

Yule (December 20-23)

Winter Solstice is the longest night and shortest day of the year. In the turning of the Wheel, the lowest ebb of light means light's returning, and Yule is the return of the sun by the Goddess' rebirth. The idea and theme were taken over by Christianity for its nativity of Christ, but the original idea was wiccan and female, and most sun gods were also originally sun Goddesses. Yule celebrates the birth of the sun child — i.e., Persephone in Greece — whose rebirth brings back the springtime. In nonfeminist wicca, the Yule child is male, and the cycle of death and rebirth is focused on the god. Out of the darkest time of winter comes the promise of spring warmth to come.

Yule rituals re-enact the return of the Goddess and the return of warmth and light. They are essentially rituals of being born and reborn, of the renewal of hope and promise. As rituals, they are quite similar to New Moons, with the same theme of beginnings. The experience of nothingness, of death, is changed to the experience of new Be-ing, where everything is wonderful and possible. Women bring forth life at Yule, and bring forth new ideas, plans for the birthing year. The tarot cards that represent the Sabbat are the Aces, the very earliest starts of projects and endeavors of all sorts. Many women rest in the positive darkness of Yule until the awakening of Candlemas, letting ideas germinate in the underground labyrinth of the dark inner mind. This is a time of hibernation, and of emerging from the womb.

Sun Goddesses of Yule include: Amaterasu (Japan), Igachindvo (Native America), Sunne (Scandinavia), Lucia (Sweden), Persephone or Kore (Greece), Befana (Italy), Perchta or Bertha (Germany), Rhiannon (Wales), Grianne (Ireland), Unelanuhi (Native America), Isis (Egypt), Tonantzin (Mexico), Akewa (Argentina), Arinna (Anatolia), Coatlique (South America), and Sun Woman (Australia). Archeologist Patricia Monaghan reports that many moon Goddesses, such as Hathor in Egypt, were originally sun Goddesses, and that the idea of a sun god is a late one in most cultures. Fire Goddesses like Pele (Polynesia), Oya (Africa), and Fuji (Japan) are also included as Goddesses for Yule.

Decorate the altar in red, for the return of light and warmth at

Winter Solstice. Use red candles, and a lot of them, the more brightly burning the merrier. Use greens and evergreens on the altar, too; their never-shedding leaves are symbols of rebirth and eternal life. Many cultures have been incorporated into western Christmas decorations, and most of the customs came from wicca. Pine boughs, evergreen trees, holly, poinsettias and mistletoe are quite proper to decorate the altar and room for women's Yule rituals. Holiday foods from many cultures are also the foods to use for Yule; put a candy cane on the altar. Red, dark green and white are Winter Solstice colors.

Yule — A Ritual of Rebirth

The ritual that follows below is a group ritual that is easily adapted for use alone. It is also a good ritual to try for the New or Waxing Moon. Decorate the room and altar for the season, with evergreens, holly and pine boughs, even a decorated fir tree. Place lots of candles on the altar, red ones, and put them at the corners/directions of the room if they are safe there. Use a holiday angel draped in white for an altar Goddess image, or even an image of Mary, who after all, was a Goddess (probably derived from Isis). On the altar are an unlit red, white, and black candle. The whole altar may be dark, candles lit within the ritual, for good effect. Use bells when invoking the Goddesses of the elements and spirit. Yule is a great time for a potluck after the ritual; bring all the holiday foods of every culture, from Chanukah to Kwanza — they are all feasts of returning light.

Need

Candles — Lots of red ones, and red, white, and black tapers for the altar.

Incense — Pine for protection and fertility, cedar for purification, or sweetgrass to call the spirits. Or use sprinkling, or stroke auras with a fir branch.

Solstice Invocation — Use the one below or choose another.

Evergreens, holly, pine boughs on the altar, images of the sun Goddess in white, icicles, and other seasonal things.

Drum — (Optional.) Use bells in invoking the elements and spirit.

Oils for Self-blessing/mirror.

Potluck dinner contributions, for after the ritual.

Matches to light candles and incense, charcoal block for loose

incense, circle-casting wand.

The women enter the circle by a birth canal, but cast the circle after everyone is inside. The high priestess and another woman stand at the door of the room, arms held high to make an arch, holding hands. As each woman enters, the women at the door lower their arms around her and say:

"From woman you were born into this world; from women you are born into this circle. Blessed be."¹

They lift their arms and the woman passes into the decorated room, joining the lengthening chain of women welcomers. The chain lengthens until all of the women are inside the room and the last woman to enter passes through several pairs of loving arms. When all the women are inside, the pairs separate and the circle is formed.

Outline

Candles are unlit, or lit only at the directions and center. Tapers in red, black, and white on the altar are dark.

Purify — With incense smoke, or by sprinkling or stroking auras.

Cast Circle/Invoke sun Goddesses for the elements and spirit.

Earth — Tonantzin, Sun Goddess, Mother of Mexico.

Air — Befana, who brings gifts to children on Twelfth Night.

Fire — Amaterasu Omikami, Sun Goddess of Japan. Lady of the bright mirror.

Water — Unelanuhi, Sun Goddess of the Hopi, divider to time.

Spirit — Isis of Africa and Egypt, who wears the sun in her hair as a crown.

Read "The Charge of the Goddess."

Invocation — Use the following invocation and poem, or choose others. The high priestess says:

"We are here to celebrate Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year. This is the time of women's rebirth from darkness, of the Goddess's rebirth. Light comes from darkness, growth from barrenness, and spring from the depths of winter. Persephone leaves Hecate in the underworld and is reborn to Demeter. Yemaya creates the world anew again from her fertile womb. Women are reborn, and new. We are here to bring light to the world.

Yule Poem

birthwatch night of sun
from darkness light
west becomes the east
freezing becomes fire
Goddess Mother Moon
she births the sun
she births the earth
she labors for
the sea and sky
death is granted life
so mote it be

circle closes
circle opens
and the oak fire strikes
bright the earth and sun
bright the newborn sea
bright the infant stars
her glowing earth
winter set aside
with new year naming
"everything she touches changes"²
as above us so below.

Meditation — Lead the group in a meditation on change, from the old to the new. Experience nothingness in the womb, experience birth (without pain), be a child, growing up, adult, growing old, experience death peacefully, and be back in the womb and reborn again. Grow up to now, then return to the circle.

Body of ritual — At the end of the meditation above, the high priestess goes to each woman and awakens her to life. She says, "It's a girl! Look it's a girl!" helps her to sit up, then goes on to the next woman in the circle.³ When each is "born" the women welcome each other to the world by singing each woman's name in turn:

(Name) be well, (Name) be well,
All manner of things shall be well. (by Z. Budapest)

Or sing "Happy Birthday" to each woman, using her name.

Go around the circle, asking each woman what she saw and felt in the meditation and "birthing," and when her name was sung.

Go around the circle three times for three wishes. Move clockwise. Each woman makes a wish to Hecate to affirm *something ending*. After they all speak, the black candle is lit. The second wish is to Persephone, for *something beginning*; then light the white candle. The third wish is to Demeter, to affirm a *goal*, and as the women speak, all the extra red candles on the altar are lit. The altar and room are bright with light and promise now.

Raise the cone of power — Use humming or drums. (Drumming is also good as the women enter the ritual room, and during the meditation and "birthing," if it is a soft, steady heartbeat. Drumming to raise power is stronger and louder, but still controlled for this ritual). Direct the cone toward the women's growth in the waxing of the year.

Ground — Send the excess energy to the earth for healing.

Self-blessing — Use pine-scent oils and the mirror.

Open Circle.

Ground again/Group hug.

Potluck dinner — With or without gift-giving for the season.

I couldn't find where this came from. I found "The Wheel of the Year", but the chapters and pages are different.