


# A Guide To Celebrating the 12 Days of Yule



by Jenn Campus

Heathen-style: Folklore, Activities and Recipes  
For The Whole Family to Enjoy For 12 Days

# A Guide to Celebrating the 12 Days of Yule

**(Heathen-style!): Folklore, Activities and Recipes For The Whole Family to Enjoy For 12 Days!**

**By Jenn Campus**

[dreamsofydalir.com](http://dreamsofydalir.com)

**All Rights Reserved. Copyright (c) 2016 Jenn Campus**

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the permission in writing from the author.

If you are reading this e-book and did not purchase it from <http://www.dreamsofydalir.com> or an authorized affiliate, then you probably bought a stolen copy. To report a suspected internet thief, please email [jenn.campus@gmail.com](mailto:jenn.campus@gmail.com)

## Table of Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [In Preparation](#)
- [First Day - December 20](#)
- [Second Day - December 21](#)
- [Third Day - December 22](#)
- [Fourth Day - December 23](#)
- [Fifth Day - December 24](#)

- [Sixth Day - December 25](#)
- [Seventh Day - December 26](#)
- [Eight Day - December 27](#)
- [Ninth Day - December 28](#)
- [Tenth Day - December 29](#)
- [Eleventh Day - December 30](#)
- [Twelfth Day - December 31](#)

## Introduction

For most Pagans of any denomination, Yule is a high holy season. We always hear that it is a 12 daylong celebration that begins on the eve of the Winter Solstice, known to most Pagans as Yule, and ends at the new calendar year. This celebration was so important in ancient times that it was converted by the Christians to the 12 Days of Christmas.

Many Pagans, especially those devoted to the Norse and Anglo Saxon Gods and Goddesses try to find some way to keep these 12 days, and so does my family. However I have been asked over and over again for several years running - How do you celebrate? What do you do exactly? What activities, what rituals, what prayers and celebrations?

I began by sharing our daily activities on my Facebook page a few years ago and have continued to do so, but I still get questions about it every year, especially in the few weeks leading up to Yule because people want to be prepared and have things planned out and all the materials they might need.

Therefore, this little guide to celebrating the 12 Days of Yule is a result of my creating family traditions for this special and most sacred (not to mention FUN!) time of year. I decided to put it all together into one little, handy and easy to follow guide, so that you and your family can celebrate the 12 Days of Yule together, with a little inspiration from what our family has been doing.

We have a young girl and an infant and have been celebrating the 12 Days of Yule since before my daughter was born, so this guide is meant for anyone including families with children of all ages.

I hope you find this guide helpful and fun.

Blessed Yule and Merry Winter Solstice to you and yours!

## In Preparation

In preparation for the 12-day long celebration, I try to gather everything that we will need to have it on hand, so that we can truly settle into the holiday without running out to get a lot of last minute things. This makes everything more relaxing and enjoyable.

Some things I make sure we do in preparation are:

- Shop for all the needed foodstuffs - for all the important festival meals, baking, parties with friends and

family etc.

- Clean the house - make sure things are tidy and the energy flow is good in the home.
- Decorate the house - we tend to do this sometime during the second week of December. My birthday is the second week of the month and I generally like to wait until AFTER that to do holiday decorating, but that is just our personal preference, you can do it whenever you like.
- Designate a Yule Log - if you have a fireplace or woodstove or somewhere to safely have a fire, it is a good idea to pick out your Yule Log ahead of time so you know where it is when it is time for that ritual.
- Put up and decorate your Yule Tree - some years we have done this on the eve of the Solstice, but I find that day is super heavy with other activities and some years it feels rushed if we wait that long to do it. So generally I like to get the tree set up the second week of December.
- Be prepared to leave a small offering of food and drink each night to the Gods, Goddesses, Ancestors or other spirits you have a relationship with or want to honor this time of year. I think of these entities in my own life as family or very good friends and I want to engage them in our celebrations by giving them the very best of what the season has to offer. Our family, therefore, does offerings of food and drink on each night of the 12 days. We usually burn the offerings in our wood stove or fireplace, but you can also bury them outside or place them in a tree.

Let's get started.

## **First Day - December 20**





- What is Mother's Night and Why & How We Celebrate
- Create a Disir Altar
- Bake Cookies
- Leave Offerings

Mōdraniht, or “Mother's Night” in modern English. The Mothers we are talking about here are female ancestors, especially of the maternal line that some Pagans, especially Heathens, believe watch over a family or clan indefinitely when they pass on. These could be very old ancestors from millennia past, or other more recent ancestors who have taken on that duty since they have crossed over.

Ancestors or the Beloved Dead are powerfully allies, since they were all human once, or at least lived their lives on this earthly plane (like animal companions). They understand more than the Gods and other spirits what it is like to be human: the struggles, the triumphs, the little hurts and frustrations. Ancestors therefore can be some of our greatest helpers when the help we seek is more mundane in nature or has to do with our own families, especially. Nothing is truer of our Disir, the female ancestors that watch over our families and clans. That is why this night is so important to the season and dedicated to them.

Truth be told, this is one of my very favorite of the 12 Days and so it seems fitting that it kicks off the festivities. Mother's Night is usually celebrated on the eve of the Winter Solstice. But we always celebrate it

on the 20th, like most Heathens, because if you are doing the full 12 days, the traditional end is New Year's Eve, or December 31 no matter where the actual Solstice falls.

For my family it is a sweet celebration, honoring all the women that have gone before us and celebrating their lives as they live on in us.

Growing up in my family baking cookies was always a big event at this time of year. I come from a large family and so my grandmother spent many weeks before the winter holidays baking cookies in preparation. Some were for our family celebrations, others were to give away to family and friends, but I think mostly she just loved doing it. She had a deft and precise hand and her cookies always looked professionally made. They were also delicious.

I think many of us have stories of grandmothers, mothers or other female relatives baking cookies at this time of year. It seems a common theme. And before our recent ancestors and the popularity (and ingredients) for cookies, specials treats were always a part of these celebrations at this time of year. So this day, we can honor our female ancestors by baking cookies (something that strikes as very maternal) and leave the cookies as offerings to those ancestors.

This night can be used to remember and celebrate all of our female ancestors, but I tend to focus my attention on those from my female line - so my mother and her mother and her mother before and so on.

You can take it a step further and think of traditional cookies from the place or places that your maternal ancestors hail from originally (or more modernly) and make those. For example, in my case my maternal line is mostly Scottish, (with some Danish thrown in) so I always make shortbread and aebelskiver. I am also adopted and so I also make Cuccidati, or Sicilian fig cookies because my grandmother always made those too.

These are activities that all the members of the household can join in on. Ask everyone in the family what cookies they remember from their childhood, or which female ancestors they wish to honor. The more cookies the merrier, right?

## **DISIR ALTAR**

- Set up an ancestor altar for the women of your family who have passed by placing pictures of them, or prayer cards, or symbols that remind you of them, or mothers in general, on the altar.

(If you don't have fond memories of female ancestors, then place symbols of what having a good relationship with a mother figure would look like and then you can ask more ancient ancestors to come to your aid, or make themselves known to you so you can work with them. Or you can choose to dedicate this night, altar and offerings to Frigga, the All Mother).

- Place a candle, an offering plate or small dish and a small cup on the altar to hold your cookie offerings and a libation. I like to give turmeric or saffron infused milk as my libation offering. Milk has an obvious deep association with motherhood and the golden color is a nice addition to kick off a solar celebration (Winter Solstice).
- You may also choose to add incense. Many of my ancestors were Catholic, so I choose to use Frankincense and Myrrh, scents they would be familiar with from holy days when they occupied this earthly plane. Both substances are also good at keeping away negativity or malicious spirits that may be hanging out near the doorway when you invite your ancestors to join your celebration. But you can choose anything you like. Other common incenses for working with ancestors are sandalwood and copal.

# BAKE COOKIES & LEAVE OFFERINGS

Bake your cookies & leave the offering on your altar.

This is a prayer I wrote to use after I light my candle and incense and welcome my ancestors by name (using their full names or specific genealogy so other spirits can't be confused by who you are calling forth).

*Spirits of all the Mothers who have come before me, {state your full name}*

*Great Disir, Ancestors, Mothers*

*Going back to the beginning of my female line,*

*I honor you today.*

*I thank you for your gifts of Body & Blood.*

*Strength & Hope*

*I thank you for life, itself.*

*Help me to do right by you,*

*To honor you with this life you have given me,*

*Let me never take for granted all of the blessings & abundance*

*Which surrounds me & my family.*

*Help me to be a good Mother, Wife, Daughter and Sister*

*Help me to pass a legacy of kindness, love, hope & strength of spirit to my descendants.*

*Thank you, thank you, thank you.*

*So shall it be.*

## Second Day - December 21





- Winter Solstice Celebrations Around the World/History
- Sun Vigil
- Prayer to Sunna
- Cleansing of Ritual Tools
- Butter Offering
- Sun Salutations
- Yule Log Traditions
- Nisser, Tomten and Yule Elves
- Winter Solstice Ritual
- Offering to the Holly King
- Winter Solstice Feast

Winter Solstice usually falls on the 21st of December, but it can be on the 22nd or 23d as well. Many Pagans of different faiths choose to celebrate Yule proper on this day regardless of the actual solar event. You can choose to go that route, or if you want to celebrate on the actual Winter Solstice celestial event, you can just substitute the activities over the next few days for one another based on what works best for you and your family.



Winter Solstice has been celebrated for thousands of years, spanning many cultures. If most of us traced our family trees back far enough (and for some we might not have to go that far) we would likely find many ancestors who celebrated this feast of light - the return of the sun after the darkest times of the winter, when the days begin to lengthen, so it is part of our personal histories.

The actual event, Winter Solstice is just a moment in time. But the celebration that comes from it marks the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Many cultures celebrate this day and night and celebrations vary from culture to culture.

The ancient Romans knew the celebration as Saturnalia, the Hindus call it Diwali, and the Jewish festival of light is called Hanukkah. For those of us who follow the pathways of our ancient Northern European ancestors, we call it Yule, Jul, or Jule. Many traditions from lighted Christmas trees, to Yule logs and mistletoe are a part of this rich history and have influenced more modern winter holiday celebrations.

These were all ways to celebrate the return of the sun and light after the bleak Northern winter; a time to celebrate brighter days ahead and hope for a brighter future. Similar themes that are part of all the aforementioned celebrations are rebirth, sun and light, and new beginnings.

Pagans in ancient Scandinavia and Germany celebrated Jul and in modern times “Jul” is still the name for this celebration in Scandinavian countries, and is often translated into English as “Christmas”. The two celebrations are intrinsically linked since many of the Jul (“Yule”) traditions are where the most common modern Christmas traditions come from.

During Viking times the Julblot was a sacred ceremony where sacrifices were given to the gods in order to receive blessings on the crops for the following spring.

The actual Solstice is what most Pagans refer to as Yule and it is the busiest day of the 12 days with much to do, starting early, if you choose. There are a lot of activities listed for this day and it is by far the longest entry in this guide. Please don't feel that you have to do everything listed. This is just to give you a lot of ideas so you can incorporate those activities that you and your family will enjoy most.

## SUN VIGIL

My day usually starts by rising about an hour before the sun, to sit for a sun vigil. Not everyone in the family is usually up for this part of today's ritual, but for me it is a lovely way to do a little sun worshipping. The Winter Solstice is the birth of the Sun, who in the Northern tradition is called Sunna and I always welcome her on the Solstice with prayers and offerings.

I light a candle in a star shaped lantern (the sun is a star after all) and burn some incense. I find amber is a good choice.

Then as Sunna begins her ascent, I spend time meditating on all her many gifts, the biggest being my life. Without the sun, humans would not exist.

## PRAYER TO SUNNA

At the exact point of Sunrise (which I calculate the day before and set an alarm on my phone), I say a prayer

of thanks:

*Sunna, Great Goddess*

*You who bring Life to all things,*

*Shining brightly in the sky,*

*We give thanks to You for our very lives,*

*Help us to take care of the good things of this Earth-*

*Plants, Animals, Trees, Waters*

*Let us feel your warmth upon us,*

*Even in darkest days,*

*For You are always there, giving of Yourself, so that we might live,*

*Help us shine brightly in our own lives,*

*Do for others as you do for us,*

*And take care of the many gifts that you give so freely.*

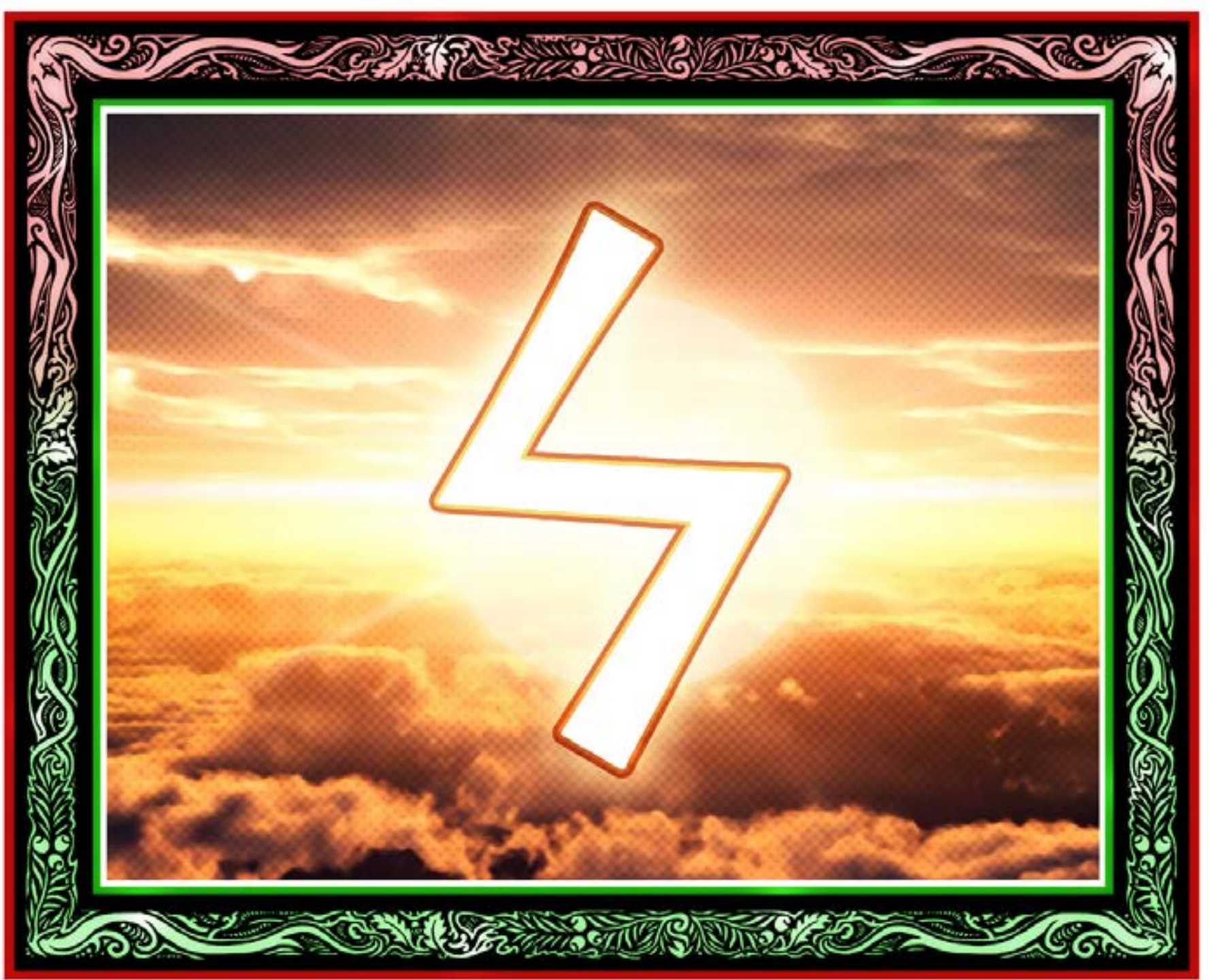
*Thank you, thank you, thank you,*

*Hail Sunna!*

## **CLEANSING OF RITUAL TOOLS**

This is a good time to get a solar cleansing of all your ritual tools, if you have any that need to be cleaned or “powered up”. So after praying, I lay out any ritual tools I wish to be cleansed and energized by the sun's power in the sunlight that is now starting to streak down.

## **BUTTER OFFERING**



Once I have done this, I leave an offering of the highest quality of butter for Sunna. I paint the doors of the house with the Sowilo Rune to mark it as an offering for Sunna and ask her to watch over our family bringing us nourishment and abundance the whole year round. I also put some butter on our house in the place that receives the most sun. So as the sun shines on the butter it warms up and melts, allowing Sunna to “eat” all year.

Good quality butter is yellow because it comes from animals that were fed a healthy foraging diet. The butter is yellow due to the carotene found in the plant matter that they consume. When humans eat butter with carotene we convert it in our bodies to Vitamin A.

Butter was an important part of the Northern diet. After the domestication of animals for milk and other nourishment, the cream from the milk was generally skimmed off to make butter, which due to the fat content makes a fairly stable and long lasting product. The rest of the milk was then generally made into cheese.

## SUN SALUTATIONS

Yoga is a big part of my personal wellness routine and so once I clean up my makeshift altar outside and gather up my tools to bring inside, I go inside and do 3 Sun Salutations facing the sun to welcome her fully. It would be nice to do this outside and you can if you live in a warmer climate but I do it indoors, since it is



hard to do yoga in snow pants and puffy coats!

At this point in the day the family is usually starting to wake up and if they aren't quite ready yet, I usually start making the coffee and tea and getting things ready for breakfast. We usually break our fast on Solstice with the Aebelskiver made during Mother's Night the night before. I like to serve them with lingonberry jam and fresh whipped cream. But feel free to enjoy a festive breakfast casserole or another special breakfast treat like homemade donuts or other pastry.

## **YULE LOG TRADITIONS**

In the Northern and Celtic countries the tradition was to find and harvest an enormous tree trunk to burn on the shortest day of the year- generally in a large hall as a celebration for the community. Doing this celebrated the rebirth of the sun as well as give thanks for the warmth and life it brings.

The ashes of the Yule Log were kept because they were believed to hold magical powers and give protection for the rest of the year, including protection against lightening strikes, which in a time when most dwellings were built with timber is important protection indeed.

We have a wood stove in our house, so we always burn a Yule log. Generally we pick a birch log from our pile of firewood and decorate it with pine boughs and wild berries and we burn it on the evening of the solstice.

However, if you don't have a fireplace or a way to burn logs safely, you can make a Yule Log Cake!

On this day I tend to spend a good deal of time in the kitchen. There is the big Winter Solstice Feast to prepare. I start by baking a Yule Log cake. This is a common Yuletide treat in France and French colonies and is called a *Bûche de Noël*. It is a sponge roulade cake shaped and decorated like a tree branch or stump. This is the dessert for our Winter Solstice Feast.

It is not known who exactly made the first Yule log cake, but it was made to replace the large Yule logs that used to be burned during the Iron Age. There are some theories to where the tradition for the cake began. Some attribute the size of the home hearths becoming smaller. Smaller Yule Logs were burnt then and those small hearths were also a good size to bake a cake such as this. Then once the modern age began and not every home had a hearth, baking the cakes were a good way to continue the Yule Log tradition.

So how long have people been making these types of cakes? The ingredients for the cake are commonplace in medieval times so the first one could have been as early as the 1600s. The first known recipe was published in 1615, in Gervaise Markham's tome "The English Huswife".

The best part about this cake is that it is really easy to make and comes together quickly. Then there is the fun of decorating it. It can be as simple cutting off one end of the cake and setting it on top of the cake or placed protruding from its side to resemble a chopped off branch, then sprinkle with cocoa powder. Or can be elaborate as making icing and creating a bark-like texture, by dragging a fork through the icing. Cakes can also be decorated with powdered sugar to resemble snow, fresh berries, and mushrooms made of meringue or marzipan - it's totally up to you!

## **NISSER, TOMTEN AND YULE ELVES**



Nisse are generally associated with a particular home or family and are known to sometimes follow the family when they move. They are rooted in the folklore of farm life and act as the homestead's guardian, a bit like a house elf. In earlier times they might have been a clan or ancestor spirit, the spirit of the person who first built the farm.

If the Nisser is treated well by the family they will watch over the farm, the animals and the family protecting them from harm. However, if not treated well by the family, they will create a lot of mischief and misfortune for the family until a proper relationship is established.

In appearance Nisse look a lot like a typical garden gnome, they are short and often squat. They are usually wearing blue shirts and they wear the iconic red conical hat. They often have very long gray or white beards and are usually elderly in appearance.

Norwegian folklore states that they have four fingers, and sometimes pointed ears and eyes reflecting light in the dark, like those of a cat. Nisse are also well known shape shifters, so if you see them at all, in may be in another form, but mostly they stay hidden from human eyes. In many ways they are similar to a garden gnome in that they are guardians of place.

These are the elves that look after the farm animals-and in return for their protection and hard work, they want porridge served with butter and cream during the winter festivities. This offering of porridge is what

remains of the ancestor worship of pre-Christian times.

I like that the porridge offering ties into ancestor worship and veneration of spirit of place. Both of these ideas were beyond the comprehension of my daughter when we started sharing this tradition with her at about age 2. But this tradition started building a foundation for her of ancestor and land spirit veneration.

The same year we introduced her to the Nisser or Tomten, we bought the book “The Tomten” by Astrid Lindgren in order to read it to her on the Solstice before leaving our bowl of porridge as offering.

## OTHER OFFERINGS

On this night we always leave an offering to the Holly King. He is the personification of the Green Man in Winter - adorned with holly leaves and berries, evergreen sprigs and pinecones. He is Father Winter and this is his special night. So each person in the family leaves a portion of their meal aside for him. Once dinner is over we put all the offerings on a paper plate or in a napkin and we burn it in the Yule Log fire later in the evening.

I have it on good authority that the Green Man enjoys a bit of whisky, and so I leave a small glass for him in offering as well.

## YULE RITUAL

If there isn't a fire going in the woodstove already on this night (which has never happened yet) we would probably start it around 11:30 PM or so.

Then whole family sits down, each with a piece of paper. Or for those too young to write, with an adult, and we write down all of our wishes, hopes and dreams for the year. It can be as simple as a few sentences, or an elaborate wish list. It all depends on the individual making the wishes. Usually this requires a bit of time to think about it, which is why we start early so people have time before midnight to get their wishes down.

Then 5 minutes before midnight we put the Yule Log onto the fire and turn off all the lights in the house so it is super dark. We all huddle around the fire, the only light in the house and usually have some quiet time to think about how dark our world would be without the sun (and if we could even exist without her - that is more for the little ones to think about). Taking this time helps us to remember how easy it is to take the sun and her blessings for granted.

Then at the stroke of midnight we put all the lights in the house on, every one we can get to- sometimes we even light extra candles to make it as bright as possible and we all cheer for the return of the light.

Then we burn our wish lists on the Yule Fire, as well as our Holly King offering.

## YULE RECIPES

Please enjoy these recipes for making your own Yule feast for family and friends.



# Recipe: Yule Log Cake (Bûche de Noël) with Coffee Buttercream



**Serves: 8-10**

(This cake is gluten and grain free)

## **INGREDIENTS:**

6 eggs, separated  
6 Tablespoons sugar  
Pinch of salt  
1/2 cup cocoa powder  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar  
butter to grease pan

1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
1 teaspoon unrefined cane sugar  
1 teaspoon of vanilla  
1/4 teaspoon of cinnamon

## **METHOD:**

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F
2. Line a jelly roll pan with parchment paper.
3. Grease the parchment paper with butter and dust with sprinkling of cocoa powder.
4. Whisk all the egg yolks together with 4 tablespoons sugar, sea salt, cocoa powder and vanilla extract until smooth.
5. In a clean stainless steel or glass bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tarter and remaining sugar until soft peaks form.
6. Fold egg white mixture into the egg yolk and cocoa mixture.
7. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.
8. Bake at 375 F for fifteen minutes.
9. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.
10. While cake cools whip heavy cream with one tablespoon of sugar, vanilla extract and cinnamon.
11. Generously dust the cake with additional cocoa powder.
12. After the cake has cooled invert it onto a kitchen towel.
13. Spread whipped cream onto the cake, then gently roll the cake length-wise and place it seam down on a serving platter. The cocoa dusted cake will crack, creating a bark-like texture and appearance, but feel free to frost and decorate to your liking. (see Coffee Buttercream Icing).
14. Slice the ends of the roll off at an angle, then stick them on the side of the log.
15. Serve and enjoy!

## **Recipe: Coffee Buttercream Icing**

### **INGREDIENTS:**

4 large egg whites  
1 cup sugar  
3 sticks (1 1/2 C) unsalted butter, room temp, softened  
2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

### **METHOD:**

1. Whisk the egg whites and sugar together in the bowl of an electric mixer.
2. Set the bowl over simmering water and whisk gently until the sugar is dissolved and the egg whites are hot.
3. Attach the bowl to the mixer and whip with the whisk on medium speed until cooled.



4. Switch to the paddle and beat in the softened butter and continue beating until the buttercream is smooth.
5. Beat instant espresso into the buttercream.

## Recipe: Gløgg



**Serves: 8-10**

Gløgg is a Norwegian mulled wine, accompanied by slivered almonds and raisins and is traditionally served during this time of year.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

2 bottles of red wine

1 cup of Brandy or Vodka

4 Tablespoons mulling spices

1/2 cup sugar

raisins and sliced almonds garnish



## **METHOD:**

1. Pour wine, brandy or vodka, sugar and mulling spices into a large pot.
2. Bring to a simmer (don't boil!) then remove from heat.
3. Let steep for 2 hours.
4. Before serving, reheat.
5. Serve hot with raisins and blanched almonds.

## **Recipe: Crispy Roast Pork with Cherry Sauce**

**Serves: 8-10**

Served with Braised Red Cabbage.

## **INGREDIENTS:**

### **Roast:**

6 pound bone-in skin-on pork shoulder  
salt & pepper to taste  
1 Tablespoon crushed juniper berries  
1 Tablespoon winter savory  
1/2 teaspoon mustard powder  
1 Tablespoon brown sugar

### **Red Cabbage:**

4 lbs. red cabbage  
1 cup red wine vinegar  
1 cup cherry juice, currant or cranberry juice can also be substituted  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoon *Beau Monde* - allspice, bay, cinnamon, cloves, mace, nutmeg, black and white pepper  
1 teaspoon salt

### **Cherry Sauce:**

1 cup 100% pure dark cherry juice  
1/2 cup fruity red wine like zinfandel  
1/4 cup of dried morello cherries  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
black pepper to taste

## **METHOD:**

1. Pre-heat the oven to 250 F.

2. Rub the entire roast with salt, pepper and spices.
3. Place it on a rack in a large roasting pan.
4. Let it roast for about 6-6.5 hours - while it is roasting make the red cabbage and the cherry sauce (see below)
5. Once the roast is fully cooked remove from the oven and let rest while you heat the oven to 500 degrees.
6. Then put the roast back in the oven and rotate the pan every 5 minutes. This makes the skin perfectly crispy!
7. Once the roast is crispy remove it from the oven and let rest for about 10 minutes. Before cutting into it. It should fall off the bone and shred easily.

### **To make the red cabbage (takes approx.. 1 hour)**

1. Shred cabbage
2. Place the shredded cabbage in large saucepan with vinegar and let simmer about 20 minutes (be sure to stir often to prevent cabbage from sticking to pan and burning)
3. Add cherry juice, sugar, spices and salt and let simmer about another 30 minute or until it is the right consistency for your palate. Some like it softer than others.

### **To make the cherry sauce (takes approx.. 15 minutes)**

1. Mix all the ingredients in a small saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil, over medium heat then reduce heat to low so it simmers.
3. Reduce the sauce until it is 1/2 of the original amount.
4. Place in a small serving bowl for ladling on top of the pork before serving.

## **Recipe: Risgrøt**

**Serves: 6-8**

One of my favorite holiday foods is Risgrøt - a traditional Norwegian dish, a rice (ris) porridge (grøt) typically eaten on Christmas Eve for dinner with various dried and cured meats. I've made it every year during the holiday season since I was an exchange student in Norway a lifetime ago. It's one of our favorite holiday traditions. But it is delicious to serve any time during the cold winter months. I often go against tradition and eat it as a breakfast porridge - my daughter loves it.

Risgrøt is a rich, flavorful, stick-to-your-bones kind of food. Perfect for cold weather!

It is also a tradition in Norway for children to put out a bowl of porridge for the Nisser-the elves on Christmas eve! Although these elves have nothing to do with Santa, they are associated with and originate from Norwegian farm life.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup of water

1 cup of Arborio or short-grained white rice

1 Tablespoon of sugar

pinch of salt

dash of cinnamon

1 quart of whole milk

Toppings: butter, cinnamon, raw cane sugar or honey

### **METHOD:**

1. Preheat the oven to 300
2. In a medium saucepan place the rice with the water, sugar, salt and cinnamon.
3. Cook over medium high heat until water has been absorbed.
4. Add the milk and stir then bring to a low boil.
5. Immediately move from heat and place a lid on the pan.
6. Place the pan in the oven and cook for 1.5 hours or until all the liquid has been absorbed by the rice and a creamy texture has been achieved.
7. Serve immediately by creating a smørøya (“butter island” - or a melting pat of butter) and topping with cinnamon and sweetener.
8. Feed your Nisser!
9. Feed yourselves and enjoy!

## **Third Day - December 22**





- Resting & Relaxing
- Making Outdoor Ornaments for Wildlife (Birds & other Creatures)
- Hygge

After 2 days of heavy activity and devotional work, we batten down the hatches and snuggle in with family and fur babies, making time to enjoy a bit of "hygge" as the Danes call it. Good activities for this day include: watching holiday movies, listening to holiday music, taking naps, reading, working on crafts and eating junk food. After all that relaxing there may be time for meditation and maybe a little divination, but we don't push it if we just need the whole day to recuperate.

## **Edible Outdoor Decorations**





One activity we tend to enjoy on this day is popping some popcorn and along with enjoying it ourselves, stringing some on yarn with fresh cranberries to make an edible garland for the birds and other backyard creatures, seen and unseen. Or we spread some natural peanut butter on pinecones and cover it with birdseed. We usually designate one of the cedar trees growing near our house to hold these offerings.

Another fun activity is to paint a birdhouse and put it out somewhere near your house. You can get them very inexpensively at craft stores. We got a very cute double decker one for less than \$8 at A.C. Moore.

## **A FEW WORDS ON “HYGGE”:**

“Hygge” is a sort of wintertime mantra that has become very popular in the US and UK over the past few years. It comes from a long held Scandinavian tradition, which is a year round way of being that has started to be embraced in other Western countries, especially for the cold months of the year when so many are affected by the colder days and longer nights.

Generally translated to “cozy”, hygge is a lifestyle and a way of interacting with others. Scandinavians who are no strangers to cold and dark days have embraced the cold and the dark and made it sacred and something to relish in and be enjoyed. It is about focus on spending good time with good people in a warm and welcoming environment and letting even the simplest thing, like making tea or coffee feel special and

enjoyable by creating ritual around it and having the intention of slowing down and really enjoying the moment.

This sentiment is especially important during the holiday season, where we are all expected to do so much - so many people to see, so many activities to enjoy, so much food to eat, that oftentimes it ends up feeling exhausting instead of fun.

The founder of Hygge House, Alex Beauchamp sums it up perfectly:

“The Danes see both the domestic and personal life as an art form and not every drudgery to get away from.”

The Scandinavian countries are always cited in the top 10 of the “Happiest Countries in the World” and it comes in large part from their ability to enjoy the activities of daily life, especially in winter and keep the cozy feeling going all year long. In many parts of Scandinavia they not only deal with bitter cold and biting wind, but also much shorter days. When I lived in Trondheim, for a few weeks in winter, the brightest it got was a sort of dusk and that was only for 4-5 hours, the rest of the day was dark as night.

Along with keeping a healthy diet, that often includes supplementing with Vitamin D, B12 and fish oil, Scandinavians tend to have a certain mental attitude about less than ideal weather conditions by having dinner parties and other gatherings with friends and family, cooking hearty meals to be enjoyed in warm and cozy houses or cabins, baking (I can almost smell the cardamom!), but most importantly by not letting the weather stop them from getting outside and enjoying nature, which is why it is often said they are born with skis on their feet - taking to the forests any chance they get, of course equipped with nice snacks like sandwiches and chocolate and hot drinks, like tea or coffee.

Here are a few simple ways to bring Hygge into your life. Start using these ideas during the Yule season and then see if you can expand on them for the rest of the winter, and then the whole year:

1. Candles - candlelight is cited as one of the most hygge things you can do. It certainly does create a feeling of gentle warmth and coziness.
2. Keep it Simple - simple is often better because it allows you to actually take full enjoyment of the moment instead of getting caught up in all the details, losing the reason why you wanted to do something in the first place.
3. Comfort - whether it is clothes, warm blankets, putting on a fire or some soothing music, comfort is key to creating hygge.
4. Ritual - making the simple special, like drinking a hot beverage out of a special cup, having a special tea set reserved for Sunday tea and homemade baked goods by the fire listening to good music (one of our big weekly rituals), or putting some luxurious bath salts into a hot tub and sinking into the warmth and soothing sensation. Or how about pizza night on Saturday, getting the whole family involved in making them from dough to toppings and then enjoying with a family movie. The key is keeping it simple and fun - taking everyday occasions and making the most of them.
5. Go Out in Nature - put on your warmest and coziest clothes and head out for a winter walk. If you live somewhere where there are nice public picnic areas, why not bring a picnic of warming food and drink enjoyed by candlelight? Or if you don't live in such a place, then make some hot cocoa and warm waffles as a snack when you get home.

## **Fourth Day - December 23**





- Count Your Blessings
- Make Wish Ornaments
- House Blessing Using Yule Log Ash

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS:

For most people who celebrate the most well known winter holiday in the Western world, Christmas, this might be the busiest day of the year. Many Heathens and other Pagans still celebrate Christmas with their families. This is the time to make sure everything is all arranged and ready for December 25th.

We just talked about Hygge, so with that in mind take a moment to count your blessings and give thanks for what you already have, the simple things you sometimes take for granted: your breath, your family, the fact that your heart beats, the home that you live in, the food on your table, the plants and animals that bring you that nourishment.

The Yule Tree is a physical representation of The Tree of Life. Do you have wishes for the coming year? Place them on the tree. You can make ornaments, marked with symbols of the hopes and dreams, or you can simply write them on paper and tuck them into the boughs of the tree, or tie them on with ribbon or string.

# MAKE A WISH ORNAMENTS:

## INGREDIENTS:

1 cup ground cinnamon

1/2 cup applesauce

dash of cloves

sprinkle of water

## SUPPLIES

- Cookie Cutters
- Toothpick
- String

## METHOD:

1. Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Start with very little water. It may not seem like enough at first, but this takes a good bit of time and elbow grease. You can always add more water later if you have to. But the key is to make sure they don't get too wet.
2. Roll the dough out like you would for cookies or piecrust.
3. Cut with cookie cutters, we generally use a star shape or hearts, but you can use whatever shape you like.
4. Using a toothpick, make a hole at the top of the ornament so you can thread it with string later to hang up.
5. Use a toothpick to draw symbols on your ornaments, or use a sharpie to draw the symbols on once the ornaments are dry and cool.
6. Bake at 200 F for 2 hours.
7. Let cool completely before stringing and hanging.

## HOUSE BLESSING AND YULE LOG AMULET





Today is a good day to start getting the home in shape, especially if we will be celebrating in our home with family and friends over the next few days. We want the energies in the home to be balanced and for any old or stagnant energy to be cleared out. Also, sometimes holidays can be challenging periods for many families and so doing a nice house blessing is a good way to set the stage for more peaceful encounters and gatherings.

## **SIMPLE 10 STEP HOUSE BLESSING:**

### **TOOLS:**

- Smudge Stick/Incense Stick
- OR Salt water in a clean Spray Bottle
- Ashtray or Heat safe dish
- Broom

### **METHOD:**



1. De-clutter and clean your house - especially wiping down the floors and counters and using a broom to clear out any cobwebs in the corners of the house.
2. Make sure you are clean as well and wearing fresh clothes.
3. At this point you can invite any Gods or Goddesses or other Ancestors or spiritual allies that you work with to join you. Sometimes I have asked Thor for his aid, if I felt there was very negative energy or if I really needed to ward the Innangard. At those times I wear my Thor's Hammer amulet. You might also ask the aid of Frigga who is the closest in the Northern pantheon to a Hearth Goddess. But it is also appropriate and I would say more appropriate to work with those whom you already have an established relationship with.
4. Do a simple smudging of the entire house with burning incense or with the salt water. I walk around the perimeter of the inside of the house and every room with a smudge stick, stick of incense or a spray bottle of salt water. These are all ways to remove stuck energy and add a protective layer to the home. If I am using a smudge stick or incense stick, I make sure to hold an ashtray or heat proof dish underneath because ash falls off and sometimes there are sparks and this prevents any from falling to the ground and creating an accident. It is important to be very diligent when working with burning materials to make sure that it is contained safely.
5. I move through the house and each room in either a clockwise (if I want to add protective and positive energy) or counterclockwise (if I want to concentrate of getting rid of stuck, stagnant or negative energy) direction.
6. Make sure to concentrate especially on windows, doorways, and any other connection to the outside world, or threshold, like telephone jacks, outlets, computer modems, wifi devices, etc. It is through these connections that outside energies enter the home. Get into corners and closets and inside lampshades and behind curtains.
7. After you cleanse each room, state the intention for the room. As you leave the room, be sure to smudge or spray salt water all over the doorway and in the middle open space. I often then trace the Algiz Rune (protection) with my finger over the threshold to prevent any of the energy I am moving in the rest of the house from settling in the room I just cleansed. I also use the smudge stick or incense stick as a pen and trace Algiz over every window in the room I have cleansed.
8. Once you have gone through the whole house take the broom to your most used doorway and sweep the energy out the door.
9. Then finally place the ashes from your Yule Log under your doorstep. If that is not possible, then place it under a welcome mat.
10. Thank any of the Spirits that you asked for aid and give an offering of food and drink.

## **Fifth Day - December 24**



- Holiday Lore Explained
- Offering for Santa and the Reindeer
- Books & Chocolate

Most people in the Western world can agree that this is one of the most magical days of the year. A day when most things feel possible and people have a twinkle in their eye. This is also known as Christmas Eve, the night that Santa comes to give presents to all the children of the world. But Santa is not just for children, although he loves them best.

To most Pagans he is The Holly King. He has many other names as well, but this is one we can all relate to. The Holly King reminds you that even in the deepest darkest time of the year, there is still vibrancy and life - that is why lots of people have evergreens decorating their homes right now. The evergreen is a symbol of everlasting life and is an ancient symbol that is still carried on in many of our holiday celebrations.

The gifts of The Holly King are those of holding tightly to that last shred of joy, if that's all you've got, or to live with jolly exuberance if you have more! The Holly King is this, and so much more, he is a deeply layered character with many lessons and he is deeply bound to the Earth and Nature and her cycles.

So to oversimplify, who we call "Santa" is not here for us just one day a year. His ability to help us

manifest our dreams and wishes is strongest between the Autumn and Spring Equinoxes and the very height of his power is over the 12 days of Yule, but his giving spirit can be felt all through the year, we just have to tap into it and ask for help. So when I say that I believe in Santa Claus, I really mean it!

So then what's the deal with the Reindeer? Personally I adore Reindeer. People post them all over my social media and I even have a tattoo of one. But what is their symbology, why are they so well loved this time of year?

Reindeer have been around for millennia and for a long part of human history we have worked together. Through the domestication of reindeer, humans have gained companionship, transportation, shelter, sustenance and warmth. We have learned to live with each other in ways that are helpful to both sides.

In the arctic regions the Amanita muscaria or fly agaric mushroom grows, it is a mushroom that causes hallucinations. As the reindeer graze on lichens and other foods they often eat the amanita, in fact they really enjoy eating it because it makes them high and they enjoy the extra energy and exuberance it gives them. Under the effects of the mushrooms they enjoy prancing around and jumping high in the air.

It is a long held tradition in the North where these mushrooms grow for the shamans to then drink the urine of the reindeer who have eaten the mushrooms. The mushrooms are very toxic when fresh but after passing through the digestive system of the reindeer, most of the toxins are filtered out, making their urine safe for humans to drink. This state of euphoria helps human shamans to travel to the other world to seek knowledge for the good of their people. They often used the hallucinogenic properties to travel to the Tree of Life on the Winter solstice to gain knowledge and wisdom to share with their people. Legend tells that the shaman and the reindeer would then fly to the North Star to retrieve such gifts.

Personally, for me Reindeer remind me of that wild magical spirit that I want to make sure I nourish within myself and of course, they have strong ties to Santa and The Holly King.

## **OFFERINGS**

This is the night where nearly everyone in the Western world gives an offering to a Pagan God: milk and cookies for Santa, and our family does the same. We usually make a special cookie on December 24th especially for this offering and leave it out with some of the night's dinner and a nice dram of single malt Scotch. We also leave carrots and sugar cubes for the Reindeer.

I created this recipe for Pfeffernusse Shortbread cookies, which I think, make a delicious offering, plus they make the house smell wonderful. Pfeffernusse means “pepper nut” in German and refers to the fact that most recipes contain ground pepper. Pfeffernusse is in the Lebkuchen or Gingerbread family of cookies, which dates back to the 12th Century. Gingerbread is based on Teutonic honeycakes. There are also versions of these pepper nut cookies in Scandinavia and The Netherlands.

### **Recipe: Pfeffernusse Shortbread Cookies**





**Serves: 6-8**

**INGREDIENTS:**

8 oz. almond meal

4 oz. oat flour

4 oz. date or coconut sugar

1 TBS Pfeffernusse Spice Blend: freshly ground: 1/4 teaspoon each: tellicherry peppercorns and cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and ginger plus 1 whole star anise (you can ground these spices in a coffee grinder)

8 oz. cold butter

**METHOD:**

1. Using a food processor pulse together almond meal and oat flour, sugar and Pfeffernusse spice blend until well blended.
2. Then pulse in the butter, broken up into chunks. Pulse until the ingredients come together to form a batter.
3. **To Make cookies:**
  - Option 1. To make cut out shapes, refrigerate dough for about an hour so butter hardens and is easier to



handle. After an hour take dough out and press it out until about an inch thick. Then cut out into shapes and place on a cookie sheet to bake.

- Option 2. Immediately roll dough into little balls using your hands and bake.

4. In a 375 F oven bake for about 20 - 30 minutes or until edges are browned.

## BOOKS AND CHOCOLATE

A few years ago we adopted a wonderful Icelandic tradition. In Iceland it is commonplace to give books as a Christmas gift. So on Christmas Eve Icelanders give each other books and then spend the rest of the night reading.

After your dinner, you can do the same. We make this tradition all the sweeter by also giving a special piece of chocolate with the book.

## Sixth Day - December 25





The Sixth Day of Yule is the perfect day to spend with family and friends who celebrate this day as Christmas.

First we check to see that The Holly King or Santa and the Reindeer ate all their treats. This is where the magic comes in for the little children. As us parents put all the presents under the tree after the little ones have gone to bed the night before, we also burn the offerings in the fire.

You can celebrate this day like most families do who celebrate Christmas, opening presents, having a yummy and relaxed breakfast and enjoying all the little children play with their new things. A magical day for sure!

It is tradition in many families to eat ham on Christmas Day. Did you know that the tradition of the Christmas Ham comes from the ancient Scandinavians and Germanic peoples? A traditional celebratory meal for these people was a whole roasted hog, a tribute to the God, Frey, who is associated with boars. So you can enjoy your Christmas Ham with the knowledge that it along with so many other Christmas traditions come straight from our Pagan ancestors.

## Seventh Day - December 26





This day is a good one to celebrate one of the Nine Noble Virtues: Hospitality!

Most of this season is dedicated in many ways to hospitality and at any time we are likely to have people to share the celebrations with. This day is nice for having people over for a low-key celebration.

Many people use this as a day to recover from the festivities so far, but most people aren't ready to give up the celebrating quite yet. So it is a nice time to invite people to your home or go visiting and bring gifts to those outside of your family circle. It is important to schedule some quieter times during these 12 days.

## **Eighth Day - December 27**



- Warding for the Winter
- Cold & Flu Tincture
- Bone Broth

- **Outside House Blessing**

Old Man Winter is here to stay and during Yule it is nice to make preparations for the long winter ahead. Doing work in the mundane world like making tinctures or teas to ward off colds and flus is a good way to keep your family healthy.

It is also a good day to make lots of bone broth to freeze for using in soups and stews throughout the winter.

I also do a house blessing, both around our entire property and also around the perimeter of the house itself. We live in Northern Vermont and so we spend a good deal of the winter months snuggled up inside the house. Doing this kind of blessing is like battening down the hatches and keeping everyone safe and healthy during the long cold days ahead. The procedure for doing this blessing is the same as doing the indoor house blessing described on Day 4.

## **Cold & Flu Tincture:**

**DISCLAIMER:** I am not a health care provider, trained herbalist, nor homeopath. I am just a person who has used and researched these integrated therapies for close to 20 years and I use them on myself and my family and have had excellent results. Please read the safety precautions of each herb before ingesting, or consult a health care provider.

These herbs together make a perfect, well-rounded cold and flu remedy for any of the season's "nasties". Each of these herbs can also be taken individually or together as a tea, which helps immediately. Tinctures are more concentrated and powerful and take longer to steep. I use tinctures when I need to "bring out the big guns" so to speak. That is why it is a good idea to make the tinctures before you get a cold, ready and waiting just in case!

Boneset is an herb I learned about from a teacher of mine years ago and it is crucial for helping the body ease through the aches and pains of cold and flu. Boneset is an herb that makes your body feel better, instead of feeling like a truck hit it.

Elder is all the rage these days - from elderflower liqueurs like St. Germaine to wonderfully soothing elderberry syrups for cold and flu. Elderberry is a great immune booster and chock full of antioxidants and Vitamin C. There is something in the tartness of the fruit that makes remedies taste pretty good too and I love the color of elderberry.

Chaga is my new love. The more I learn about it, the more I love it. Chaga is a mushroom that grows mainly on birch trees. It has been used for healing by cultures all over the world because of its amazing properties and is one of nature's most potent adaptogens. An adaptogen helps your body fight the effects of stress and disease. Chaga is full of minerals, vitamins and amino acids. It is anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-viral and anti-yeast. Some even claim with good reason that it is cancer fighting. This is an amazing one of nature's remedies and that is why I add it to my tincture and also why I take chaga nearly everyday during winter steeped in my chai tea.

Echinacea is one of the first herbs that people think about when they get sick, and there is solid science to back up the use of this herb too. Echinacea has been often linked with helping people get over colds faster and also as a preventative by boosting the immune system.

## **INGREDIENTS:**

1:5 dried herb to alcohol mixture; the alcohol mixture should be 50 percent alcohol and 50 percent water. I

like to use a mixture of brandy and vodka for the alcohol part because it tastes good.

Pint sized glass jar with lid

Small mesh strainer

Amber bottle with dropper

## **METHOD:**

When I made my tincture, I checked to see how much brandy and vodka I had and then went from there with measuring out the right amount of herbs. I used 50% Elderberry and an equal amount of the other herbs: Chaga, Boneset and Echinacea to round out the other 50%.

1. Grind the dried herbs down to the consistency of coarse cornmeal by using a coffee grinder, Vitamix or other high powered grinding tool. As you crush and mix your herbs, focus on your intention for healing and imagine the power of your intention radiating from your heart, into your arms and down through your fingers, finally out into the substances you are working with. Thank all of the herbs for coming together for healing.
2. Measure and mix the alcohol mixture in a separate jar.
3. Weigh the herb and pour it into the macerating container.
4. Slowly pour the alcohol mixture over the ground herb.
5. Steep the mixture: Cover tightly, shake, and set to macerate in a dark place at room temperature. Label with the current date and herb name. Shake daily for a period of 3 weeks. At the end of this time, pour the mixture into a strainer and express thoroughly by hand. Collect the crude tincture in a jar, label it, and set it on a shelf to settle overnight. The following morning, pour off the liquid through a filter and collect the finished tincture in a jar. Store in labeled amber glass bottles, in a cool room, and out of the sunlight.

**Dosages:** You will have to experiment with dosage, start with about 5 drops, to make sure there are no reactions. However, the average dosage for children from 4 years to 10 years is 5 to 10 drops of well-diluted tincture in water or juice, taken 3 times daily. The average dosage for children from 4 years to 10 years is 5 to 15 drops of well-diluted tincture in water or juice, taken 3 to 5 times daily. The average adult dosage is 30 to 60 drops (1 to 2 standard droppersful) diluted in a little water and taken 3 to 5 times daily.

**Note on Alcohol:** If you don't want any alcohol to remain, and I like using this method for children, or those with alcohol dependency, place the drops in a cup of boiling hot tea or hot water and let the alcohol evaporate. Then you can drink it hot or when it has cooled off.

**Note on Herbs:** I order all of my herbs from Mountain Rose Herbs, I like their quality and have always enjoyed their customer service. They also sell bottles for storing tinctures.

## **Recipe: Bone Broth**

There is a lot going around these days about the health benefits of eating bone broth and, or gelatin (aka collagen). Bone broth contains gelatin, which in turn contains the amino acids glycine and proline. These amino acids are found in the bone, connective tissue and organs of animals. Our ancestors used to consume these parts of the animals they ate, but modern diets don't usually include them, which is a shame because gelatin is great for our skin, nails, hair, joints and even our digestive organs, which directly relates to our immunity.

All you need to make your own bone broth are: bones, apple cider vinegar (preferably raw), water and a crockpot. You can also make bone broth in a stock pot, but I prefer a crockpot because you do need to keep



a close eye on it, it just does its thing.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

Chicken Bones - at least 6 ounces worth

1 Tablespoon of Apple Cider Vinegar

Water (to cover)

### **METHOD:**

1. Place bones or whole chicken in the crockpot.
2. Cover bones and or chicken with water.
3. Pour in 1 TBS of raw apple cider vinegar (at this point you could also add seasoning, I like to season simply with salt, pepper and one or two bay leaves). Apple cider vinegar helps break down the bones so the collagen can leech out into your finished product.
4. Turn Crockpot on High setting and let cook for 6-12 hours. If you are using a stockpot, make sure the pot doesn't lose too much water and never let the stock come to more than a simmer - you don't want it to boil.
5. After 12 hours, put crockpot on the Low setting and let it go another 12-24 hours more
6. Strain broth and store
7. Broth stores well in mason jars and can be stored in the freezer for up to 6 months. Just make sure to leave a little headroom in the jars to prevent them from breaking the glass as the broth expands during the freezing process.
8. If you used a whole chicken, you can now take the meat off the bones and reserve to chicken soup or chicken salad. Then I store all the skin, tendons and other less desirable pieces in a jar in the fridge to mix in with my pets' food. I then burn the brittle bones in our wood stove. This means there is never any waste.

## **Ninth Day - December 28**



- Tie up loose ends
- Create Space

Use this day to work on projects that need some work to be finished, things that feel like they are just "hanging" and you want to get them off your plate and finished. Or you can create space for new things to come into your life by clearing out old and unwanted items and donating them to those in need.

**Here are some things you can do:**

1. Work on scrapbooks, or photo albums
2. Get the next year's calendar set up with important dates and birthdays
3. Clean the pantry and refrigerator of expired foods
4. Take care of bills that need to be paid
5. Clean out a closet of items you no longer use and donate them
6. Clean out your junk drawers
7. Organize kids rooms or toys



It feels good to start the New Year with these items no longer on our plates, so we can step over the threshold to the New Year feeling lighter.

## Tenth Day - December 29



- Get out in Nature
- Homemade Hot Cocoa
- Homemade Trail Mix

Get out in nature, breathe some fresh air, and go for a walk, no matter what the weather is (as long as it is not dangerous to do so!). If it is cold or snowing, dress for the weather and spend some time out of doors. It is good to remember that we are part of this planet, related to the animals, trees and plants that surround us. That the air we breathe provided to us by trees just by living their lives. Remembering that I am part of the cycles of nature, life and death and that I am inherently "wild" is a good way for me to decompress during the holiday season.



### Here are some quick ideas for outdoor winter fun:

1. Take your dog or children (or all of them!) for a walk and bring a thermos of hot cocoa
2. Build a bonfire and make s'mores or roast hot dogs
3. Build a snowman and decorate it with natural elements - branches, stones, etc.
4. Go sledding, skiing or snowshoeing
5. Check the birdfeeders you made and see if they need replenished
6. Look for bird nests and other animal homes
7. Take photos of the winter landscape
8. Hug a tree
9. Follow animal tracks and figure out what animal made them
10. Go out at night and look at the moon and watch for shooting stars

### Recipe: Trail Mix



**Serves: 4-6**

**INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup almonds

1 cup cashews

1/2 cup pepitas or pumpkin seeds (you can also use sunflower seeds)

1/2 cup dried blueberries

1/2 cup dried cherries

1/4 cup dried Turkish apricots

1/4 cup chocolate chips

**METHOD:**

1. Mix all the ingredients together and store in an airtight container.

**Recipe: Homemade Hot Cocoa**





**Serves: 1**

**INGREDIENTS:**

8 oz. milk of your choice

3 Tablespoons fair trade cocoa powder

Pinch of cinnamon

Maple syrup to sweeten to taste, but about 1 Tablespoon

**METHOD:**

1. Heat milk in a saucepan for about 3-5 minutes, over medium heat, until hot but not boiling.
2. Stir in cocoa powder and cinnamon.
3. Sweeten with maple.



# Eleventh Day - December 30



- Divining The New Year
- Active Dreaming
- Goals, Not Resolutions
- Create a Dreamboard

## Divination Spread for The New Year

It is a good idea to do a Year reading if you practice any kind of divination. I also like to pick a rune for each month (so 12 in total) to divine what the year ahead will look like, month by month

## Active Dreaming

Active Dreaming is a bit like meditation and visualization combined. It is a practice of thinking about what you want for your life, through visualization. So basically, you are imagining what you want in your life, down to the nitty gritty. The best visualizations are the ones where you flesh out every detail. So instead of saying, "I want to be rich", you imagine all the ways that being rich would feel like. Where would you live? How would you spend your days? Who would be there with you? Etc.

It is a great practice for everyone in the family to take part in. While you are engaged in Active Imagination, write all of your ideas down so that you can all come together afterwards and create a Dreamboard.

### **Goals, Not Resolutions**

Thinking about what you wish to accomplish during the next year sets the tone for the next year. Many people dislike making resolutions because it feels like a punishment. So framing it in the way of creating goals and milestones after a session of Active Dreaming feels more empowering. This is the time to create some mundane steps to get you closer to achieving those aspirations. What do you need to do this week or this month, or within the next 6 months to get there?

### **Dreamboard**

A dreamboard is a physical representation of all the things you came up with during active imagination. You can either then create a family dreamboard or each individual can create their own - or you can do both!

Basically, you cut out pictures, words and phrases that represent your dreams, wishes, hopes and desires and place them on a large poster board. Then you hang this collage up in a place that you see often (we usually put ours in our bedroom, opposite the bed so we always see it when we wake up).

You will be amazed to see how many of those dreams come true over the course of the next twelve months.

## **Twelfth Day - December 31**





- Tie Up Loose Ends
- Tidy Up
- Prepare to Celebrate! (again!)
- First Footing Ritual

### **Happy New Year!**

This is another wonderful day to celebrate with family and friends before getting “back to reality”. But here are a few more ideas to celebrate and get in the right mindset for the New Year.

The Yule Season is starting to wind down and will go off with a big bang tomorrow! Today is a day to get everything in order - anything from this year that you don't want to bring into the New Year and you'd like to finish up, to have a cleaner slate (no one is perfect!).

Ring in the New Year in with a clean house feels wonderful. To me the state of my home says so much about the state of my life and I think it is important to start the New Year in the same way you want the rest of the year to go. Plus my house is starting to come undone after so many days of celebration.

I have a good bit of Scottish ancestry and Scotland has very specific and special traditions for bringing in the New Year - it is called Hogmanay and harkens back to ancient fire festivals. We love incorporating a lot of it into our celebrations tonight.

## Here are some things we'll do to ring in the New Year:

### 1. Bake Shortbread for First Footing

First footing is a ritual done to ensure good luck for the house. It is said that the first person who crosses the home's threshold on New Years is a foretelling of what kind of luck the household will have that year. The first foot is ideally a dark haired male (light hair coming over your threshold in the night usually meant an enemy had come to your doorstep back when this tradition began), and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, and a wee dram of whisky to offer health, abundance and hospitality to the family. You then invite him in and enjoy the treats.

### 2. Clean the house and smudge the inside of the house - the Scots use juniper branches to do this. You can use a stick of juniper incense if that is easier

### 3. Make a soup of beef bone broth and homemade gnocchi (a take on traditional New Year's eve fare in Italy)

### 4. At Midnight burn any of the ornaments you made with wishes and desires during the Solstice

### 5. Listen and sing along to Auld Lang Syne

### 6. First Footing & Whisky Toast

## CONCLUSION

I hope you have enjoyed celebrating the 12 Days of Yule with your loved ones. Now that you have celebrated the 12 Days, you can think of more creative traditions to incorporate into next year's celebrations.

**GOD JUL!**

**Thank you**

Thank you for taking the time to read *A Guide to Celebrating the 12 Days of Yule*.

If you enjoyed it, please consider telling your friends or posting a short review. Word of mouth is an author's best friend.

Thank you,

Jenn Campus

**About the Author**





Is a published author who has been writing on a variety of topics for the past 20 years. She is passionate about the stories, foods, cultures and mythology of the Northern countries ever since she was an exchange student in Norway. She is a practicing polytheistic Pagan devoted to Wuldor/Ullr and also honors many of his other kin as well as those Gods related to the hunt and the wild places. An avid archer, she is obsessed with deer, especially reindeer, is a self-proclaimed herb nerd, a foodie and has been known to hug trees.

You can find her at: [dreamsofydalir.com](http://dreamsofydalir.com)

[www.dreamsofydalir.com](http://www.dreamsofydalir.com)