess of Spring, of Rebirth and the East. She is almost certainly the same as the Greek

Goddess Eos, Goddess of the Dawn or Sunrise, since the sun rises in the east, and most directly in the east at the Vernal Equinox. This belief is preserved for us in the Christian practice of celebrating Easter at sunrise services.

Traditionally the four Elements—Earth, Air, Fire and Water—are associated with the four directions—North, South, East, West—and with the Seasons—Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

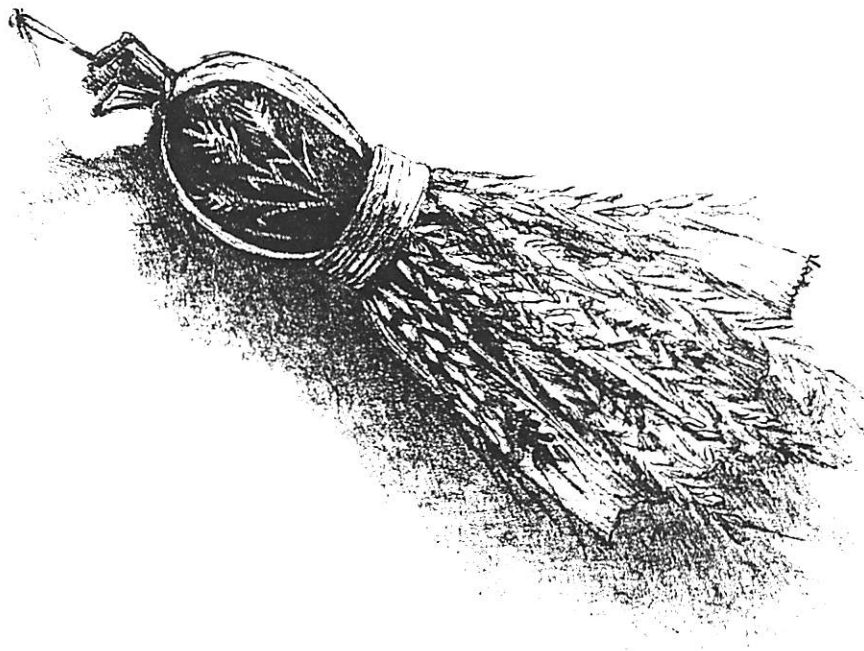
There is a legend in the Anglo-Saxon and Norse traditions that the Goddess obtained her necklace—Brisingamen—only after spending one night with each of the four dwarfs. Their names are not given, but they are probable similar to, if not the same as, the names of the Norse guardians of the four directions: Austri, Sudhri, Vestri and Nordhri. The magickal necklace Brisngamen is the Magick Circle and the Wheel of the Year. It gives the Goddess power over the cycles of the seasons, or Life, Death, and Rebirth.

The Goddess Eostre, Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring and of the East, as the Greek Eos, Goddess of the Sunrise, is also the Maiden aspect of the Three-formed Goddess, the other two in Greek Mythology being Hemera, the Goddess of Day (the Mother), and Nix, Goddess of Night (the Crone). And, this is in keeping with the Goddess of Spring aspect, especially since the Solstices and the Equinoxes also have associations with the specific times of the day: Vernal Equinox—Dawn; Midsummer—Noon; Autumn Equinox—Dusk; and Yule (Winter Solstice)—Midnight (see table). The greater Sabbats, which mark the turning point from waxing to waning of each season, should be celebrated at the Witching Hour of Midnight, that time that is not a time. All of the major Sabbats are actually “eves” or the “night before” a festival: e.g., May Eve—Beltain, or August Eve—Lammas, etc.

Eostre’s Hindu counterpart, according to Janet Farrar in *The Witch’s Goddess*, is Ushas, whose lover, or opposite, is Fire. The opposite of a Goddess of Dawn would be a God or Goddess of Dusk, or Sunset, which in Latin is “Vesper.” This corresponds to the Norse Guardian of the West, “Vestri.” It also corresponds to the Roman Goddess Vestra, Goddess of Fire (to the Greeks, Hestra), to whom the Vestal Virgins dedicated themselves; they kept her living symbol, the eternal flame, burning in her sanctuary. If this were so, it would make Fire the element of the West.

West is the direction of Death, and is traditionally associated with the element of Water. The transition called Death was often compared with crossing a body of water. In ancient Egypt, the Necropolis, or “City of the Dead,” was on the west bank of the Nile, while the land of the living was on the east bank. To the ancient Greeks, Hades, the realm of the Dead, was entirely surrounded by the River Styx. Later, Greeks had divided Hades into several sections, including prototypes for heaven

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An Ancient House Blessing

and hell of the new religion, and each of these sections had an associated river. Among these was the River Acheron, or River of Woe, which the ferryman Charon helped all of the dead across. Later, the Anglo-Saxons and the Norse sent their dead into the next world by "burial at sea," with their famous ship funerals, or ship burials. Or did they? The funerary ships of the Norse were certainly put out to sea, but they were set ablaze first. And, ship burials often contained urns of the cremated remains of the deceased. So it is possible that at some point in history, the direction of the West, with its fiery sunsets, was associated with death and also the transforming element of Fire. Be that as it may—as a traditionalist, I shall continue to place water at the West. But now let us continue the subject of the Vernal Equinox and Eostre, Goddess of the East, of Spring and of Rebirth and Resurrection.

The Pagan Anglo-Saxons made offerings of colored eggs to the Goddess Eostre. They also placed them among the grave goods in burials, probably as a charm of rebirth. The Egyptians, too, placed eggs in tombs—and the Pagan Greeks placed eggs on the fresh graves of their deceased loved ones—all, no doubt, to ensure the resurrection of the deceased by the potent magick of the egg.

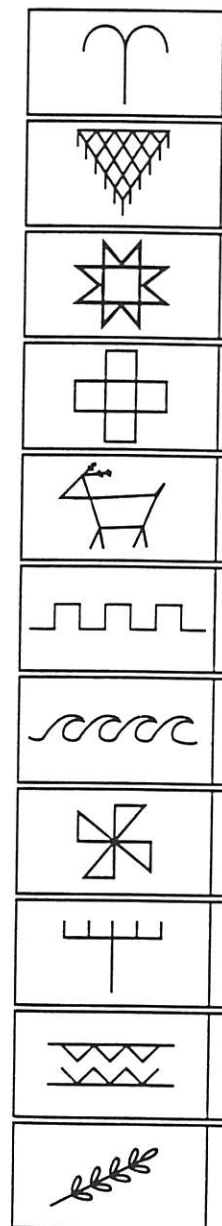
Among the earliest examples of the association between eggs and graves are the decorated ostrich eggs found in the neolithic graves of pre-dynastic Egypt. It is very unlikely that these eggs, decorated with incised lines depicting zigzags and highly stylized animals (including the great horned ibex and the ostrich) were placed in the graves as food for the deceased, because apparently they were emptied prior to being placed in the graves, as the neat holes in the eggshell suggest. Also, some graves contain models of eggs rather than actual ones.

The Druids dyed eggs scarlet in honor of the Sun, using furze (gorse) blossoms or possibly madder root. But there can be little doubt that the practice of dying and decorating eggs came—like the Goddess herself—from Eastern Europe. Here, in countries like Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and most notably the Ukraine, the art of coloring and decorating eggs in Spring is unsurpassed. It is also in these countries, including northern Greece, that ancient cultures (ca. 7000-5000 B.C.E.) worshiped a Bird Goddess. She was sometimes portrayed with the head of a bird, and at other times with the long legs of a marsh bird. As a Mother Goddess, the milk of her breasts was associated with life-giving rain. As a Grain Goddess, she was associated with the baking of sacred bread. And she was also portrayed as holding a snake, centuries before the Minoan Goddess. The numerous figures of this most ancient Goddess, and the miniature temples and shrines dedicated to her, are frequently decorated with lines, V shapes, and chevrons, that are still today inscribed on eggs in Eastern or Old Europe. In Hungary, designs were scratched onto eggs that had been dyed red; designs with names like the White Horse, Goat's Claw, the Snake, and the Horseshoe. In Hungary, too, a 1300 year old burial of a woman was discovered in which the woman was buried with an inscribed egg in her hand.

Pysanky were and still are considered to be magickal amulets of fertility, protection, and prosperity. Magickal designs of very ancient origin are inscribed on pure white eggs in beeswax, using a tool called a "kitska" which is heated in a candle flame. The process itself is a magickal ritual. (For further details on designs and process, see *Wheel Of The Year*, and my article in the Summer 1987 *Circle Network News*.)

Pysanky are not the only magickal eggs in the Ukraine. There is another type called "Krashanka." These are the eggs that were hard-boiled, dyed in a color and ritually eaten at sunrise on Easter Sunday. Krashanka comes from the word "krasha," meaning "to color," while Pysanky comes from the word "pysaty," meaning "to write" (referring to the designs inscribed on Pysanky). Krashanka are hard-boiled and intended to be eaten, while Pysanky are kept raw, to preserve their fertility magick.

Krashanka are dyed a single color, usually red, while Pysanky are inscribed and dyed in designs of several colors.



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Once the eggs have been colored and (if desired) marked with the magickal signs and symbols, they are ready to be consecrated. This can be done as part of the Spring Rites, or in a separate ritual, earlier (for instance, if you wanted to bring the magickally charged eggs to a coven meeting to be eaten or exchanged after the Sabbat Rites have been performed). To consecrate the eggs, place them on the altar and surround them with the symbols of the four elements. Hold the athame high, and intone such words as:

*In the names of the Goddess of Spring (name),
And the ever returning God of the Sun (name),
By the power of the four elements—
Earth, Air, Fire, and Water,
I do consecrate these eggs.*

Then point the athame at each egg, and make a sign of the pentagram as you visualize the energy flowing from you through the blade into each egg.

*Now do they contain new life.
In accordance with their signs,
And with my will,
So Mote it Be!*

Now the eggs are ready to be ritually eaten as part of the Spring feast, or exchanged with other coveners to be eaten at a later date.

The Goddess of Fertility was also Goddess of Grain, and so offerings of bread and cakes, as well as those of colored eggs, were made to her. Most European countries have a traditional Eostre bread. In the countries of Eastern Europe, it is a sweet yeast bread made with white raisins, called "babka." It is traditionally served with a sweetened cheese cake adorned with candied violets, called "pashka." In Italy, it is called "pan de Pasque," a sweet bread that has the colored eggs baked into the braided loaf. (While the name "Easter" in the Germanic languages comes from the name of the Goddess Eostre, the word for Easter in Latin languages comes from the Hebrew word for Passover—hence, the word "Pasque" for Easter in Italian.) Italy has several traditional Easter cakes and breads.

Here is a rare recipe for an Italian Easter cookie that features ground almonds. Almonds are sacred to the God Attis, whose resurrection was celebrated annually at the Vernal Equinox. It is made in the shape of an Eostre basket and also contains hard colored boiled eggs.

to remove her jewels as she descended into the Underworld, but had them returned to her upon her ascent. The Anglo-Saxon Goddess, too, had to spend time in the Underworld to obtain her necklace—since that is the realm of the Dwarfs in Anglo-Saxon and Norse myth. Among the jewels of the Goddess Ishtar is the “girdle of birthstones” that she wore about her hips. This is the probable origin of the practice of wearing birthstones, and it predates any Biblical reference to birthstones by almost 1,000 years. Considering, too, that the girdle was worn about the hips, there can be little doubt that the girdle of birthstones was an amulet of Birth and Rebirth. Its association, then, with Women’s Mysteries would likewise associate it with the Moon, another symbol of the Goddess Ishtar, rather than the Sun and its relationship to the signs of the zodiac, and so the stones would be thirteen in number rather than twelve.

As every ending is a new beginning, so is the reverse true. As we move with the turning of the Wheel into the time of Light and Life, so do we move away from the time of Darkness and of Spirit, and from those in Summerland who had come to join us from time to time, to share the warmth and companionship of our winter evenings by the fire during the long, dark months that are now coming to an end.

One night before the Vernal Equinox, light violet or purple candles and place them in the window, in the place where at Samhain you lit Jack-o-lanterns to invite the Spirits. Burn patchouli incense and carry it slowly through all the rooms of your home. If you feel that it is warranted, have an Ouija board or wine glass ready to receive any last messages. Then when you feel that the time is right, extinguish the candles in the windows, and as you do so whisper, “Merry meet again.” Then prepare to greet the Spring.

This is the time for the blessing of seeds that are to be planted in the earth, and which have lain dormant through the dark half of the year since the Autumn Equinox. As you prepare for the rites of Spring, gather together the seeds which have been stored, some in the cool darkness of the cellar, some in the airy dryness of the attic, and place them in a basket or other container. This can be kept beneath the altar during the ritual where the seeds will be charged with the magickal energy of the celebration, or where they can be easily reached to be placed on the altar for a specific blessing such as the one given in *Wheel Of The Year*.

After the ritual—whether the seeds have been blessed, or have just absorbed energy by their presence in the Circle—put them aside in a suitable place until the New Moon, and all danger of frost is passed.

As the Circle is being prepared for the ritual of Spring, let each object and ornament be of magickal significance appropriate to the season. Pussy willow, being a willow, is a plant that has long had associations with Witchcraft, as well as with Spring. It is ideal for adorning the altar at

the Vernal Equinox. The Circle itself may be adorned with bowls and baskets of colored eggs, some dyed with plant materials in soft shades of natural hues and intended to be eaten; others inscribed with Runes or the intricate and powerful patterns of the Pysanky, intended to be kept as charms or amulets. On the altar a plate of round cakes bearing the solar cross, or cakes formed in the shape of a basket containing eggs might await the blessing, and become part of a feast following the ritual. The Lady might be represented on the altar at this rite by a figure of a rabbit. It might even be made of white chocolate.

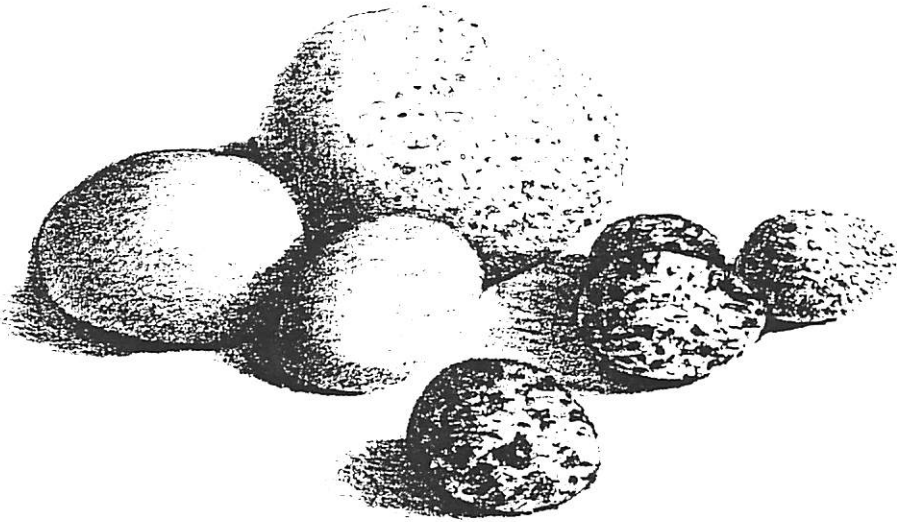
In other times, Sabbat rituals were followed by feasting. Today, some covens have potluck suppers following their rites. In any case, there are some foods that are traditionally associated with certain Sabbats. The traditional Easter ham, whether fresh or smoked, is probably just as Pagan in its origins as colored eggs, hot cross buns and Eostre bunnies. Among the ancient Celts, warriors after a battle celebrated by feasting on roast boar, competing among themselves to see who earned the "hero's portion." Archaeologists are uncertain as to what exactly the hero's portion was. Obviously, it was something a pig had only one of—the head or the tail. As there is nothing to eat on the tail, and considering that right down to the seventeenth century, large pewter plates called chargers were produced to hold the hog's head during holiday feasts, the head is probably the hero's portion. Especially since the Celts also believed that the head was the seat of the spirit, and that the boar or sow was sacred to the Goddess.

Among Germanic people, it was believed that those who died in battle were taken to Valhalla by the Valkeries to feast each night on a magickal sow that was reborn each morning. The resurrection of the pig at sunrise certainly suggests a connection to the Vernal Equinox, one that is confirmed by the tradition of the Easter ham.

When the feasting is finished, and the ham and the hard boiled eggs, the babka and the kielbasa, the pane de Pasque, hot cross buns, pizza rustica and jelly beans have all been eaten, gather up the fragments of the colored eggshells and take them to a place where the river flows. Then toss the colored fragments into the flowing water, chanting words like:

*Rivers flow and grasses grow,
The Goddess has returned!*

Reflect for a few moments on the eggshells on their journey down stream to a river, the river to the ocean, to a misty Land of Faery far beyond.



Wild Bird Eggs

There is a wonderful Gypsy folktale from Eastern Europe that tells of a young girl who was very curious. One day she was eating an egg on the bank of a river. She left the eggshell on the river bank and watched to see what would happen. Eventually, a Witch came along. Finding the eggshell, the Witch intoned a magick word and the eggshell turned into a boat and the Witch sailed away. The young girl remembered the word and obtained another eggshell. She spoke the magick word, and instantly it too turned into a boat and the young girl sailed away. She returned with exotic flowers and rare fruits which she sold to her neighbors. Each night she sailed away and returned with some treasure, and she became quite wealthy. But, there was a jealous woman in the village who followed her one night. When the young girl returned, she left the boat on the river bank. As soon as she was out of sight, the jealous woman got into the boat. But she did not know the magick word so the boat would not budge. The woman cried out in anger, "In God's name—MOVE!" and the boat immediately turned back into an eggshell and sunk, with the woman inside.

On a remote island in the South Pacific a strange annual ritual had been performed for hundreds of years. Here, among rocks carved with strange figures, half bird, half human, the migratory frigate bird lays its eggs of the season. Each man competed in place of his shaven-headed master. The master of the man who found the first egg ruled the island for one year. Little is known about the Bird-Man Cult. Its rituals were

ANCIENT WAYS









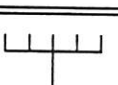

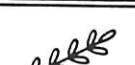
The outer leaves of red cabbage will color eggs an unbelievable robin's egg blue, if boiled with eggs and a tablespoon of vinegar. Allow the pot to cool for an hour after boiling, then drain the liquid and allow the eggs to stand in it overnight. The incredible color is worth the extra effort, but handle these eggs carefully because the dye is easily scratched off.

The magick of naturally dyed eggs can be greatly enhanced by inscribing them with magickally potent Runes and symbols. This can be accomplished in several ways. The simplest, of course, is to write signs and symbols on the egg with pen and ink, or even a magic marker (pardon the pun). A more natural way that works well on dark eggs—those dyed a deep rust with onion skin—is to inscribe them with a pen dipped in lemon juice or bleach, blotting as you go. This removes the color, leaving the Runes and the symbols white. Some natural inks are the juice of black walnut hulls, the juice of pokeberries, or the yellow-orange juice of celandine stems. The stems can be used as marking pens.

NATURAL DYES

COLOR	HERB	TYPE OF MAGIC	RUNE
GREEN	COLTS-FOOT BRACKEN	GROWTH PROSPERITY	ƒ
YELLOW GREEN	CARROT TOPS	FERTILITY NEW BEGINNING	ᚢ OR ᚦ
YELLOW	TURMERIC	SUN, ENERGY VITALITY	ᚔ
ORANGE	ONION SKIN	SUN, ENERGY, VITALITY	ᚔ
RUST	ONION SKIN	STRENGTH	ᚏ
RED	MADDER ROOT COCHINEAL	SACRED EGGS	⊕ OR ᚔ OR ✨
PINK	MADDER ROOT COCHINEAL	LOVE AFFECTION	✕
BLUE	BLUEBERRIES	PROTECTION	ᚢ OR ᚦ
BRIGHT BLUE	RED CABBAGE LEAVES	SPIRIT SKY FATHER	ᚠ OR ᚡ OR ƒ

SOME TRADITIONAL UKRAINIAN EGG DESIGNS

	RAM'S HORNS	FERTILITY GOD
	TRIANGLE	THE GODDESS
	8-POINTED STAR	THE SUN GOD
	SOLAR CROSS	UNITY
	DEER	PROSPERITY & FERTILITY
	MEANDER	FIRE OR WATER
	MEANDER	WATER
	SUN WHEEL	THE SUN GOD
	RAKE	AGRICULTURE
	WOLVES' TEETH	STRENGTH & WISDOM
	PUSSY WILLOW	SPRING



BIRD
THE BIRD GODDESS



OAK TREE
THE GOD



ROOSTER
THE SUN GOD



ENCIRCLING BANDS
THE ETERNAL CYCLE OF BIRTH, DEATH & REBIRTH