

Midsummer Celebration

Altar

- Summer flowers, grapes and cherries

Centering

Invocation

- Sun King marries Queen of Summer

Casting The Circle

- Song: Earth My Body
- Calling The Four Directions

Battle of Oak King and Holly King

- Explanation
- Holly King North; Oak King South
- Battle of Drums: migration from south to north
- Songs: Summer Is Icumin In/Winter Is Icumin In

Midsummer Fire

- Fire dance
- Healing herbs

Offering To Sun

- Light fire;
- Proceed clockwise around fire with flower in hand
- Song: Where Have All The Flowers Gone
- Place flower in fire, thinking of what needs to blaze

Healing Waters

- Healing herbs most potent at midsummer
- Healing requires the body to rest and regain its balance
- Dip hands in healing water and splash it on fire

Meditation

- Lake at nightfall; boat takes to island; woman leads thru apple orchard to temple
- Lie on pallet; woman applies herbs; awake to sunlight; thank woman; return

Opening Circle)

- Farewell to God and Goddess
- Farewell to Four Directions
- Song: Hail and Farewell

Midsummer Invocation

This is the time of the rose, blossom and thorn, fragrance and blood. Now on the longest day, light triumphs, and yet begins the decline into dark. The Sun King grown embraces the Queen of Summer in the love that is death because it is so complete that all dissolves into the single song of ecstasy that moves the world. So the Lord of Light dies to Himself, and sets sail across the dark seas of time, searching for the isle of light that is rebirth. We turn the Wheel and share his fate, for we have planted the seeds of our own changes, and to grow we must accept even the passing of the sun.

Battle of Oak King and Holly King

Excerpted from *Ceremonies of The Seasons* by Jennifer Cole

Midsummer rituals reenact a symbolic battle between the wise Oak King, who rules from Midwinter to Midsummer, and the youthful Holly King. Before the Summer Solstice, the Oak King is always growing in power. Crowned with lush green leaves, he is usually represented as a young man, full of optimism and vitality. At the Summer Solstice, however, the Oak King is defeated by the Holly King, who reigns until the Winter Solstice when he is, in turn, vanquished by the Oak King. Their cyclical battle reflects the balance between the seasons.

Re-enactment

- Holly King stands in North
- Oak King stands in South
- Congregants gather around Oak King; move to Holly King during the battle of the drums
- Drums battle until everyone surrounds Holly King

Midsummer Fire

The magical power of fire was especially important at midsummer. People lit bonfires to celebrate the sun at its height of power and implore it not to withdraw into winter's darkness. Fires ritually strengthened the sun to swell fruits and ripen grain, and it protected both human and livestock from insect-borne disease. The festival began the night before Midsummer Day, according to the Celtic custom of starting a new day at dusk, hence the title of Shakespeare's magical play, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

In Ireland there were similar solstice fire customs and perhaps an even greater awareness of the supernatural aspect of this time. Midsummer Eve was known as one of the three spirit nights of the year, the other two being at Beltaine and Samhain. In places where the faerie faith was strong, people saw faeries joining in the festivities, mingling with the human revelers.

The Lady of Flowers plays a vital part in the modern Cornish bonfire celebrations. We don't know how traditional this figure is, but similar customs have taken place in many areas of the British Isles and Ireland for centuries. In nineteenth century Wales, girls with bundles of three or nine different kinds of flowers joined hands with boys who wore flowers in their buttonholes and hats. Together they jumped over the midsummer fire, then threw all their flowers into the fire for good luck and to honor the sun, symbolized by the fire itself.

Midsummer was also the traditional time to cull magical plants and healing herbs, which were at their most potent at this time of year.

Midsummer Meditation

Centering

- Close eyes
- Take deep breaths
- Allow breath to carry you to another place, another time

Setting

- Standing at edge of lake
- Nightfall; mist floating upon water
- Hear the sounds of the night: crickets, frogs, owl in nearby tree

Transition

- Boat appears; steered by some magic will of its own
- Step in the boat; sit on a wooden bench in its center
- Rock the boat gently; feel how it supports you on the water
- Listen to the water parting before the boat as it glides through the mist
- The mist lifts; an island appears;
- A woman in dark blue robes waits for you on the shore

Arrival

- Woman greets you; motions to follow
- Leads you through apple orchard silvered by the moon
- At center of island is a low, stone temple
- Woman leads you thru door made of crystal beads to pallet of heather
- Lie on pallet as woman places herbs in cauldron
- Smell the herbs as she places them on the parts of your body needing healing
- Herbs lull you into dreamy state and it seems the woman is singing.

Parting

- After short time, long time, or no time at all, slowly return to consciousness
- Woman bids you rise and leads you outside; sun gilding the apple orchard
- The boat awaits you at the shore; thank woman and bid farewell
- Sit in boat; it moves when you regain your balance, thru sun lit water
- Alight from boat when reach shore; take deep breaths and return to present