

Celebrating Lammas



Information
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Celebrations of Lammas

Lammas is one of those holidays between the equinoxes and the solstices, that divide the year into quarters. Unlike the solar (and astrologically determined) equinoxes and solstices, the quarter days tend to be agricultural markers. Lammas marks the first harvest.

The word **Lammas** comes from the Anglo Saxon Hlaf-mass or Loaf-mass. It's my favorite way of designating this holiday because it's the most transparent.

Lughnasa is the Celtic term for this holiday, a festival honoring Lugh, the Sun god of pagan mythology who is slipping into darkness.

Other related festivals include

- ❖ the Catholic holiday of Transfiguration
- ❖ the ancient Greek festival of Hecate-Artemis
- ❖ which the Romans turned into the *Nemoralia*
- ❖ and the Catholics into The Assumption (also known as Mary of the Harvest)
- ❖ perhaps St Lawrence
- ❖ the Greek New Year, the *Drimes*
- ❖ the Italian holiday of *Ferragosto*

In the pages that follow, you will find descriptions of these holidays, their history and relationship to Lammas.

I once had a phone conversation with someone who thought I was talking about llamas when I was talking about Lammas. I've always wanted to find a way to make llamas part of Lammas.



The Quarter Days

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the quarter days are "the four days fixed by custom as marking off the quarters of the year, on which tenancy of houses usually begins and ends, and the payment of rent and other quarterly charges falls due." Both Maire MacNeill and the OED make a distinction between the English and Scottish (Celtic) quarter days (sometimes the English call the Scottish quarter days cross-quarter-days, and vice versa):

Celtic/Scottish

Imbolc/Candlemas (Feb 1)

Beltane/Whitsun (May 1)

Lughnasa/Lammas (Aug 1)

Halloween/Samhain (Nov 1)

Martinmas (Nov 11)

English

Lady Day (Mar 25)

Midsummer/St John (June 24)

Michaelmas (Sep 29)

Christmas (Dec 24)

The English quarter days are closely aligned with the equinoxes and solstices (although they have been shifted slightly to fall on the nearest Church holidays). The equinoxes and the solstices are astronomically determined, based on when the sun moves into a particular zodiac sign, which is why they slip around (over a 3 day period) from year to year. By choosing the closest church holiday, the quarter days became fixed on the same date each year, more convenient for planning.

The Celtic or Scottish quarter days are related to agricultural phenomenon rather than the movements of the sun. Feb 1st (Candlemas/Imbolc) is the time when branches bud and bulbs poke through the soil (at least here in the Pacific Northwest where our seasons correspond quite nicely with the old Celtic seasons). May 1 (May Day or Beltane) is the time when the May tree flowers and the flowers begin their dance of attraction. August 1 (Lammas or Lughnasad) is the time of the first harvest, when the grain is cut. And November 1 (Halloween or Samhain) is the last harvest, the end of the agricultural year and the start of the dark time of hibernation.

In America, we tend to think of the equinoxes and solstices as the start of each season but the old British names for the holidays (for instance Midsummer on June 24) suggest an older understanding in which they mark the midpoint of each season. The Celtic quarter days are then the starting dates for each season. This was certainly the way the Celts looked at it. They thought of Samhain (Nov 1) as the start of winter, which was also the start of their year, and Beltane (May 1) as the start of summer, when the flocks were driven out to their summer pastures.

The quarter days have always been seen as significant moments in time. They liminal times, like gateways between the seasons, sometimes viewed as auspicious and sometimes as dangerous.

In Celtic lands, these quarter days were celebrated with great assemblies, like the Teltown Fair (on August 1). On these occasions, people gathered for religious ceremonies, judicial proceedings, marriages and fairs, games and races. Great bonfires are associated with most of the Celtic quarter days; often fires were rekindled. Protection rites were also performed: Bridget's crosses were made for Imbolc, special bannocks crumbled in the corners of barns on Lughnasa.

It was unlucky on quarter days to give away anything (just as taking anything out of the house on New Year's Day brings bad luck) so too, giving away fire (in the form of kindling or ember) or milk or rennet might mean the household would go without in the coming season. This ill luck applied to the Monday after the Quarter Day as well.

To prevent your cows from being bewitched, draw water from the well before sunrise, pour it into a pail over a silver coin and give the "silvered" water to your animals to drink. I like this idea of silvered water for protection--perhaps you could use this on your house plants, your domestic animals and yourself.

*The first Monday of the Quarter,
Take care that luck leave not thy dwelling.*

Quarter days were also good days for divination. On the island of Lewis, girls noted the name of the first man they met on a quarter day, since he would have the same last name as their future spouse. The quarter days were considered lucky for getting married, setting out on a journey or starting a new project.

According to MacNeill, special bannocks were made on each of the Quarter Days: a large one for the family and smaller ones for each individual. People ate them outdoors and threw a piece over each shoulder, saying: "Here to thee, wolf, spare my sheep; there to thee, fox, spare my lambs; here to thee, eagle, spare my goats; there to thee, raven, spare my kids; her to thee, martin, spare my fowls; there to thee, harrier, spare my chickens."

Lammas



As early as 921, the Anglo Saxon Chronicle mentions "the feast of first fruits," held on August 1st. On this day, people reaped the first grains and baked them into loaves which were taken to church to be blessed, thus the name "Hlaef-mass" or Loaf-mass. A book of Anglo-Saxon charms provides an explanation of what to do with the loaf once it's blessed: it should be broken into four pieces and crumbled in each corner of the barn to make it safe for the grain that will be stored there.

August 1st was also sometimes called the Gule of August. Unfortunately no one is quite sure what Gule means. It may be derived from the Welsh word *gwyl* meaning feast (the Welsh called August 1st, *gwyl aust*, the feast of August). It may also derive from the same word as Yule, meaning a time of rejoicing in August. The Italians have a similar concept in Ferragosto (which simply means the festival of August and extends throughout this month when most businesses are closed and everyone is on vacation).

According to Hole, August 1st is the day when the Lammas Lands, those common lands lent to individuals during the summer, are returned to community use.

Despite the fact that this is a Anglo-Saxon holiday, most of the Lammas lore comes from the Scottish highlands, which suggests that the Anglo-Saxon name was simply being applied to a Celtic holiday. The Scottish highlanders performed protection rites on August first. These included putting rowan crosses over doors (a nice reflection, halfway around the year, of the plaited crosses put above doors on Imbolc). These were probably like the amulets described by MacNeill, found in the northeast of Scotland until 1885: two rowan twigs tied together crosswise with red thread.

Alexander Carmichael records a corn-reaping ritual from Scotland, that might well have been performed on Lammas. The father of the family takes his sickle, faces the sun and cuts a handful of corn. Then he holds it up and whirls it around his head, three times, sunwise, praising the god of the harvest, for giving them corn and bread, food and flocks, wool and clothing, health and strength, peace and plenty. In Scotland, a special small cheese was made from the curds of Lammas Day milk and given to the children in the family for luck and good-will. Curds and butter were traditional foods for Lammas Day.

Ronald Hutton (who is a folkloric stickler) also doesn't see a connection between St Mary's Feast in Harvest (celebrated in the Hebrides on August 15th) and Lughnasa but the emphasis on grain, the harvest and protection seem obvious to me.

According to an Old Statistical Account from the Parish of Eskdalemuir in Scotland in 1794 (quoted by Kightly), it was customary at the Lammas Fair for a couple to make a pledge to live together until the same time next year.

This was called Hand-fasting, or hand-in-fist. If they were pleased with each other, then they continued together for life: if not, they separated, and were free to make another choice.

Lughnasadh

*Lughnasa, made known its dues,
In each distant year:
Tasting every famous fruit,
Food of herbs at Lughnasa.*

K Meyer, *Hibernica Minor*

Since the Celtic year begins with Samhain (November 1st), the holiday falling on August 1st is the last of the four festivals which mark the quarters of the Celtic year. Lughnasa (pronounced loonasah) was the end of summer, and beginning of autumn. One source calls it "the day all fruits ripen." It was celebrated as the beginning of the harvest, and also as an assembly in honor of the god Lugh (*nasad* means assembly).

Maire McNeill's book *The Festival of Lughnasa* is the most comprehensive source for information about this festival. She looked for clues about the origins of the holiday in ancient Irish literature, antiquarian journals, accounts written by folklorists and responses to a survey administered in Ireland in 1942.

The date of this holiday was more slippery than most of the quarter days. It was sometimes celebrated on the last Sunday of July and sometimes on the first Sunday of August, much less often on August 1st. McNeill attributes this to the communal nature of the festival which made it easier for people to meet on a weekend than on a fixed date.

There is one scanty bit of evidence that this may at one time have been a lunar festival. There was a great feast of the gods on the thirteenth day of Rivros, according to the Celtic stone calendar found at Coligny. This would be equivalent to the full moon of August (which ties this festival to the great goddess festivals in my mind). One of the tales of Lugh records that he sat on the throne of Nuadu for 13 days (which might have been the period between the new moon and the full moon).

This holiday has many names, including an older one, Bron Trogain, sometimes translated as "the wrath of Trogan" but also as "earth sorrows under her fruits." Other names refer to customs associated with the holiday like Garland Sunday, Garlic Sunday, Black Crom's Sunday, the Last Sunday of Summer, the First Sunday of Autumn, and Bilberry Sunday.

A folklorist, Thomas O'Connor, explaining the way Garland Sunday was celebrated in County Mayo explains the garlands as "made from the stalks of corn" and worn in honor of Ceres. MacNeill finds the reference to Ceres dubious (perhaps imposed upon the Irish celebration by a scholar) but I like the way it connects Lughnasadh with the Harvest Goddess. In other places, the garlands refer to flowers which are gathered and left atop mountaintops, along with other offerings such as wheat. At Gainmhe in County Donegal, everyone wears a flower going up hill and at the summit all the flowers are put into a hole and covered over, as a sign that summer is over.

Climbing a mountain is one of the most characteristic aspects of Lughnasad. All over Ireland, people climb mountains, especially on the Sunday before and after Lammas, usually picking bilberries as they go, thus giving rise to the popular name of Bilberry Sunday. Bilberries (also known as whortle-berries and blaeberrys) are the small, dark-blue berries of the *vaccinium myrtillus* a hardy shrub that grow on heaths and sunny moors in Great Britain and Northern Europe. They are one of the first berries to ripen. In some places, boys thread the berries on grass stalks and make bracelets of them for the girls of their choice. In Cashel Plantin' in County Armagh, these strung berries were brought home as presents and kept around the house for luck.

Since many scholars believe Lugh was a sun-god, it makes sense that people would climb mountains and leave offerings for him in high places. But some of the Irish folks surveyed by MacNeill said the offerings were left for the fairies, who would be extraordinarily active on quarter days. MacNeill believes the practice of standing on a peak overlooking the landscape, keep alive a passion for the land and its history.

The offering of the first fruits to God harkens back to God's command to Moses in Leviticus 23:9-14 where he asks the children of Israel to reap corn and bring sheaves of ears, the first fruits of the harvest to the priest who will lift it up before the Lord. (Indeed the father of the household performs a similar ritual in Scotland on the Feast of Mary of the Harvest.) "You shall not eat either bread, or parched corn, or frumenty of the harvest, until the day that you shall offer thereof to your God." In this passage, a lamb is also killed as an offering, and there are a few references in Ireland to the killing of sheep on this day. Uurlin mentions the blessing of a live lamb at the Lammas Mass in York Minster.

In Ireland, Lughnasa was the first date on which it was acceptable to eat the new potatoes, the main subsistence crop (in more ancient times, the first fruit of the harvest would have been grain). The days before this were often times of scarcity, reflected in the phrase, "The Bitter Six Weeks," for the period between Midsummer and Lughnasa. July was often known by the unflattering names of "Staggering Month," "the Hungry Month," "the Month of Shaking out the Bags," and the "Least Month." The farmers of Ballinrobe, County Mayo, said there were three things a good farmer should have left on Garlic Sunday: a stack of unthreshed oats, a stack of old turf, and a pit of old potatoes (thus showing his ability to properly allocate his resources).

Digging potatoes before August 1st was disgraceful and potatoes must always be dug on this day, even if not quite ready, to bring luck. The first potatoes were dug on Lammas, and the last on Halloween. New potatoes were usually served on Lammas Day, often times with bacon and cabbage, but in earlier times, probably with fowl or fish. Colcannon (a dish of potatoes, mixed with butter or milk and seasoned with garlic, onion or cabbage) was a traditional dish.

Throughout Ireland, people gather in open spaces, usually atop a mountain but sometimes besides a lake or pool to celebrate Lughnasad, with bilberry-picking, dancing, singing, games and sometimes horse-racing. The association with horses seems to be ancient, and goes back to the first recorded assemblies at Teltown and Carman. The famous horse fair in Lincolnshire, Brigg Fair, is held on August 5th and Muff Fair is a horse fair in County Cavan held on August 12th. In other places, horses were raced or sometimes made to swim. At Lough Owel, in County Westmeath, these two ideas were combined and a horse-race was held in the lake.

One of the most important Lughnasa assemblies was held in ancient Ireland at Teltown, a site associated in legend with Lugh (whose mother or wives were said to be buried there). Legends told of a great Queen Tailtu, widow of the defeated Fir Bolg chieftain, who married the king of the Tuatha de Danaan, cleared the plain of Teltown and died of her labors on the Calends of August. In 1007, the poet Cuan o'Lothchain wrote a poem describing the assembly at Tailtu which was recited in front of his patron, Maelsechlainn, who revived the gathering after a lapse of 80 years. The many stanzas tell about the fair and its rules, its displays, games, chariots, horse-racing and entertainments, the prohibition of disputes, fights, arrests, and the custom of keeping men and women separate (which makes it hard to know how Teltown marriages evolved). The poem says Ireland will always have song as long as the assembly is held; its purpose is to provide corn, milk, good weather and peace. Unfortunately the last record of a Teltown fair was in 1170.

There was also a famous assembly, the Oenach of Carman, held in Leinster. In 1040, a famous poem was written to celebrate that fair for Diamit mac Maelnambo. This assembly was held on the calends of August every third year and went for seven days. Each day was dedicated to different groups: 1) the saints 2) the king 3) the women of Leinster 4) the Leix and Forth (tribes that were vassal-allies of the Leinster kings) 5) the princes of the kingly families 6) the people generally and 7) the men of Ossory (who held their games on this day). As at Teltown, men and women were kept apart and elopements not allowed. This description gives a flavor, I think, of what it must have been like:

*Three busy markets on the ground,
A market of food, a market of live stock,
The great market of the Greek strangers
Where there is gold and fine raiment.
The slope of the horses, the slope of the cooking,
The slope of the women met for embroidery.*

MacNeill downplays the idea of Teltown marriages although she acknowledges obvious opportunity for romance and courting provided by gathering on mountain-tops for dancing and feasting. In some places, only the young folk gathered on Lammass (just as it was the young who went out into the woods on Beltane). But in the Irish rural tradition, harvest was not a marrying time, e.g. the saying "The sheaf that is bound in the harvest will be opened in the spring."

O'Donovan who was surveying the site of Teltown in 1836 first mentioned a Teltown marriage. He recorded a tradition that marriages were once celebrated in pagan times at a wall in the hollow of the Fair at Teltown. A number of young men went on the north side of a wall high enough so they could not see over and an equal number of young women on the south side. Each woman put her hand through the hole in the gate and a man took it. The couples thus united by blind chance were obligated to live together for a year and day and at that point, if not satisfied with the union, could obtain a deed of separation. The term "a Teltown marriage" came to mean a trial period of living together. A tenth century source also mentions marriages conducted at Teltown in term of bride-price and marriage contracts, suggesting more formal alliances, arranged and solemnized at the assembly.

Maire MacNeill wrote a 600+ page book about the festival of Lughnasa. I've given you just a taste of some of her research, focusing on the longest-lasting traditions of the offering of first-fruits and the communal meal of new potatoes and bilberries. Other features MacNeill derives from legends and customs include:

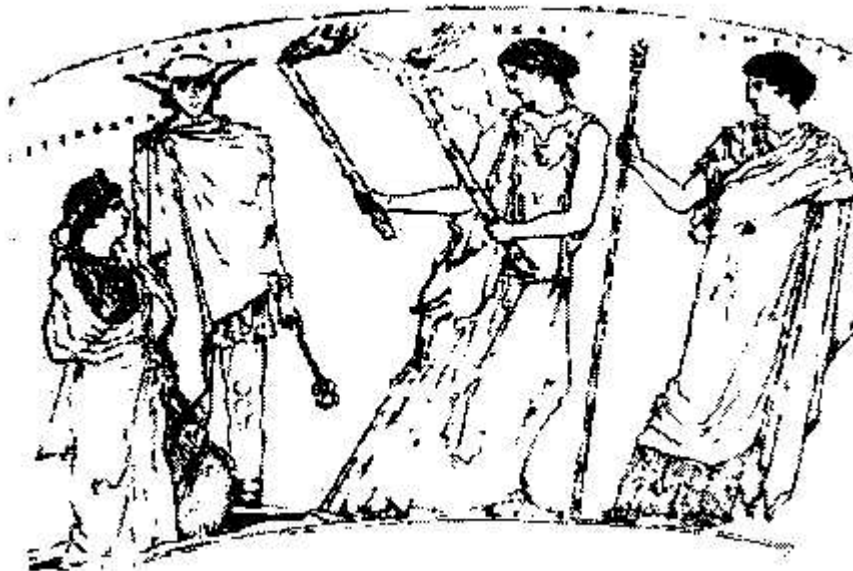
- ❖ *A sacrifice of a sacred bull, a feast of its flesh, with some ceremony involving its hide, and its replacement by a young bull;*
- ❖ *A ritual dance-play perhaps telling of a struggle for a goddess and a ritual fight;*
- ❖ *An installation of a head on top of the hill and a triumphing over it by an actor impersonating Lugh;*
- ❖ *Another play representing the confinement of Lugh of the monster blight or famine;*
- ❖ *A three-day celebration presided over the by the brilliant young god or his human representative.*

Artemis-Hecate

The Full Moon Festival of August is one of the oldest continuous holidays of the Goddess. At this turning point in the year, between the yang energy of summer solstice and the turning inward of the autumn, the Goddess comes into her own as protector, provider and mediator between the worlds.

Known by many names, at this time of the year she is revered as Artemis, Hecate and the Blessed Virgin Mary. All three are moon goddesses: Artemis as crescent moon, Hecate the dark moon and Mary is often depicted standing on the crescent moon. All three are invoked for protection of the grain and the fruit which is so vulnerable to storms in these weeks before harvest. And all three are mediators between the worlds: Artemis in her origin as Goddess of the shamanistic cultures of the North (see Geoffrey Ashe's book *Dawn Behind the Dawn*), Hecate as the one who stands at the crossroads between life and death, who goes down into the darkness of the Underworld with her two torches blazing, and Mary as the mediator between Earth and Heaven.

This feast of the goddess was first celebrated in Greece at the full moon of Metageitnion. In Erkhia, Artemis (as Hecate) was invoked, along with Kourotrophos, and beseeched for protection summer storms, which could flatten and destroy the crops. This image from a



Greek vase (ca 440 BCE) shows Hecate lighting the way with her torches as Persephone emerges from the Underworld to be reunited with her mother while Hermes looks on.



Nemoralia

In Rome, the Greek lunar festival honoring Artemis-Hecate was placed on the fixed solar calendar on August 13th and called the Nemoralia, also known as Diana's Feast of the Torches. Roman women made torchlight processions to the temples of Diana and Hecate or visited the groves of Diana with their hunting dogs leashed. Hair-washing was an important ritual activity.

Assumption / Our Lady of the Harvest

The story of Mary's Assumption derives from ancient stories called *the Obsequies of the Holy Virgin*, which were written in Syria at the beginning of the third century (or about 150 years after the event they relate). The story of "The Departure of My Lady Mary From this World" tells how Mary was lifted up into Heaven bodily, in other words, she did not die, but became immortal (a goddess). To commemorate this extraordinary event, the Apostles proclaimed a holiday in Her honor:

And the apostles also ordered that there should be a commemoration of the Blessed One on the thirteenth Ab, on account of the vines bearing bunches of grapes and on account of the trees bearing fruit, that clouds of hail, bearing stones of wrath, might not come, and the trees be broken, and the vines with their clusters

According to the story, Mary's Assumption took place at Ephesus, where she was living under the care of the apostle, John. Ephesus was one of the most famous sanctuaries of Artemis, the home of the famous statue of Artemis with many breasts, symbolizing the productive and nurturing powers of the earth. Mary, who is also well known for her nurturing and protecting qualities (she is so tender-hearted she cannot deny any sincere request for help), was clearly carrying this role.

Ab is the Jewish lunar month of Av and the thirteenth of Ab is therefore a full moon. So quite early on, long before Emperor Maurice proclaimed the Assumption a Church holiday during the seventh century, the apostles chose the full-moon feast honoring Artemis-Hecate as the time to honor Mary, as protector of the crops and mediator between worlds.

As early as the tenth century, the aroma of herbs and flowers was associated with Mary's victory over death, and people brought medicinal herbs and plants to church (periwinkle, verbena, thyme) to be incensed and blessed, bound into a sheaf and kept all year to ward off illness, disaster and death. In central Europe, it was called Our Lady's Herb Day. Gertrud Mueller Nelson's mother kept this holiday alive by taking her daughters on walks, gathering wild grasses, a custom I've adopted in Seattle. It's amazing how many kinds of wild grass grow on my city block.

In 19th century Scotland, this holiday was called Great St. Mary's Feast of the Harvest. It's probable that many of its customs were once those of Lammas Day. Women made a magical bannock (a kind of cake) on this day, from ears of new corn which were dried in the sun, husked by hand, ground with stones, kneading on a sheepskin and toasted over a fire made of magical rowan wood. Each member of the family ate a piece of the bannock, in order by age, and all walked sunwise around the fire. Then the embers were gathered into a pot and carried sunwise around the farm and field, while reciting this charm:

On the feast day of Mary the fragrant,
Mother of the Shepherd of the flocks,
I cut me a handful of the new corn,
I dried it gently in the sun,
I rubbed it sharply from the husk,
With mine own palms.

I ground it in a quern on Friday,
I baked it on a fan of sheepskin,
I toasted it to a fire of rowan,
And I shared it round my people.

I went sunways round my dwelling
In the name of Mother Mary
Who promised to preserve me
Who did protect me
Who will preserve me
In peace, in flocks, in righteousness of heart,
In labor, in love,
In wisdom, in mercy,
For the sake of Thy Passion.
Thou Christ of grace
Who till the day of my death
Wilt never forsake me!
Oh, till the day of my death
Wilt never forsake me!

Carmina Gadelica

In Armenia, the Sunday nearest the Assumption is called Blessing of the Grapes. None are eaten until this day when every churchgoer gets a cluster as she leaves church. Women named Mary host parties in vineyards or at their homes. The Syrian festival is characterized by offerings of new wheat and small three-cornered cakes.

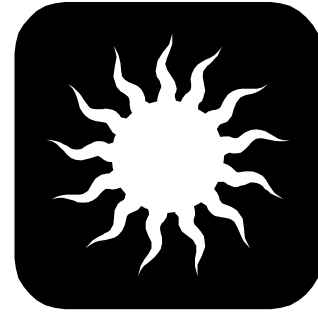
The Assumption marks the start of a time period called “Our Lady’s Thirty Days,” a time when animals and plants lose their harmful qualities and all food is wholesome, which runs until September 15 about the same time as the constellation Virgo. This period of benevolence coincides with the seven weeks following the full moon of the Jewish month of Av, which were called the Weeks of Comfort . The readings for these weeks are comforting, promising peace and prosperity. They also echo the sense of relief following the dangerous period of the Dog Days which begin around July 3rd and end around August 11th.



In 1950, when Pope Pius XII made Mary's Assumption, the belief that her soul and incorruptible body had been taken into heaven, dogma, there was great consternation in the Catholic church. How naïve! How medieval! But Carl Jung said that this proclamation was the most important religious event since the Reformation. He understood that the image of the feminine was coming back into the light, the Queen of Heaven was being acknowledged once again and given her rightful place, turning the Trinity into a quaternity, the symbol of wholeness. And in the years that followed, we’ve witnessed the truth of this insight.

The Transfiguration

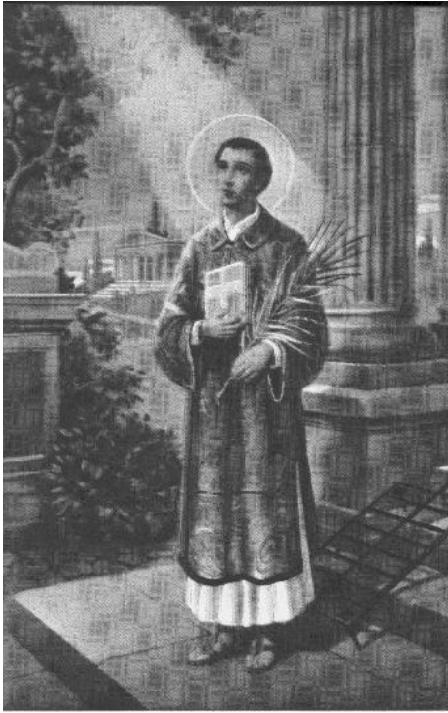
Despite being raised Catholic, I don't remember celebrating this rather obscure holiday which commemorates the vision of Christ in glory, shining like the sun and talking to Elijah and Moses, witnessed by Peter, James and John. Perhaps it also refers to the mysteries of the grain and grapes which occur at this time of the year.



According to Spicer, in Russia, this holiday is celebrated on August 19th (formerly August 6th) when people bring honey, pears, apples, plums and other fruits to the church to be blessed. In other places, the Transfiguration is observed on the 98th day after Easter.

Since I am not aware of any liturgical reason for the placing of this feast on this particular date, I assume it's another example of the Catholic Church replacing a pagan custom--processions to the tops of mountains to honor the sun--with a Christian interpretation.

Kathleen Norris writing in *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* about the blessing of the fields performed in spring (probably on his feast day of March 22), also mentions that the reverse blessing will be performed in early autumn. She doesn't mention the date but this ceremony might be performed on August 6th. The first fruits of the garden are carried to the church to be blessed, then the celebrants process to the kitchen and bless it, the utensils and the cooks. (Or perhaps since he's the patron saint of cooks, on St. Lawrence's Day).



St Lawrence

I never thought too much about St Lawrence's Day and why it occurs at this time of year until I started preparing this packet. Then I realized that perhaps this day was deliberately assigned to St Lawrence because of the way his myth echoes the themes that appear in other, more agricultural rituals of this season: sacrifice and extreme heat.

In 258 AD, during a time of persecution, he sold the sacred vessels of the church (which were supposed to be turned over to the Prefect of Rome) and gave the money as alms to the poor, thus becoming the **patron of the poor**. This so enraged the Prefect that he ordered the saint to be roasted to death on a gridiron. St. Lawrence is reputed to have said to the soldiers who were roasting him, "You can turn me over. This side is done now," which is how he became the **patron of cooks**. He also **protects against burns**.

That's the story. However, since the usual method of execution was beheading, this bizarre story of St Lawrence's martyrdom probably reflects a more ancient ritual, perhaps one honoring Sol Indiges (the indigenous sun god) who the Romans honored on August 9th.

In Italy on this day, people show their respect for him by eating cold meals, rather than grilling or roasting. In Marradi, they eat watermelon; in Imperia, an enormous dinner salad of tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet peppers, olives and anchovies. In Florence, the bakers and pastrycooks used to display their work in the plaza on this day.

The Perseid meteor showers are sometimes called "the fiery tears of St Lawrence."



Tisha B'Av

One of my favorite Jewish holidays, although I've never celebrated it. I like the emphasis on the heat of the summer, the feeling of dread, which links this with old superstitions about the dog days and their deleterious effects.

It was probably derived from a Babylonian festival, held on the ninth of Av, a day of dread and sorrow, the climax of a month-long celebration focused on torches and firewood. The Jews may have chosen this day to commemorate the burning of the Temple.

It is a day of deep mourning. Beginning at sundown, Jews don't eat or drink, wear leather, wash themselves, anoint their skin or hair with oils or perfume, or make love. The synagogue service is conducted like a funeral. The Ark of the Torah is draped in black, or left empty. There are no bright lights, just candles, and in some Sephardic and Eastern congregations, those are extinguished before the end of the service.

These proscriptions remind me of the customs associated with the Dog Days and the first three days of August in Greece (the *Drimes*). The Greeks also fast between August 1 and August 15th, which would (in the old lunar calendar) occur from the new to the full moon of Av.

The morning service the following day is also solemn, but in the afternoon the mood changes. In some communities, women put on perfume to welcome King Messiah. After sundown, the fast is broken, and Jews wash their faces and go outside to hallow the moon. It is said that in the days of the Messiah, the moon will be restored to equality with the sun.

Drimes

The whole month of August is a transitional month in Greece, as recording in popular sayings like: "August has come--the first step of winter" or "Winter begins in August, summer in March."

On the island of Lesbos, people build bonfires in crossroads (which seems to me to have something to do with Hecate, the goddess of crossroads, who's also pictured holding torches) and leap over them shouting "August ! Figs and walnuts!"

In other parts of Greece, people prepare for August by cleaning house and in fact, August 1st was once the New Year in Athens. People stay up all night having parties in the vineyards and make offerings to the spirits of the dead.

The first three days are called the *Drimes* and were considered somewhat dangerous (just as the Quarter Days in the British Isles were times when witches were particularly active). People avoided certain activities: chopping wood, washing hair, swimming in the sea and going out in the sun. These taboos remind me of the proscriptions of the Dog Days (which extend into August) which were probably designed to protect the body from the extremes of temperature. Similar taboos are observed around the Jewish feast of Tisha B'Av. In fact, the Greeks don't eat meat from August 1st until the east of the Assumption (which would have been the first full moon of the year).

Ferragosto

In Italy (as in New York City, I'm told) the whole month of August is a holiday--everyone is on vacation, businesses are closed. This sounds like a custom we should adopt. The name comes from *Feriae Augustae*, meaning the festival of Augustus, who declared a holiday on the first day of the month named after him.

Celebrating Lammas

The year is 1100. The date is August 1. The monks in the abbey at Gloucester are celebrating the holy-day of St Peter in Chains. One of the monks wakes from a strange dream in which God promises to strike down the wicked King who has abused the Holy Church. His superior, Abbot Serlo, on hearing of the dream sends a warning to the King, William the Red, who has oppressed all of England with taxes and disgusted many with his licentiousness and blasphemy. Red as he is called, receives the message the following day while preparing to indulge in one of his favorite sports, hunting, in the New Forest. Although there are no longer any people dwelling in the New Forest--they were all cleared out by Red's father, William the Conqueror--there are rumors that it's a hotbed of pagan activity. And August 2nd is an important pagan holy day. The Saxons call it Lammas, the Loaf-Mass. William the Red laughs at the warning from the monks and goes out hunting. A short time later, he is dead, struck in the chest by a stray arrow, and his brother, Henry, who was in the hunting-party, is riding hot-foot for Westminster and the Crown.

Now some people say that William the Red was a Lammas sacrifice, that having made a wasteland of the kingdom, he was killed by the people (or by the Gods) as a sacrifice to bring new life to the land. And some people say his brother Henry had him assassinated. And some people say that both versions are true.

This story comes to mind when I think of Lammas because I spent ten years researching a medieval novel set in the time of William the Red and Henry. But this tale of sacrifice and hunting, a dying King and a wasted land, embodies many of the dominant themes of Lammas.

The ancient Celts used to hold an assembly at this time honoring the God Lugh, who was at one time a King, and perhaps a sun god, by climbing mountains and ceremonially harvesting the first grain. On the Saxon holiday of Lammas, the first sheaf of wheat was ceremonially reaped, threshed, milled and baked into a loaf. The grain dies so that the people might live. Eating this bread, the bread of the Gods, gives us life. If all this sounds vaguely Christian, it is. In the sacrament of Communion, bread is blessed, becomes the body of God and is eaten to nourish the faithful. This Christian Mystery echoes the Pagan Mystery of the Grain God.

Grain has always been associated with Gods who are killed and dismembered and then resurrected from the Underworld by the goddess-gods like Tammuz, Osiris and Adonis. The story of Demeter and Persephone is another story about the cycle of death and rebirth associated with grain. Demeter, the fertility Goddess, will not allow anything to grow until she finds her daughter who has been carried off to the Underworld (like the seed which is harvested and entombed over the winter to provide life in Spring). The Eleusinian Mysteries culminated in the revelation of a single ear of corn, a symbol to the initiate of the cyclical nature of life, for the corn is both seed and fruit, promise and fulfillment.

You can adapt the themes of Lughnasa and Lammas to create your own ceremony by making an offering of the first fruits of harvest.

Honoring the Grain God or Goddess

Bake a loaf of bread on Lammas. If you've never made bread before, this is a good time to start. I've included several recipes from the simple to the complex in this packet. Honor the source of the flour as you work with it, remembering it was once a plant growing in a garden. In fact, you might want to go out and collect samples of wild grains as a centerpiece for your table. You might also buy wheat berries at the health food store and sprout them to incorporate into the bread. If you have a garden, add something you've harvested--herbs or onions or corn or seeds--to your bread. If you don't feel up to making wheat bread, make corn bread from a mix. Or gingerbread people. Or popcorn. What's most important is intention. All that is necessary to enter sacred time is awareness of the meaning of your actions.

Shape the dough in the figure of a man or woman and give your grain person a name. If he's a man, you could call him Lugh, the Sun-King, or John Barleycorn or the Pillsbury Dough Boy or Adonis or Tammuz or Osiris. Pauline Campanelli in *The Wheel of the Year* suggests names for female figures: She of the Corn, She of the Threshing Floor, She of the Seed, She of the Green Loaf (these come from the Cyclades where they are the names of fertility figures), Freya (the Anglo-Saxon and Norse fertility Goddess who is also called the Lady and the Giver of the Loaf), the Bride (Celtic) and Ziva or Siva (the Grain Goddess of the Ukraine, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia).

Feast

Like all holidays, Lammas calls for a feast. In Ireland, the traditional meal was of new potatoes, dug on Lughnasad, and often cooked with garlic and butter. Because this festival is usually celebrated outside, you might want to pack a picnic and go for a hike, finding a place where you have a view of the surrounding countryside. The Irish also pick bilberries on Lughnasad, so a blackberry-picking expedition might be in order. I've concentrated on traditional Lammas foods, but whatever is ripe and ready for the picking where you live should be the focus of your feast.

When you eat your dough figure, tear him or her apart with your fingers. You might want to start the feast with the Lord's Prayer, emphasizing the words: "Give us this day our daily bread." The next part of the ceremony is best done with others. Feed each other hunks of bread (or gingerbread people or popcorn), putting the food in the other person's mouth with words like "May you never go hungry," "May you always be nourished," or "Eat of the bread of life." Offer each other drinks of water or wine or mead with similar words. As if you were at a wake, make toasts to the passing summer, recalling the best moments of the year so far.

Food for Thought

Lammas is a festival of regrets and farewells, as well as a celebration of the harvest.

Regrets and Farewells: Think of the things you meant to do this summer or this year that are not coming to fruition. What is passing from your life?

What is over? Say good-bye to it. You might use flowers as visual symbols of your regrets and bury them in the ground or throw them into lakes or streams.



Harvest: What have you harvested this year? What seeds have you planted that are sprouting? Find a visual way to represent these, perhaps creating a decoration, like a wheat weaving for your house or altar which represents the harvest to you.

Preserves: This is also a good time for making preserves, either literally or symbolically. As you turn the summer's fruit into jams, jellies, granitas or liqueurs, think about the fruits that you have gathered this year and how you can hold on to them. How can you keep them sweet in the store of your memory?

Rituals

I don't like to suggest specific guidelines for rituals, perhaps because I learned how to create rituals from the Reclaiming Collective, in which every ritual is created on the spot, at the moment, by the group of people who will carry it through. This means that the themes and symbols which are important to the group will be incorporated into the ritual, and that the landscape itself--its geography and vegetation--will become an integral part.

Helen Farias used to sponsor an event called the Harvest Mysteries on her land outside of Bright Mountain. She would gather friends and assign them roles as various Celtic deities including Manaddan, Cerridwen, Taliesin, and Elen. Participants in the Mysteries, after a ritual blessing and solitary meditation, would walk a path through the woods and encounter these numinous beings who asked provoking questions. Afterwards, people would sleep in the meadow in sleeping bags, watching the Perseid meteor showers overhead.

I hope that you will find many ideas in the pages of this packet that you can incorporate into your ritual, whether you observe Lammas alone, with your family, or with a group. Blessings of the first of the harvest.

Lammas Activities & Themes

Traditional

Climbing mountains

Assembling out doors, especially on mountains & near lakes & holy wells

Picking bilberries (blackberries where I live)

And threading them into bracelets (not quite sure how to do this)

Gathering flowers and burying them (to bury summer)

Dancing

Playing games & sports, especially those with two factions

Hand-fasting (temporary marriage for a period of one year)

Reaping the first grain

Gathering herbs

Digging the first potatoes

Baking bread

Eating a meal of the first fruits

Making cheese of the day's milk

Baking a special bannock

And crumbling it in the four corners of the barn (or house or garden)

Eating only cold foods (for St Lawrence)

Making an offering of first fruits (on a high place)

Killing a lamb

Racing horses, or encouraging horses to swim

Putting rowan crosses above the door

Waverly's suggestions:

Hiking

Weaving wheat

Making natural yeast

Making mead, metheglin, rose honey

Making lavender wands

Making granitas & liqueurs,

And other ways of preserving summer

Washing hair

Bathing in water scented with lemon balm

Going for a walk around your block and gathering wild grains

Identifying grains

Visiting llamas

Themes:

Blessing first fruits

Harvesting

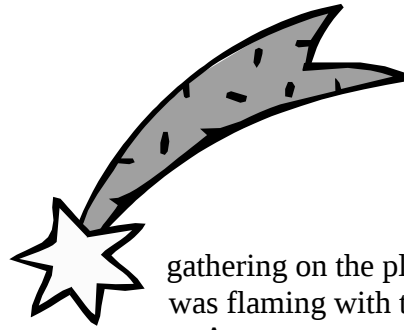
Asking protection (for the harvest)

Saying farewell to summer

The Night Sky of August

Perseid Meteor Showers

About the same time the ancient Celts were Moytura for the games of Lugh, the night sky was flaming with the meteor showers. These meteor showers which occur every August we now call the Perseids, because they emanate from the constellation named Perseus, the Greek hero who cut off the head of Medusa. Helen Farias speculates that the Celts might have called this same constellation Lugh after their own radiant hero god. Thus during his festival Lugh would be shooting off golden sparks, creating, if nothing else, a spectacular ancient fireworks display.



Gary Kronk, in his comet and meteor web site, says the first record of the Perseids comes from China in 36 AD where an annalist recorded "more than 100 meteors flew thither in the morning." The same meteor shower was recorded in Chinese, Japanese and Korean accounts from the eighth through the eleventh centuries. In the later Middle Ages the meteors were known as St Lawrence's Tears, because they fell so close to his holiday of August 10th. The name Perseids was first used in 1835 when a Belgian astronomer, Quetelet, noted that they originated from the constellation Perseus.

The best time to see the meteors is between local midnight and dawn. Local newspapers will usually tell you which night is expected to be the peak of the shower (usually around August 12 or 13). They are predominantly Northern Hemisphere meteors.

To view them find a dark site, away from city lights, and look at an unobstructed part of the sky. The meteors will streak overhead at a rate of approximately 40 per hour (the number varies depending on how close we are to the parent comet, Swift-Tuttle, whose dust makes up the meteor shower). The meteors are actually dust particles, some no larger than a grain of sand, burning up as they enter the earth's atmosphere. They appear so bright because they are moving so rapidly (132,000 miles per hour). The Perseids are well known for having long tails. If you trace these back, you will see they originate in the constellation Perseus.

Virgo

Depictions of the constellation Virgo show a woman holding an ear of wheat in one hand and a palm branch in the other. In the sky, she is flanked by two serpents (Hydra and Ophiuchus), so it's probable the famous relief of Demeter is an image of Virgo rising.



The constellation was known by many other names including Persephone, Demeter and Ceres (the confusion of these names is not surprising since Demeter and her daughter were sometimes called the Two Goddesses and seen as doubles of each other). She was also known as Arista, Harvest or Arista Puella, the Maiden of the Harvest.

The brightest star in the constellation is Spica, ear of corn, which is found by following the curve of the Dipper through Arcturus (the first bright star after dusk, overhead); at the end of the arc on the southern horizon is Spica.

In August, the constellation sets in the west just after sunset. Helen Farias writes:

Though invisible during the sunny hours, she peers down upon the earth during the hot days of August First Fruits, showing herself in the cool evening, slipping quietly into the western sea.

Lammas Foods

Autumn is the time of the transformation mysteries, the time for turning grain into bread, barley into beer, grapes into wine. Time for celebrating the changes of the cycle which enable us to enjoy the fruits of the field and the vine during the year ahead.



In this packet I've focused on recipes for various breads (since Lammas means "loaf-mass"), plus instructions on creating your own natural yeast, a starter which will breathe, require tending and combine with inert flour to produce an entirely different substance.

For intoxicating beverages, I've included instructions for making mead or methlegyn, ancient honey drinks that were probably the first fermented beverages. You will find recipes for beer-making and wine in the Autumn Equinox (Harvest) packet where they seemed more appropriate.

However, with the idea that preserving summer is part of the task of Lammas, I've included in this packet instructions for making granitas and liqueurs from summer fruits and herbs.

Bread for Lammas

Bread is merely flour, water, yeast and salt as the world is merely earth, water, fire, and air. These four elemental ingredients--grain from the fields, water from rivers and mountain streams, leavening from the wild yeasts of the air, and salt from the sea, have been combined since Roman days...

Bread in Italy, Carol Field

In her wonderful book on the breads of Italy, Carol Field includes a number of Italian proverbs to show how fundamental bread is to the Italian soul:

<i>Buono come il pane</i>	As good as bread (a big-hearted, down-to-earth person)
<i>Senza il pane tutto diventa organo</i>	Without bread, everyone is an orphan
<i>I miei parenti son I soldi in tasca e il pane nella casa</i>	My family is money in my pocket and bread at home
<i>Issu este unu cantu de pane</i>	He is a piece of bread (said of someone who can be trusted)
<i>Uscire di pane duro</i>	To leave behind hard bread (to make a change for the good)
<i>Dire pane al pane e vino al vino</i>	To call bread bread and wine wine (to call a spade a spade)
<i>Trovar pane per i proprio denti</i>	To find bread for one's very teeth (to meet one's match)
<i>Se non e zuppa e pan bagnato</i>	If it isn't soup, it's moistened bread (it's 6 of one, a half dozen of the other)
<i>Nutrirsi a pan bianco</i>	To eat white bread all the time (to live on easy street)
<i>Avere per un pezzo di pane</i>	To get it for a piece of bread (to get it cheap)
<i>Essere pan e cacio</i>	To be like bread and cheese with someone (to be thick as thieves)
<i>Distinguere pane dai sassi</i>	To know the difference between bread & rocks (to know what's what)
<i>Render pane per focaccia</i>	To give bread for focaccia (tit for tat)
<i>E tanto pane!</i>	It's so much bread (said upon seeing rain where there's real need of water)
<i>Il pan di casa stufa</i>	Homemade bread makes you fed up (grass is always greener)
<i>Riuscire meglio a pane che a farina</i>	To succeed more with the bread than with the flour (to have more success than expected)
<i>Non e pane per I suoi denti</i>	It's not bread for his teeth (not his cup of tea)

There are many customs associated with bread in Italy, rituals that illustrate the sacred place it occupies. Even crumbs dropped on the floor are swept up and eaten, for anyone wasting bread will spend a year in Purgatory for every crumb. It is unlucky to put bread on the table upside down. And leaving a knife plunged into a loaf of bread is like leaving a knife in the flesh of the Lord. Bakers make the sign of the cross over the bread oven and sometimes in the dough before baking; many people similarly bless the freshly baked loaf before taking a bite. Even the smell of bread is said to have healing power.

There are also rules about when it's appropriate to bake bread. Bread should never be baked when the furrows are open for sowing wheat, or the bread will mold. Bread should be cooked during the early morning so it swells with the rising of the sun. Some people say bread should be made when the moon is waxing, others only in the last quarter but never on the new moon or the bread will be bewitched. If you enter a house when bread is cooking, you must express a good wish, for instance, "May God protect you!" If the guest neglects this duty, the cook will shower him or her with flour to avoid bad luck.

Sometimes bread takes the role of an amulet. When Calabrians leave home, they take with them traditional rolls stamped with an image of the Madonna and blessed by a priest.

According to Field, the Romans learned to bake bread from the Greeks. Before that they ate *puls*, a mush of grain boiled in water, similar to polenta, although usually made out of millet or spelt (unlike polenta which is made out of corn).

The Greeks considered bread sacred; it was part of the ritual worship of Demeter and Persephone, the Grain Goddess and her daughter, also known as Kore (from the same root word as corn). Greeks following the Roman armies back to Rome in 170 BC brought the art of baking with them and Greek slaves tended the ovens in Roman bakeries.

By 25 BC, there were 329 public bakeries in Rome. Bakers leavened bread by using a bit of dough, from the baking of the day before, or by adding beer yeast, which they learned about from the Gauls and the Germans. They made saltless sponges which were called biga, as they still are today, by fermenting wheat flour with grape must, sprouted barley, or bran soaked in white wine.

Most bread was made from wheat, millet and rye. Loaves made with bran were fed to dogs and cattle ate oats.

Lammas Bread

This is Pauline Campanelli's recipe for Lammas Bread.

If you want to add sprouted wheat to the bread dough, soak the sprouts a few days before.

In a large baking bowl combine 2 cups of milk warm to the touch, two packages of baking yeast, one teaspoon salt, one-half cup of honey and one-fourth cup of dark brown sugar. Cover the bowl and set it aside in a warm place until it has doubled (about half an hour). Add to this mixture three tablespoons of softened butter and two cups of unbleached white flour, and stir until bubbly. This is the time to add the sprouted wheat, if you wish.

Then mix in one cup of rye flour and two cups of stone-ground wheat flour. With floured hands, turn this dough out onto a floured board and gradually knead in more unbleached white flour until the dough is smooth and elastic and no longer sticks to your fingers.

Place this dough in a greased bowl, turning it so that the dough is greased, then cover it with a clean cloth and keep it in a warm place to rise until it is doubled (about an hour). Then punch it down and divide it in half. Shape it into two round, slightly flattened balls and place on greased cookie sheets. Cover these and return to a warm place until they double again.

If you wish to bless them see the next page for bread blessings.

Beat a whole egg and a tablespoon of water together and brush this over the loaves. Bake them in a 300 degree oven for about an hour, or until they are don and sound hollow when tapped.

Blessings of the Bread

Carol Field quotes from Gavin Maxwell's book *The Ten Pains of Death*, in which he relates in Italy only the mother may knead the flour, salt, water and oil for homemade maccheroni, using a special board for making pasta and bread. She cuts a cross into the dough as she says:

By the grace of God, I see that you are now dough.

Waverly's charm for cutting the scones in scone mix into four quarters:

*By north and south,
And east and west,
These scones are blessed.*

Pauline Campanelli's charm for Lammas Bread, said after inscribing a pentagram on the top of the bread with her magical knife:

*I invoke thee beloved Spirit of the Grain
Be present in this Sacred Loaf.*



Beer Bread

Like the making of bread, the making of beer is also a transformation mystery of Autumn so it seems appropriate to use this recipe from the side of a Pyramid Ales container:

Form a well in 2-3/4 cups of self-rising flour. Add eight ounces of fresh Amber Wheat Beer. Add a couple tablespoons of honey and one fresh egg. Whip the beer, egg and honey briefly before blending completely into the flour. When moistened, place in a well-buttered loaf pan and bake at 375 degrees for approximately one hour, until lightly browned and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped.

Herb Soda Bread

This recipe from Diana Carey and Judy Large combines the herbal harvest of summer with the bread-making associated with Lammas for a nice transition into Autumn: I recommend substituting fresh herbs from your garden for the dried herbs mentioned in the recipe.

8 oz whole wheat flour
8 oz unbleached plain flour
pinch of salt
1 tsp baking powder
2 tsp cream of tartar
1 tsp honey or brown sugar
1/2 tsp dried marjoram
1/2 tsp dried basil
1/2 tsp dried thyme
2 oz soft margarine or butter
1/2 pint plain yogurt or sour milk

Place all the above ingredients, except the milk or yogurt, into a large mixing bowl. Rub the fat into the mixed dry ingredients until well blended. Now add the yogurt and stir to form a soft dough. Turn out onto a breadboard, knead lightly and shape into a round. Score the top of the bread in criss-cross fashion (perhaps using one of the bread blessings). Bake at 375 degrees for thirty minutes. When cooked, the bread should be well risen and sound hollow if tapped at the base.

You can also use seeds in this bread when the herbs in your garden get to the seed phase. Try substituting coriander, fennel, caraway or dill seeds for the herbs.

Panmarino, Rosemary Bread

Here's my favorite bread recipe from Carol Field's book, *The Italian Baker*. It is so simple that I can make it without any problem, yet the bread is stunning and flavorful. My favorite part of the process is foraging for the fresh rosemary that grows in the front yard of the apartment building across the street from mine, but I also have my eye on several other rosemary bushes in the neighborhood.

This recipe comes from a baker from Ferrara named Luciano Pancalde who invented this bread while trying to reproduce a bread served years ago to the d'Este family, rulers of Ferrara, which was described as a rosemary bread with a crust sparkling like diamonds. In his recipe, the top of the bread is slashed into a star and sprinkled with sea salt to create the sparkling effect.

Makes two round loaves. I've adapted the recipe slightly to make the portions work better with the sizes of packaged yeast available to me.

21 grams dry yeast (*or use natural yeast you've created--see next page)
3/4 cup warm water
3/4 cup milk at room temperature
1/4 cup olive oil
3 T finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 T salt
About 4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 t coarse sea salt

By Hand: Stir the yeast into the water in a large mixing bowl; let stand until creamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in the milk and oil. Combine the rosemary, salt and flour and stir into the yeast mixture in 3 or 4 additions. Stir until the dough comes together. Knead on a floured surface until velvety, elastic and smooth, 8 to 10 minutes. It should be somewhat moist and blistered.

By Mixer: This recipe is slightly large for the mixer (perhaps not as I've pared down the ingredients--you tell me if this is a problem--I always do it by hand) so you'll have to stop and push the dough down frequently while the mixer is kneading it. Stir the yeast into the water in a mixer bowl; let stand until creamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in the milk and oil with the paddle. Combine the rosemary, salt and flour and add to the yeast mixture. Mix until the flour is absorbed, 1 to 2 minutes. Change to the dough hook and knead on medium speed until velvety, elastic, smooth and somewhat moist, about 3 minutes. Finish kneading briefly by hand on a lightly floured surface.

By Processor: Make sure your processor can handle the volume of this dough. Even when done in 2 batches, there will be about 2 cups of flour plus liquid to be processed. If you have a large-capacity machine, use a dough blade. Stir the yeast into 1/4 cup warm water in a small bowl; let stand until creamy, about 10 minutes. Place the rosemary, salt and flour in a food processor fitted with the dough or steel blade and process briefly to mix and chop the rosemary. Stir the oil into the dissolved yeast. With the machine running, pour the yeast mixture, cold milk and 3/4 cup cold water in a steady stream through the feed tube and process until the dough gathers into a ball. Process 45 seconds longer to knead. Finish kneading by hand on a lightly floured surface until smooth, velvety, elastic and slightly moist, 2 to 3 minutes.

First Rise: Place the dough in an oiled bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled, about 1-1/2 hours.

Shaping and Second Rise: Gently punch the dough down on a lightly-floured surface but don't knead it. Cut the dough in half and shape each half into a round ball. Place the loaves on a lightly floured peel or a lightly oiled baking sheet, cover with a towel, and let rise 45 to 55 minutes (but not until truly doubled).

Baking: Heat the oven to 450 F. If you are using a baking stone, turn the oven on 30 minutes before baking and sprinkle the stone with cornmeal just before sliding the loaves onto it. Just before you put the loaves in the oven, slash the top of each loaf in an asterisk with a razor blade (I use a sharp knife but the lines aren't as crisp as they could be). (This is also a good time to bless the loaf.) Sprinkle half the sea salt into the cuts on each loaf. Bake 10 minutes, spraying 3 times with water. Reduce the heat to 400 F and bake 30 to 35 minutes longer. Cool completely on racks.

Natural Yeast

Carol Field provides instructions for creating natural yeast in *The Italian Baker*. She says that it is a splendid but complicated art, known as a "wild horse," since there's no way to tell how it will behave. The Romans used must from the wild grape as a source for wild yeast, but Field recommends mixing together thoroughly 1-1/2 cups of flour, 1 cup of warm water and a small portion of mashed overripe banana. Leave this mixture out on your kitchen counter to collect the yeasts of the air for a day or two, then stir in 2 cups each of flour and water. After three more similar infusions, you'll have natural yeast. She adds, "If you're lucky."

If you do succeed in making your own natural yeast, use it instead of commercial yeast in any recipe by substituting it for the amount of 20 to 35 percent of the weight of the flour. For instance, if a recipe calls for 4 cups of flour (500 grams), use 100 to 175 grams of the starter. Add it right before finishing the mixing of the dough, to produce a flavorful and aromatic loaf. Field says the bread will last longer and stay tastier than breads made with a single addition of yeast.

Ferragosto Dinner

Figs with Prosciutto
Baked Filet of Sole
Vegetables Giardiniera
Pears Helene

Helen Barolini in her book *Festa* suggests the menu above for Ferragosto. The figs, which are ripe at this time of year, are simply cut open and wrapped with prosciutto. The recipe she provides for sole has it baked simply in a sauce that combines onion, garlic, tomatoes and rosemary. And the Pears Helen is a complicated recipe which seems too much work for anyone during the heat of August. But I thought this lovely scramble of garden-fresh vegetables would be a perfect accompaniment to a freshly-baked loaf of Lammas Bread.

Vegetables Giardiniera

3 T unsalted butter
3 T olive oil
2 cups chopped onion
2 zucchini, cut in 1/4 inch slices
1 yellow summer squash, cut in 1/4 inch slives
1/2 cup chopped celery
2 green bell peppers, cut into rings
4 large basil leaves, chopped
3 large ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded and lightly chopped

Put the butter and oil in a large saucepan over moderate heat. When sizzling, add the onions. Cook, stirring, until they are translucent but not brown. Add the rest of the ingredients, cover and lower the heat to medium. Cook for 20 minutes, until the vegetables are tender but still crisp. Serve warm.

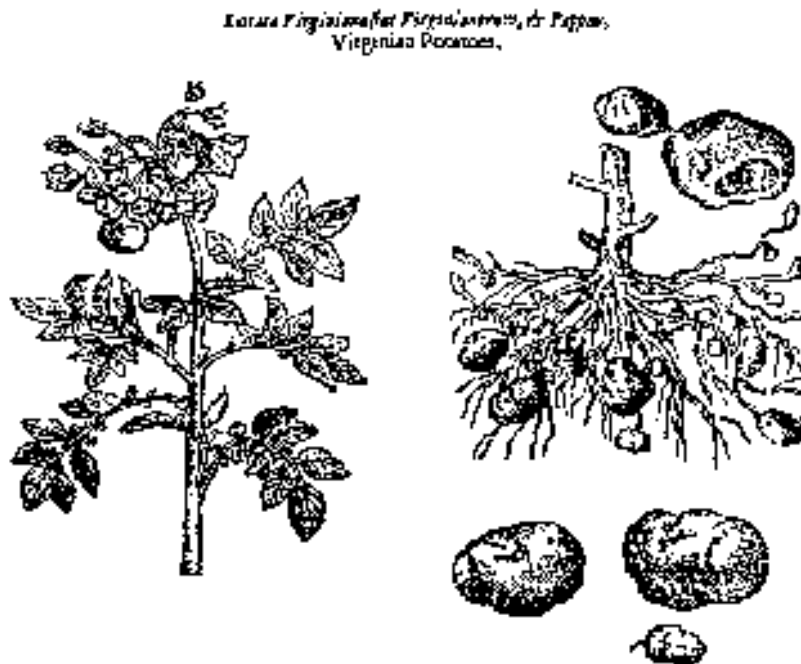
Colcannon

The traditional food served in Ireland on Lughnasad, when the first potatoes were dug and mixed with butter (or cream) and garlic (or onions). It was probably served with bacon (lamb or chicken for the more affluent), cabbage, and berries and cream for dessert.

The following recipe comes from the allaboutirish.com website:

1 medium head of cabbage (or equivalent amount of kale)
2 lb potatoes
2 medium leeks
1 cup milk
mace
ground black pepper
1/2 cup butter or margarine

Quarter and core the cabbage. Cover with water and boil until tender (about 12 to 15 minutes). Chop the cabbage when cool enough to handle. Clean and chop the leeks. Cover the leeks with milk and heat until almost boiling, then simmer until tender. Peel the potatoes and boil until tender. Mash or rice the potatoes. Stir in the leeks and milk, adding a bit more milk, if needed to achieve a smooth consistency. Add a small amount of mace and pepper to taste. Mix in the cabbage and butter.



Mead

One of the traditional foods of summer is honey, the food made by the bees from flower pollen. Rosemary Verey, writing in *The Countrywoman's Year*, notes that her bees made their first sortie on June 25th, St John's Day (perhaps why he is the patron saint of beekeepers).

Sometimes the full moon of June is called the Honey Moon or Mead Moon. Mead seems like the appropriate drink for the summer solstice so two years ago I went searching for recipes for mead and finally found one in *The Magic of Honey* by Dorothy Perlman.

Making mead was a ritual activity at one time. Perlman notes that astrologers were consulted to determine the proper time for making it and mead-makers were expected to refrain from sex during the time of the fermentation (which could take as long as 30 days). Perlman provides the recipe used by her grandmother:

My Grandmother's Mead

- 1 gallon water
- 4 pounds honey
- 6 cloves
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- juice and peel of 2 lemons

Boil combined ingredients slowly for 30 minutes. Strain into an earthenware crock, leaving room for expansion. After it cools, add a teaspoon of activated yeast for each gallon of liquid. The mead can be flavored with thyme, ginger, nutmeg, sweet marjoram or rosemary.

Since mead is a fermented beverage, be careful. It will continue to give off gas as long as the yeast is working, so don't cap it tightly or it may explode.

Metheglyn (Rose-Flavored Mead)

I first learned about metheglyn in one of my favorite historical novels, *The White Witch*, first published in 1958 and written by one of my favorite novelists, Elizabeth Goudge. It's the story of Froniga, a half-Gypsy woman who heals with herbs during the time of Cromwell. "Her religion was entirely individual, an astonishing mixture of Christianity, white witchcraft, Romany and fairy lore and quite sublime faith in her own powers." (Not a bad definition for anyone's religion, I think) Goudge also stuffs the novel full of delicious snippets of herblore and folk customs.

One of Froniga's herbal remedies is metheglyn. The OED notes that the word metheglyn comes from the Welsh *meddyglyn* which mean healing liquor and defines it as a medicinal variety of mead peculiar to Wales. Froniga is asked if she uses Queen Elizabeth's recipe for metheglyn; apparently this involves adding violets and gilliflowers, herbs and sweetbriar leaves to the honey and ale. Or does she simply tie a bag of cloves and mace to the tap hole of the barrel (so that they flavor the metheglyn as it is poured)?

A recipe from 1620 notes that boiling rosemary, hyssop, thyme, oregano or sage in the water you use to make metheglyn will improve it. Froniga uses sweetbriar roses and toilet water* in her recipe for metheglyn and damask roses when she makes melrosette. Apparently the difference between metheglyn and melrosette is that metheglyn is fermented and melrosette is not.

*Toilet water in Froniga's time would not have meant the same thing it does in ours. For a recipe for toilet water, probably similar to the one Froniga used, see the lemon balm pages.

In the Stillroom

One scene in *The White Witch* opens with Froniga in the stillroom at the manor, mixing up a herbal concoction to cheer up the lady of the house. Most large houses had a stillroom, a place set aside for distilling and preparing of medicines and cosmetics, cordials and conserves. All were prepared within the household, usually created by the lady of the house herself. The recipes were passed along from mother to daughter, from friend to friend.

Sir Kenelm Digby published a book in 1669 of recipes he collected from his many friends, including The Countess of Bullingbrook's White Metheglin, Sir John Arundel's White Meath, Scotch Ale from My Lady Holmbey, the Countess of Newport's Cherry Wine, a Syllabub Recipe from My Lady Middelsex and finally the Queen [Elizabeth]'s Barley-Cream. Sir Kenelm was interested in anything. He tells how to prepare plague-water, dress lampreys, make cheesecake and pickle an old fat goose. The following recipe for Metheglin comes from his book:

An Excellent Way of Making White Metheglin

Take of Sweet-bryar berries, of Rosemary, broad Thyme, of each a handful. Boil them in a quantity of fair water for half an hour; then cleanse the water from the herbs, and let it stand 24 hours, until it be thorough cold. Then put your honey into it (honey which flowerth from the Bomvs of itself in a warm place is best) make it so strong of the honey that it bear an egge (if you will have it strong) the breath of a groat above the Liquor. This being done, lave and bounce it very well and often, that the honey and water may incorporate and work well together. After this boil it softly over a gentle fire, and scum it. Then beat the whites of eggs with their shells, and put into it to clarifie it. After this, put some of it into a vessel, and take the whites of two eggs, and a little barm,* and a small quantity of fine flower; beat them well together, and put it into the vessel close covered, that it may work. Then pour the rest into it by degrees, as you do Beer. At last take a quantity of Cinnamon, 2 or 3 races of Ginger, and two Nutmegs (for more will alter the colour of it). Hang these in a little bag in the vessel. Thus made, it will be as white as any White-wine.

*Barm is an old-fashioned term for yeast.

Melrosette (Rose Honey)

Melrosette comes from the Latin for rose honey (*mel rosae*) and is a preparation of powdered rose-leaves (or petals?) with honey and alcohol. Froniga's recipe combines the boiled red rose petals of the damask rose and purified honey. The roses are for comfort, the honey for cleansing and both for strength.

In her book, *The Art of Cooking with Roses*, Jean Gordon notes that rose honeys are very popular in England where they are used for colds, coughs and infections.



Rose Honey

From *The Art of Cooking with Roses*

If rose petals are not available, add 1 or more teaspoons of rose water or a few drops of rose extract to a cup of warm clover, orange blossom or any mild honey.

If you do have rose petals, mash 1 cup of petals with a wooden masher and place in a small saucepan. Pour 1 cup of honey over them and warm over low heat for 2 minutes. Strain the petals from the honey. Then pour the honey into a jar and seal tightly. Allow to stand in a warm room for 1 week.

Rose Honey

From *Jeanne Rose's Herbs & Things*

Pour 2 cups of boiling water over 2 ounces of dried red rose petals (make sure they were not sprayed) and let stand for 10 hours. Then strain and press the liquor out of the rose petals and combine it with 1-1/2 pounds of organic honey. Boil to a thick syrup and put away for future use.

Preserving Summer: Granitas



Granitas are Italian ices, made by combining fruit purees with simple syrup (a mixture of sugar and water). My recipes come from an article by Diane Posner Mastro in *Fine Cooking*. She often adds lemon juice, salt and herbs to bring out the flavors of the fruit.

Simple Syrup

Combine 2-1/2 cups of water with 1-3/4 cups of sugar in a non-reactive pot. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Then cool the syrup and store in the refrigerator where it will keep for several weeks.

Infused Syrup

Mastro likes to make an infused syrup with herbs to add another flavor to the granita. TO make an infused syrup, place 8 to 10 large herb leaves or two or three sprigs of herbs in a cheesecloth or muslin infusion bag and cook with the sugar and water. (If you have a fine mesh strainer, you can cook the herbs loose in the pot, then strain it afterwards). When the mixture boils, remove from the heat and steep for twenty minutes. Remove the flavorings at this time; leaving them in longer may create a bitter aftertaste. If you already have simple syrup on hand, you can infuse as much as you need for your recipe by bringing it to a boil again with the herbs and letting it steep.

Choose fruit carefully, picking fruit that is at the height of its ripeness but not over-ripe. Soft fruits like mangoes, pineapple and summer berries can be pureed with a bit of lemon juice and a pinch of salt. Firm fruits like rhubarb, pears and apples need to be cooked to soften them and release their colors, flavors and natural sugars. Mastro also cooks peaches and plums. Pineapples must be perfectly ripe and pureed in a food processor until smooth, otherwise the fibers will float and the syrup and juice sink. Avoid fibrous mangoes, or strain the puree and remove the fibers. Experiment with flavors and herbs and if you find something you want to share with others, let me know.

Once you've combined your ingredients, pour the granita into a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid and put in the freezer for at least a day. Shallow, wide plastic containers are perfect. To serve the granita, scrape the ice out with a spoon. Granitas will keep for about six weeks in the freezer.

Fresh Summer Berry Granita

3 pints fresh ripe blackberries, raspberries or boysenberries
pinch of salt
1 T lemon juice
3/4 to 1 cup simple syrup

Puree the berries with the salt and lemon juice. Strain to remove the seeds (leave a quarter of the puree unstrained if you want some of the seeds for texture). Combine with the simple syrup and freeze. Makes about 5 cups.

Mango Granita

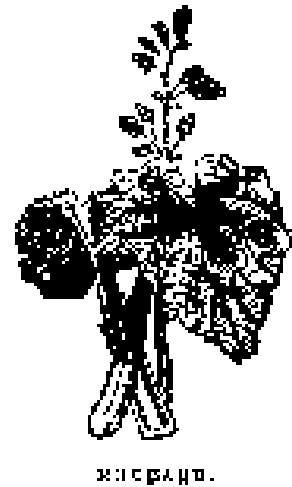
6 ripe mangoes, peeled and seeded
pinch of salt
1 T fresh lemon or lime juice
1 cup simple syrup

Puree the mangoes with the salt and citrus juice until smooth. Combine with the simple syrup and freeze.

Roasted Rhubarb Granita

2 lb rhubarb stalks, cut into 1 inch pieces
1 cinnamon stick
1 3-inch branch rosemary
1 T fresh lemon juice
pinch of salt
1 cup rosemary-infused simple syrup

Put the rhubarb in a non-reactive baking dish with the cinnamon and rosemary. Sprinkle with lemon juice and add a pinch of salt. Cover with aluminum foil and roast in a 175 oven for 40 minutes or until the rhubarb is soft. Remove the cinnamon stick and rosemary. Puree the rhubarb, combine with the simple syrup and freeze.



Preserving Summer: Liqueurs

I began making liqueurs several years ago to give as gifts at Christmas using recipes from a booklet *Making Liqueurs for Gifts* by Mimi Freid. Making liqueurs is much simpler than making other alcoholic beverages, like beer, since you use alcohol that has already been distilled by someone else--either brandy or vodka--and simply add flavor to it. In this way, liqueurs don't allow you to participate fully in the transformation mysteries of autumn. However, like canning and preserving seed, they do permit you to save the bounty of the harvest for nourishment and intoxication all year around.

Sugar Syrup

The sweetness of a liqueur comes from sugar syrup, made by adding 1 part of water to 2 parts sugar. Boil together for about 4 minutes at full boil; be sure the sugar is dissolved. Cool the syrup thoroughly before adding to the alcohol.

Raspberry Liqueur

1 pint fresh raspberries
2-1/2 cups vodka
1 vanilla bean 1/4 tsp allspice
1/3-1/2 cup sugar syrup
wide mouth quart jar

Ready to drink in six to eleven weeks.

Rinse the berries, place in a mixing bowl and lightly crush them to release their flavor. Pour into a covered glass jar and add the vodka, vanilla bean and allspice. Stir, cover and store the jar in a cool, dark place for 3 weeks. Strain the mixture through dampened cheesecloth, squeezing out as much juice as possible. Pour back into the jar, adding sugar syrup to taste and age another three to five weeks.

Spicy Herbal Liqueur

I haven't tried this one yet. The author notes that it is similar in taste to Italian Strega (isn't that the word for witch?) and the spicy taste may not appeal to everyone.

6 cardamom pods
3 tsp anise seeds
2 1/4 tsp of chopped angelica root
1 cinnamon stick
1 clove
1/4 tsp mace
1 fifth of vodka
1 cup sugar syrup

Ready to drink in 1 week

Remove seeds from cardamom pods. Crush the kernels of anise seeds with the back of a fork. Put in a 1-quart container with the angelica root, cinnamon, clove, mace and vodka. Shake well and store in a cupboard for 1 week. Pour through a cheesecloth-lined strainer several times. Blend with the sugar syrup and it is ready to serve.



Lemon Balm

As far as I know, there is no official reason to associate Lemon Balm with this holiday except for a comment in Lawrence Wright's book *Clockwork Man* about Autumn being the time of the Balms Market. The other association is a magical one. Lemon balm has long been considered an herb of the moon and associated with Diana so it seems appropriate to harvest it for magical purposes on the full moon of August.

Lemon balm (*melissa officinalis*) is a herb with many magical and medicinal uses. It's also known as sweet balm, balm mint, blue balm and garden balm. Its Latin name (*melissa*) means honey-bee; *officinalis* simply means that it had recognized medicinal uses. In the language of flowers, lemon balm means sympathy. When added to bath water, it supposedly attracts lovers (like the plant attracts bees).

The Arab philosopher, Avicenna, wrote about lemon balm in 100 AD: "Bawne makes the heart merry and joyfull and strengthens the vital spirits." The Greek physician Discorides advised using it for the bites of both scorpion and dog, and added it to wine for patients to drink. The oil of lemon balm, like many aromatic plants, when used as a dressing, seems to inhibit bacteria and viruses. Fresh leaves can be used as soothing poultices on insect bites and stings.

During the Middle Ages, lemon balm was a key ingredient in perfumes, toilet waters and liqueurs. A mixture of lemon balm, lemon peel, nutmeg and angelica root was called Carmelite Water and used to soothe nervous headaches and nerve problems. (I imagine this concoction also contained alcohol which may account for much of its ability to soothe--try using the Liqueur recipes with these herbs to create your own version.)

The leaves were once rubbed on wooden furniture, thus lemon balm was the first lemon-scented furniture polish. Nicholas Culpeper wrote in the mid-seventeenth century that lemon balm "causeth the mind and heart to become merry....and driveth away all troublesome cares and thoughts out of the mind, arising from melancholy and black choler." A medical study mentioned in Rodale's *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs* says that the herb had a sedative effect on mice.

The London Dispensary in 1696 recommended a cup of lemon balm tea every morning to renew youth, strengthen the brain and relieve a languishing nature. Jeanne Rose says the tea will induce a mild perspiration and ease the pain of a fever. When mixed with honey and vinegar, steeped in water, and then strained, it can be used for a gargle for inflamed throats.

An article about lemon balm published in the newsletter of the Sacred Grove says that the priestesses of Diana wore the flowers in their hair, wove the stems into belts for their

waists, and fed the full moon with a mixture of lemon balm and fresh spring water. Michael Tierra in his *Herbal Tarot* also correlates lemon balm with the moon because of its soothing, calming influence.

A flourishing lemon balm can be harvested three times a season. Cut the stems off near the base before the flowers bloom for optimal fragrance. Be careful not to bruise them. The Sacred Grove newsletter says to gather the leaves on the full of the moon. The first harvest will have larger leaves. Dry within two days of picking because it turns back unless dried quickly. It is better to use trays (I used window screens) for drying than to hang it in a bunch. You can use the stems as well as the leaves for making tea.

Lemon balm is a member of the mint family and like other mints it has a square stem. It is a bushy plant, of floppy, coarse leaves, that grows about two feet high. It likes well-drained soil and full sun though it can grow in partial shade.

Like other mints it spreads rapidly, but not from roots, but by self-seeding. I find it cropping up all over my garden and let it grow for as long as it likes, since the scent is divine when brushed against. The plants are easily uprooted or harvested once you decide you no longer find them amenable to your gardening plans.

Lemon Balm Tea

Steep one ounce of lemon balm flowers and one ounce of lemon balm leaves in 1-1/2 pints of water for five minutes. Add honey to taste. This tea will keep you young.

Balm Wine

Rodale's *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs* prints an 1829 recipe for lemon balm wine which calls for 49 pounds of sugar dissolved in 9 gallons of water and poured, when cool, over 2-1/2 pounds of balm and "a little new yeast." This mixture stood for 24 hours and then was fermented under cover for six weeks before being bottled with a sugar lump in each bottle. The recipe comments that the wine improves with age and is better the second year. This (untested) recipe comes from the newsletter of the Sacred Grove:

10 lbs white sugar
4 gallons water
1-1/4 lb fresh balm leaves
1-1/4 lb fresh balm tops
2 T brewer's yeast
1/2 oz lemon peel
sugar lumps

Boil sugar in the water for 1-1/2 hours, skimming carefully. Bruise the balm and place into a small cask or tub with the yeast and lemon peel. When the water has cooled, pour it over the balm, stirring well. Let stand for 24 hours, stirring every 4 hours or so. Cover tightly until fermentation ceases (about 9 weeks). Then draw off the liquid and place into individual bottles adding a lump of sugar to each bottle. Cork the bottles tightly and store for at least one year before sampling.

Lemon Balm Liqueur

This recipe may be more useful than the one above. It is from an article by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay on herbal liqueurs in *Herb Companion*:

1-1/2 cups sugar

1/4 cup water

2 cups (firmly packed) leaves and tender stems of lemon balm

1 liter vodka

Combine sugar and water. Bring to a boil and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved. Pack the herbs in a large glass container. Cool the sugar syrup to lukewarm and pour over the herbs, then add vodka. Cap and store in a cool dark place for at least one month, shaking occasionally. Strain and decant into bottles. You can use the same recipe with other herb leaves (the authors suggest rose geranium, lemon verbena or red-stem apple-mint). I bet this is a great anti-depressant in the winter.

Soothing Bath

1 cup fresh lemon balm

1/2 cup fresh rose petals

1/4 cup fresh camomile

1/2 cup fresh comfrey leaves

Place the herbs in a pot or basin. Cover with a quart of boiling water and let steep for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain the infusion into the bathwater. If you are using dry herbs, use them in the same proportion, but in smaller amounts (a cup of herbs to 1 quart of water).

Classic Toilet Water

This recipe is adapted from one found in Maggie Oster's wonderful book on gifts and crafts from your garden.

1/4 cup fresh rosemary, crushed

1 T fresh lemon balm, crushed

3 T fresh rose petals, crushed

1 T each grated lemon and orange peel

1 cup of 100 proof vodka

Steep all ingredients together in a glass jar for several weeks. Strain the herbs and bottle the toilet water. At this point you could use it as a basis for metheglin, or dab it on your skin as a cooling cologne. Oster adds one cup of rose petal infusion and 4 teaspoons of glycerine and lets it sit for a few more weeks to mature. Once the glycerine is added, it is no longer for internal consumption. Label the bottle accordingly.

Lemon Balm Jelly

Created by Margaret Hill, adapted from a recipe on the Pomona's pectin box:

3 cups apple juice

1 cup water

1 box lemon sugar-free jello

2 lemons and their juice

1 large bunch of lemon balm (just picked, rinsed)

2 t Pomona pectin

2 t calcium water (included in the Pomona pectin box)

5 to 8 drops of yellow food coloring

Have ready four sterilized jelly jars with screw bands and metal lids. Simmer juices, lemons and lemon balm. Add lemon sugar-free jello and stir. Bring to a boil. Strain through two layers of cheese cloth. Return to pan and add pectin. Stir until boiled. Add calcium water and stir. Skim any foam. Pour into jars while still hot, leaving 1/4 inch at the top. If you like, add fresh sprigs of lemon balm or lemon peel for decoration.

Lavendula minor, fine Spica.
Lavender Spike.



Lavender

I am not aware of any particular association of Lammas and lavender (except for the lovely alliteration of those twin L's), except that it blooms at Lammastide in Seattle.

When I took a nine-week class on herbs from a local herbalist, EagleSong of RavenCroft Garden, she assigned us all the task of getting to know one plant. We were to spend time with it, daily if possible, and get to know it in every possible way, from the scientific study of its components to its many medicinal and culinary uses. The plant I chose was lavender, a favorite of mine before, but now it is entwined with my life on a much more intimate basis.

The name lavender comes from the Latin verb "to wash;" both the Romans and Greeks scented soap and bathwater with the herb. In the Middle Ages, it was considered a herb of love. Kate Greenaway in *Language of the Flowers* says it means distrust. But another source (from before the days when I became scrupulous about writing down bibliographic information) says it means constancy and loyalty, sweetness and undying love, "fervent but silent heart," and good luck. That's how I feel about it.

It's a herb of Mercury. Perhaps that's why Linda Ours Rago in *The Herbal Almanac* says that lavender stimulates the brain and makes learning easier. Starhawk in *The Spiral Dance* lists it as a plant to be used in working spells for love, money and business, creative work and psychic work.

Identifying Grain

One of my favorite Lammas practices is walking around the block on the Feast of the Assumption, gathering wild grains. I like to see how many different grains grow in my neighborhood, most of them considered weeds by those of us who buy our bread in plastic wrappers at the grocery store.

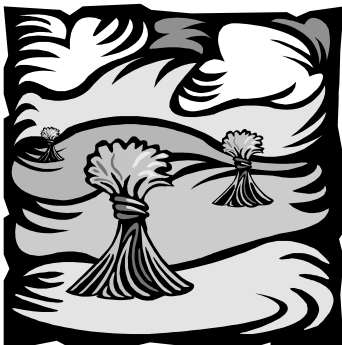
See if you can identify these grains and find them in walking distance of your home. Clues can be found in the song: *The Ripe and Bearded Barley*. And the answers are at the bottom of the reference page.



Wheat Weaving

A couple of years ago I was in Aberystwyth in Wales on Lammas. I hadn't planned any special activity for this, my favorite seasonal holiday, but I had gleaned some wheat stalks a few weeks earlier from a field near Rose Cottage (the home of my favorite novelist, Elizabeth Goudge, who lived outside of Henley-on-Thames). I didn't have any instructions for wheat-weaving with me. All I remembered was that I had to soak the wheat, which I did in a bathtub, releasing that wonderful nutty aroma from the stalks. Then I wove it into a simple plait which I tied in a loop with a strand of orange yarn. That primitive wheat weaving came back across the ocean to Seattle and for over a year sat above my stove, my very own harvest spirit, blessing the food I prepared and ate, while reminding me of my pilgrimages in the British Isles.

In earlier times in England, the last sheaf of wheat was cut down with special pomp and ceremony and carried into the house where it was displayed throughout the winter, being returned to the soil when the fields were ploughed in spring. Sometimes the spirit of the grain was invited to inhabit weavings made of wheat stalks interlaced in intricate patterns. These were often called corn dollies, corn being a word for grain and dolly describing the shape.



To make your own wheat weavings, you must first obtain wheat, either from a craft supply store or a field (I have friends who grow a small patch in their garden for harvesting at Lammas and using in wheat-weaving and bread-baking). The excursion to get the wheat could become a part of your holiday rituals. I will never forget my first sight of wheat fields, driving one Fourth of July weekend with my daughter through the wheat country of eastern Washington. For miles and miles as far as the eye could see, for hours we drove among the silent rolling hills of golden wheat.

Maggie Oster in *Gifts and Crafts from Your Garden* says that wheat for wheat-weaving should be harvested about two weeks before the regular harvest when it is in the "dough stage." Test it by pinching one of the grains with your thumbnail. If it releases a milky sap, it is too green. If it is hard, it is too ripe. It should puncture easily but no sap should appear. Cut the wheat about four or six inches above the soil and bundle in sheaves about four to six inches in diameter. Keeping all the heads of wheat in one direction, bind near the bottom of the stalk and either hang them up or stack them for two weeks.

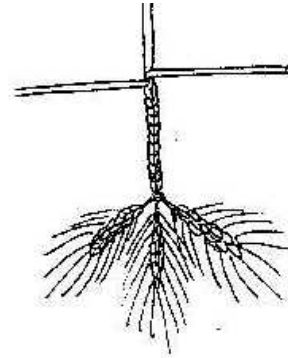
Wheat weavings were often hung on walls, not just as decorations but as protection, like the charms made in the Scottish Highlands on Lammas by tying red strings around crossed rowan-twigs and hanging them over doors. In Wales, wheat weaving has become a traditional art form, divorced from harvest customs. Everywhere I went in Wales, I saw beautiful and elaborate wheat weavings for sale. You may be able to find someone in your area who can teach you this traditional art. Like many women's arts, it's hard to describe on paper--it cries out for one-to-one instruction and a kinesthetic experience.

Prepare the wheat by cutting off and discarding the second-joint straw and removing the leaf-sheaf. Soak them in warm water for at least 30 minutes. Then drain and wrap in a damp towel so they will stay moist.

The first set of instructions come from Helen Farias' unpublished book, *The Harvest Mysteries*.

Witch's Mark or Cat's Paw

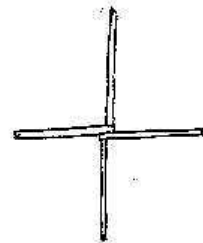
This creates a long flat braid. Tie three straws together, just below the heads with stout thread (Helen suggests buttonhole twist). Fan them out into north, east and west positions with the heads to the south. Fold the east (right) straw under the north (top) straw just before you fold the north straw over the east straw--in other words, they trade places. Then fold the west (left) straw under the north straw, just before folding the north straw over the west straw--again they trade places. Repeat.



As you work, you may wish to stretch the braid slightly. With your left thumb and forefinger (if you are right-handed) firmly hold the weaving, and move your grip up the weaving as it grows. Stop a few inches from the end and tie off.

Four Straw Plait or North, South, East West Plait

This creates a plait with a bit more dimension. Tie four straws together under the heads. Hold the heads down (towards the floor) with your left thumb and forefinger, keeping your palm upward. Fan the four straws out in the four directions.



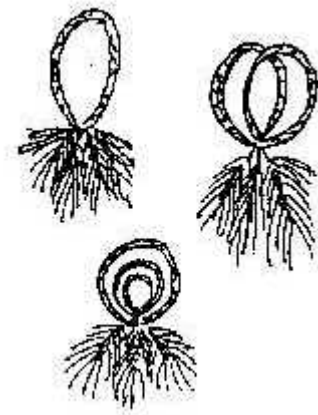
With your right hand (if you're right-handed), fold the south straw to the north and the north to the south. Put your thumb across the fold. Fold the east straw to the west and the west straw to the east. Secure with your thumb. Repeat, moving your grip slowly upwards as the weaving grows, stretching it when necessary, holding it securely with your thumb. Stop a few inches from the end and tie off.

Shaping the Weaving

These braids can now be twisted into various shapes. The simplest is a simple loop. Tie the end to the neck of the heads and either fan the straw ends out, snipping them at an angle, or hide them behind the heads.

Or loop the braid twice and overlap the loop, creating a vesica piscis or almond shape in the center.

Or make three concentric loops for a miniature "dolly" (with the loops as the head, the sheaves as the skirted body).



Secure the ends again, straighten the weaving and pat it until it is even and pleasing. Mist it once or twice, if it's dried out, and place under a brick, heavy book (protected with plastic) or some other flat weight. When it has dried, decorate as you like. The traditional decoration is a red ribbon.

Mordiford Wheat Weaving

In her book, *Gifts and Crafts from the Garden*, Maggie Oster provides instructions on how to create the heart-shaped "corn dolly" associated with the Mordiford district in England. For this weaving you will need 50 to 60 wheat straws.

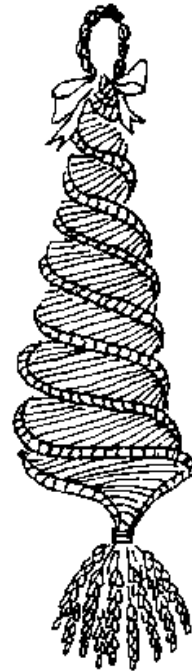
1. Tie 18 straws, right below the head, using a clove hitch knot and 12 inches of strong thread. Divide the straw into three groups of six and braid these as you would hair (right over center, left over center) for five inches. Tie at the end of the braided part with another knot made from 12 inches of strong thread.
2. Repeat to make a matching set of braids, the exact length of the first,
3. Tie the two wheat braids together where the braids end, using another 12 inches of thread and a clove-hitch knot.
4. Lay the two braids in front of you with the unbraided heads at the bottom. Carefully bend the two braids inward to form a heart shape. There should be three to four inches of unbraided straw in the center. Tie the two braids together just above the heads using another 12 inch piece of thread and a clove hitch. Tie a large bow over this knot.
5. Take another five pieces of wheat and tie them together right below the heads. Trim the ends so this bunch is four inches long. Tie this bundle directly on top of the point where the braid ends are tied (at the top of the heart).
6. Take an 8 inch piece of ribbon and wrap it several times around this knot, then bring it through to the back and tie it, so it will serve as a hanger.



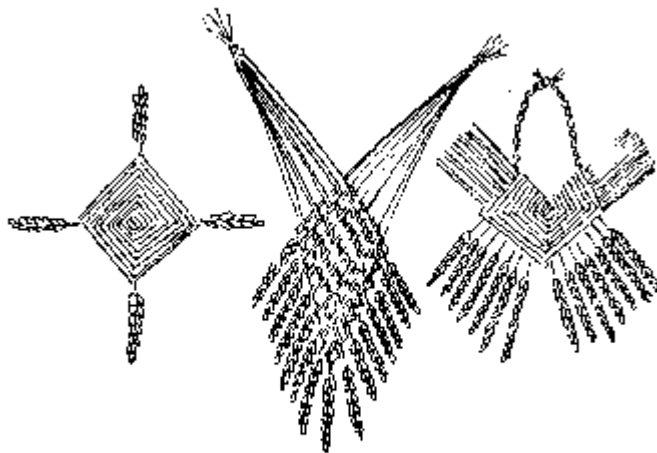
Tall Spiral Corn Dolly

Pauline Campanelli provides instructions on how to create this shape in her book, *Ancient Ways*. I have to say I have not been successful in reproducing this one.

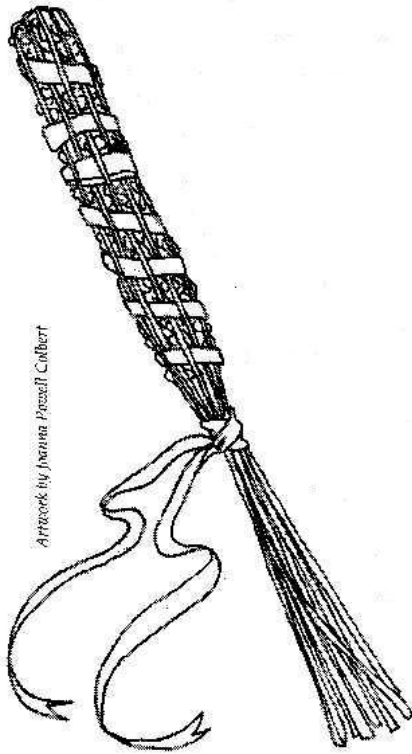
Take five straws of wheat and tie them together using a clove hitch knot, just under the heads. Turn the wheat upside down so that the wheat heads hang down like a tassel. Lay the straws out flat in the form of a cross with one of the arms being made of two straws. Begin weaving by taking one of the two straws and folding it over the straw next to it, so that it is now parallel to the next arm of the cross. Bend that straw around the new one and fold it over so that now it is parallel to the third arm of the cross. When the first round is complete, a square will have been formed. Continue weaving in this manner, laying each new round of straw outside the square, thereby increasing the width of the spiral until the desired width is reached. The spiral can be decreased by folding the straws to the inside of the square formed by the previous round. If the straw should run out, replace it with a plain headless weaver. When you reach the neck of the Dolly, braid the remaining straws together and tie them into a loop.



If you can't master this one, you might try one of these other traditional corn dollies shown in *Ancient Ways*.



Lavender Wands



I've been making lavender wands for years. You want to create your wands while the stalks are still fresh, as they are more pliable then. You will need:

- ❖ Odd number of freshly-picked stems (from a variety that has 18 to 24 inch long stems) with the leaves stripped off.. I usually make my wands out of 7 or 9 stems, but I've seen directions for wands made from 19 stems. Strip the leaves off the stems.
- ❖ 3 yards of 1/4 inch wide satin ribbon-- choose a color that's meaningful to you

Tie one end of the ribbon right below the bunched heads of the lavender buds. Then turn the bunch over, so the blossoms are pointing down and the stems are sticking up in the air. Bend down each stem, right above the blossoms, to form an umbrella or little cage. Weave the ribbon, satin-side up, in and out of the stems like a basket. The first two rows are the most

difficult as the stems tend to flop, cross and slip around. Pull the weave tight after you've done a few rows. Continue weaving the ribbon in and out of the stems until you've covered the flowers. I usually tie the ribbon off at this point, then wind it around the length of the stems to hold them together, and tie it off again at the bottom. Trim the ribbons and stalks but leave some dangling for a nice effect.

You can store these in a drawer or a closet to impart fragrance to your clothes or linens. I often attach them to Christmas gifts as decorations. Once they've dried, the scent can be released by stroking or squeezing the wand.

Brigg Fair

This old song comes from Lincolnshire in north-central England. The melody was immortalized by Frederick Delius in his tone-poem of the same name. He got the tune from his friend Percy Grainger who recorded it as sung by an old folk-singer, Joseph Taylor, in 1908. Taylor said he learned it from a gypsy.

*It was on the fifth of August,
The weather fair and fine,
Unto Brigg Fair I did repair,
For love I was inclined.*

*I rose up with the lark in the morning,
With my heart so full of glee,
Of thinking there to see my dear,
Long time I wished to see.*

*Oh, the green leaves shall wither,
And the branches they shall die,
If ever I prove false to him,
To the boy that loves me.*

In 1911, Grainger published it, adding these two verses, from another folk song, as the 3rd and 4th verses.

*I took hold of her lily-white hand,
O and merrily was her heart:
"And now we're met together
I hope we ne'er shall part".*

*For it's meeting is a pleasure,
And parting is a grief,
But an unconstant lover
Is worse than any thief.*

Sir John Barleycorn

This song represents Barley, the oldest of the cultivated grains, with the life of a being, cut down, beaten, ground and transformed into a substance that also has the power to transform boys to men and men to asses. For a great, dirge-like rendition, check out John Langstaff's version sung on The Revels *The Wild Mountain Thyme*.

*There came three men from out of the west
Their victory to try;
And they have ta'en a solemn oath,
Poor Barleycorn should die.*

*They took a plough and ploughed him in,
Clods harrowed on his head;
And then they took a solemn oath,
John Barleycorn was dead*

*There he lay sleeping in the ground
Till rain on him did fall;
Then Barleycorn sprung up his head
And so amazed them al.*

*There he remained till Midsummer
And look'd both pale and wan;
Then Barleycorn he got a beard
And so became a man.*

*Then they sent men with scythes so sharp
To cut him off at knee;
And then poor Johnny Barleycorn
They served most barbarouslie.*

*Then they sent men with pitchforks strong
To pierce him through the heart;
And like a doleful Tragedy
They bound him in a cart.*

*And then they brought him to a barn
A prisoner to endure;
And so they fetched him out again,
And laid him on the floor.*

*There they set men with holly clubs,
To beat the flesh from th' bones'
But the miller served him worse than that
He ground him 'twixt two stones.*

*O! Barleycorn is the choicest grain
That e'er was sown on land:
It will do more than any grain
By the turning of your hand.*

*It will make a boy into a man,
A man into an ass:
To silver it will change your old,
Your silver into brass.*

*It will make the huntsman hunt the fox,
That never wound a horn;
It will bring the tinker to the stocks
That people may him scorn.*

*O! Barleycorn is the choicest grain
That e'er was sown on land.
And it will cause a man to drink
Till he neither can go nor stand.*

The Ripe and Bearded Barley

Come out, 'tis now September
The hunter's moon's begun,
And through the wheaten stubble
We hear the frequent gun.
The leaves are turning yellow,
And fading into red,
While the ripe and bearded barley
Is hanging down its head.

CHORUS:

All among the barley
Who would not be blithe,
While the ripe and bearded barley
Is smiling on the scythe.

The wheat is like a rich man,
It's sleek and well-to-do.
The oats are like a pack of girls
They're thin and dancing, too,
The rye is like a miser,
Both sulky, lean and small,
While the ripe and bearded barley
Is the monarch of them all.

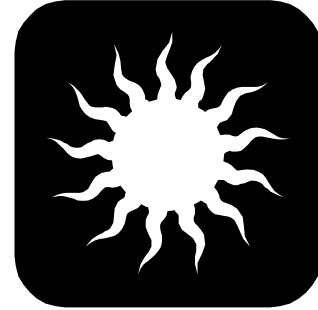
CHORUS

The spring is like a young maid
That does not know her mind,
The summer is a tyrant
Of most ungracious kind,
The autumn is an old friend
That pleases all he can,
And brings the bearded barley
To glad the hearts of man.

CHORUS

Dirge of Lugh the Sun-King

My favorite celebration of Lughnasa was at the first witch camp I attended, sponsored by Reclaiming at the beautiful Loon Lake in British Columbia. The Lammass ritual was the closing ritual of the camp. I can still recall the majesty of Raven's voice, calling the North, as it echoed among the trees.



As the sun set, we walked down a dusty pathway singing the "Wake of Lugh the Sun-King." It went on and on--there were a lot of us--becoming more and more dirge-like--until we gathered around a bonfire. A giant corn-man, made out of cornbread mix and wrapped in tinfoil, was plunged into the fire, then removed and carefully unwrapped. The ritual chant became triumphant. We feasted on warm corn bread, breaking it off and stuffing it into each other's mouth's and murmuring "May you never be hungry" over and over again.

The song still gives me shivers. I'm sorry I can't give you the tune but you can find it on the Chants tape produced by the Reclaiming Collective:

*This is the wake of Lugh the sun King
He passed away on the solstice day
This is the wake of Lugh the sun King
He goes into the dark to show us the way*

*Oh tell me why
Oh tell me why
Oh tell me why must the clouds come to darken the sky*

Words by Raven Moonshadow

Holy Maiden Huntress

Another pagan song that seems appropriate for the August full moon feast of the Goddess, whether you celebrate it as Artemis-Hecate on the full moon of August, or the Nemoralia on August 13th or the Assumption on August 15th, is this well-known chant:

*Holy Maiden Huntress, Artemis, Artemis,
New Moon, come to us.*

*Shining silver wheel of radiance, radiance,
Mother, come to us [or, if you feel bold, substitute Mary, a prime Mother Goddess]*

*Ancient Queen of Wisdom, Hecate, Hecate,
Old one, come to us.*

Words by Pete Soderberg

Lugh

Lugh has often been described as a sun god. Apparently this identification stems from a tale in which Lugh's face is described as shining like the sun (not unlike Christ's face in the feast of the Transfiguration). This led some folklorists to assert that Lugh is a sun god while others believe he fought and killed a solar deity (the one-eyed Balor).

Julius Caesar said the chief god of the Celts was Mercury; many Celtic scholars believe he was writing about Lugh whose epithet means the "many-skilled." He was supposedly the inventor of chess, ball-play and horsemanship.

There are many stories of Lugh. Here are a few of them:

Balor, who has one fiery eye, was told that his daughter, Ethne, would have a child who would kill him so he keeps her locked up in a tower. One day he steals a cow from a smith who is making armor for a champion. The champion steals the cow back and manages to sneak into the tower and impregnate Ethne (and in some versions, her twelve attendants). When babies are born to Ethne (or her handmaidens), Balor drops them into the sea. Only one survives, Lugh; the others become seals. Lugh is raised by the smith. One day Balor comes to the forge and brags about the killing whereupon Lugh drives a glowing rod through his one eye and kills him.

There once was a king named Nuadu, one of the Tuatha de Danaan, who was deprived of his throne because he had lost his arm (the Irish kings had to be perfect in body). Bres was appointed king in his place but his rule became oppressive, he failed to provide feasts and he was banished and Nuadu reinstated. Lugh arrived at Nuadu's court and introduced himself as a man of many crafts. He won a chess-game and was permitted to sit in the King's seat for thirteen days. Bres, meanwhile, summoned his people, the Fomoiries to help him regain the throne. Lugh is the champion of the Tuatha de Danaan. The battle was fought on Samhain. During the battle the one-eyed Balor (who is Lugh's maternal grandfather) kills Nuadu but Lugh kills him with a slingshot and a rock which pierces his eye. Bres has been captured in the battle and Lugh permits him to live in exchange for providing advice on ploughing, reaping and sowing.

Lugh's spear was one of the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danaan. Although it does not feature much in any of the tales about him, it shows up in a few celebrations recorded by McNeill. In 1843, in Dublin, all of the guilds marched in a procession on August 1st, each carrying the tools of their trade. The Lord Mayor, at the head of the parade, threw a spear into the sea at Ringsend to mark the limit of the city's jurisdiction. A similar ceremony occurred in Cork every third year on August 1st, when the Mayor was conveyed by barge to the sea where a feathered dart was thrown into the waters.

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Answers to Grain Quiz:

The grain illustrations are from the World Book Encyclopedia, 1989 edition.
Grains are shown in this configuration:

Barley	Three kinds of wheat: common wheat, club wheat & durum wheat	
Rye	Oats	Millet