



**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- **Aequinoctium
Auctumnale**
- **Chants**
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- **Mabon Recipes**

Aequinoctium Auctumnale (Fall Equinox, Mabon, c. Sept. 21)
Gk. He Isemeria Phthinoprine.

Apollonius Sophistes (c) 1995

Many of the Greek and Roman festivals of this season celebrate the end of the military campaigning season. At the end of September and beginning of October, however, the emphasis shifts to the Corn Mothers and other agricultural deities. In many Greek states the month beginning mid-September was called Demetrium after Demeter (though it was called Boedromion in Athens). [PFA 53]

Great Mysteries (Grk., c. Sept. 29-Oct. 5)

Ancient: 15-21 Boedromion (the festival begins on the full moon and continues to the third quarter).

In origin the Great (Eleusinian) Mysteries were a festival for the autumn sowing. They are, of course, mysteries, so some things about them remain concealed, in particular, the contents of the Sacred Kistai (boxes) and the actual initiation of the Mustai (Initiates). Anyone can be initiated, regardless of age or sex.

The festival is conducted by the Archon Basileus and four assistants. Two of these, the Hierophantes and Dadoukhos (Torch Bearer) wear the ependutes (a long-sleeved tunic ornamented at the hem and shoulders), headband and Thracian knee-boots; they carry one or two long torches. Further, there are Mustagogoi (Initiate Guides), who guide individual postulants, often their friends, through the initiation.

Preparatory

Preparations begin two days before the Mysteries proper (13 Boedromion, c. Sept. 27): on the 13th two mounted Epheboi (Youths) travel to Eleusis and on the 14th they accompany Ta Hiera (the Holy Things), contained in round Kistai bound with purple ribbons, which are brought by wagon to Athens, where they are received at the shrine (Eleusinion). (Mylonas has guessed that Ta Hiera are Mycenaean goddess figures.) An official, the Phaidruntes (Cleaner) of the Two Goddesses, reports their arrival to Athena's priestess (as at the Skira, c. June 27, Athena's priestess pays her respects to Demeter's). (The Two Goddesses are, of course, Demeter and Persephone, but Their names are considered too sacred to be mentioned in the rites.)

1st day: Agurmos (Gathering)

The would-be Mustai, who must have already been initiated in the Lesser Mysteries (February), gather in the Agora. The Kerukes (Herald) calls for them to step forward, and informs them that they must have "a soul conscious of no evil" and that they "must have lived well and justly." Those afflicted by blood-guilt or other impurity are

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warned away. At this time names may be taken, and it may be ensured that the postulant is already initiated in the Lesser Mysteries. The postulant spends the remainder of the day in spiritual exercises recommended by his or her Mustagogos.

2nd day: "Seaward, Initiates"

The second day is for purification. The postulants travel to the sea (or other place of ritual cleansing). On the order "Seaward Initiates!" they enter the water with their offering so that both may be purified by salt water.

In ancient times the offering was a piglet, which was supplied to the postulant, for the pig is sacred to Demeter. In the evening the piglet was sacrificed and the postulant was sprinkled with its blood; later there might be a feast on the pork. Nowadays we might use an ear of corn as an offering and sprinkle the postulant with water in which the corn has been boiled.

3rd day: "Hither the Victims"

The third day is for the main sacrifice to the Two Goddesses. (See "Neoclassical Sacrifice" in The Lyre #3 for more details.)

4th day: Epidauria

On this day the postulant secludes him or herself indoors to prepare mentally for the initiation. There are also celebrations for the god Asclepius, for on this day in 420 BCE He came, with His daughter Hugia (Health) and His sacred snake, and requested the Eleusinian initiation.

5th day: March to Eleusis

The mounted Epheboi, the postulant Mustai, their Mustagogoi, initiated Mustai, and the officials escort Ta Hieria back to Eleusis. The procession begins at the shrine of Iakkhos, and His priest, the Iakkhagogos (Iakkhos Guide), leads the procession with the sacred image of Iakkhos, which depicts Him as a torch-bearing youth. Iakkhos is the Eleusinian name of Dionysos/Bacchus; in the procession He is the joyous attendant of the Two Goddesses, and mediates between Them and the Mustai. The marchers are accompanied by musicians (flute, harp, voice); all join in the ecstatic cry, "Iakkhe!" (Shout!).

The Mustai wear garlands of myrtle and may carry bakkhoi, which are bundles of myrtle branches tied with wool; they may also carry a sack of travel necessities on a pole. Religious observances are made at sacred sites along the way. At one place the Krokidai tie a yellow woolen thread (kroke) on the right hand and left leg of each postulant. At another place disguised men verbally abuse the postulants, which may drive away bad luck. The final part of the procession is by torchlight, because Demeter is traditionally depicted seeking Kore by torchlight.

At night the postulant offers to Demeter the Kernos, which is an earthenware dish with many small cups attached; small offerings of the fruits of the earth (grain, peas, beans, etc.) are placed in the cups. The postulant shares these with the Goddess.

6th day: Initiation

On the day of Initiation sacrifices of corn meal are made to the Two Goddesses. In sympathy with Demeter when She mourned the absent Kore, the postulants fast and prepare themselves mentally for the sacred rite. Towards evening, like Demeter when She accepted the drink from Meteneira, the postulants drink the Kukeon (mixed drink), comprising water, barley meal and pennyroyal. (There is debate about

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the ingredients of the Kukeon, but this is the formula given in the "Homeric Hymn to Demeter," ll. 208-9.)

The initiation, which lasts through the night, takes place in a closed building called the Telesterion (Initiation Place); in its center is the Anaktoron (House of the Anax = King), the "Holy of Holies" to which no-one but the Hierophantes (Revealer) is admitted. The specifics of the initiation are, of course, secret, and have not been revealed to this day (though a great deal of conjecture has been published). However, they involve Things Said, Things Done and Things Revealed. There is music, song and speech; there are ritual actions; there are revelations by torch light. Thereby the Mustai participate in the Demeter's joy at the restoration of Persephone. The effect of the Mysteries on the initiate is profoundly transformative. Even the clothes worn during the initiation are consecrated thereafter.

The Epoptai (Those Who Have Seen) are the initiates of the highest level (who must have been Mustai for at least one year), who have beheld the supreme symbol of Demeter, as Triptolemos, the first Mustes, beheld it, and they have witnessed the Hieros Gamos (Sacred Marriage) of Demeter and Zeus.

7th day: Plemokhoai

Each Mustes has two water-filled Plemokhoai (Flowing Floodtides), which are earthenware vessels shaped like a spinning-top; one is tipped out to the east and the other to the west, while the Mustes pronounces a spell known only to initiates. [LEM 155; NFR 25; PFA 59-72; SFA 24-35]

Feast of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva (Rom., Sept. 13)

Ancient: Id. Sept. (full moon).

The Ides (full moon) of every month are sacred to Jupiter, as the Kalends (new moon) are to Juno. This day is an Epulum (feast) for the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno and Minerva), so statues of the three deities are present, dressed in festal robes, and represent Their attendance at the feast. The face of Jupiter's image is reddened with minium (red lead) and He reclines on a lectulus (couch); Juno and Minerva sit on sellae (chairs).

The feast begins with a sacrifice to Jove (in ancient times it might have been a white heifer, since Jupiter and Juno prefer white sacrifices), at which mola salsa (salt meal) made by the Vestal Virgins is used (see "Neoclassical Sacrifice" in *The Lyre #3* for more on the mola). The Vestals' mola salsa, which is made from the first ears of the previous harvest, is used at only two other times (Vestalia, Jun. 9, and Lupercalia, Feb. 15). For the feast proper, tables of food are set before the images of the Gods and music accompanies the festivities.

Although September is under the protection of Vulcan, most of the honor goes to Jupiter. The Ludi (Games) both proceed and follow the Feast for the Capitoline Triad (in ancient times the Ludi lasted Sept. 5-19). There are races, wrestling, parades and performances of various sorts. [SFR 23, 183-7]

Lesser Festivals

Genesia (Grk., c. Sept. 19)

Ancient: 5 Boedromion (nominally mid-Sept. - mid-Oct.).

This is the Athenian festival in honor of the dead. (Of course families honor their own dead on their anniversaries.) There are lamentations and speeches of praise. In ancient times, the vernal equinox (approximately) ended the summer campaigning season, so several of these festivals (Genesia, Artemis Agrotera, Boedromia) relate to the cessation of fighting. [PFA 53-4]

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Mabon Ritual*

Decorate the altar with acorns, oak sprigs, pine and cypress cones, ears of corn, wheat stalks and other fruits and nuts. Also place there a small rustic basket filled with dried leaves of various colors and kinds.

Arrange the altar, light the candles and censer, and cast the Circle of Stones.

Recite the Blessing Chant.

Invoke the Goddess and God.

Stand before the altar, holding aloft the basket of leaves, and slowly scatter them so that they cascade to the ground within the circle. Say such words as these:

Leaves fall,
the days grow cold.
The Goddess pulls Her mantle of the Earth around Her as You,
O Great Sun God,
sail toward the West to the lands of
Eternal Enchantment.,
wrapped in the coolness of night.
Fruits ripen,
seeds drop,
the hours of day and night are balanced.
Chill winds blow in from the North wailing laments.
In this seeming extinction of nature's power,
O Blessed Goddess,
I know that life continues.
For spring is impossible without the second harvest,
as surely as life is impossible without death.
Blessings upon You,
O Fallen God,
as You journey into the lands of winter
and into the Goddess' loving arms.

Place the basket down and say:

O Gracious Goddess of all fertility,
I have sown and reaped the fruits of my actions, good and bane.
Grant me the courage to plant seeds of joy and love in the coming year,
banishing misery and hate.
Teach me the secrets of wise existence upon this planet,
O Luminous One of the Night!

Works of magick, if necessary, may follow.

Celebrate the Simple Feast.

The circle is released.

*Scott Cunningham
A Guide For The Solitary Practitioner

Mabon Recipes

Salem Witch Pudding

Recipe by Gerina Dunwich

4 eggs, separated
 1-1/2 cups pumpkin puree
 1 cup light brown sugar
 3/4 cup half-and-half
 5 tablespoons rum
 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1/4 teaspoon salt

In an electric mixer or large mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff. In a different bowl, beat the egg yolks until thick and lemon-colored. Combine the yolks with the remaining eight ingredients; mix together well; and then fold in the egg whites.

Pour the pumpkin mixture into a buttered 1-quart souffle dish. Place it in a pan of hot water and bake in a 350-degree preheated oven for about 45 minutes. (This recipe yields 6 servings.)

Stuffed Grape Leaves

Prep Time: 1 hour
 Cook Time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

1 jar grape leaves
 2 Cups white or brown rice, cooked about halfway
 1 onion, chopped
 1 egg
 1/2 Cup golden raisins
 1 granny smith apple, chopped
 1/2 Cup loose fresh mint leaves, chopped
 1/3 Cup chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans are perfect, but pine nuts work too)
 2 Tbs. curry powder (or more, depending on how much you like curry)
 4 Cups vegetable broth
 Lemon wedges

Preparation:

First, if you're using commercially prepared grape leaves, remove them from their jar and rinse them in cold water for about five minutes. They're pickled in a brine solution, so you'll want to separate them gently and let them soak for a while. If you're using fresh leaves off the vine, soak them until they're

nice and pliable.

Meanwhile, combine the rice, onion, egg, raisins, apple, mint, nuts and curry powder together in a bowl, mixing well.

Lay a few grape leaves out on a cutting board, shiny side down, and remove their stems. Place a small, compact scoop of the rice mixture in the middle of each leaf - about a tablespoon should do it, although you could use more if you have really big grape leaves. Fold the grape leaves over each other, like you're wrapping a burrito. Be sure to roll them as tightly as possible. Repeat until you've used up all your rice mixture, or run out of grape leaves.

Place all your rolled leaves in the bottom of a large pot. You can pack them in pretty tightly, which will help keep them from unrolling as they cook -- you can even stack them in layers, if you need to. Pour the broth in on top, covering the rolled leaves just barely to the top. Cover the pot and bring to a rolling boil, and then decrease heat and simmer for about 25 minutes.

When the rolled leaves are done simmering, the rice will be cooked all the way. Remove the leaves from the pot and allow to cool. Squeeze lemon wedges over the tops. These are really nice served with chilled yogurt and pita bread as a light meal, or they can be a side dish to a Mediterranean or Middle Eastern-style dinner.



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Festival for Artemis Agrotera (Grk., c. Sept 20)

Ancient: 6 Boedromion.

This day is a feast for Artemis Agrotera (Huntress), for the sixth day is Her birthday. (After the Athenian victory at Marathon this festival became known as Kharisteria, "Thanksgiving.") [PFA 54-5; SFA 82]

Boedromia (Grk., c. Sept. 21)

Ancient: 7 Boedromion (first quarter).

This is a minor thanksgiving festival for Apollo (since the seventh day is His birthday), in gratitude to Him as a rescuer in war. [PFA 53]

Festival for Apollo and Latona (Rom., Sept. 23)

Ancient: IX Kal. Oct.

A minor festival for Apollo and His mother, Latona; it corresponds approximately to the Boedromia. [SFR 188]

Festival for Venus Genetrix (Rom., Sept. 26)

Ancient: VI Kal. Oct.

A minor festival for Venus Genetrix (The Mother who Brings Forth). [SFR 188]

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Scroll of Oplontis.

Mabon images and pictures



Suggested Reading List

- ***The Spellcaster's Reference: Magickal Timing for the Wheel of the Year** by Eileen Holland
- ***A Conspiracy of Faith: Why They Had to Kill Santa and Other True Stories About Holidays and Religion** by Rel Davis and Greg Fisher
- ***Llewellyn's Sabbats Almanac: Samhain 2009 to Mabon 2010** by Llewellyn
- ***Enchantment Encumbered: the Study and Practice of Wicca in Restricted Environments** by Ashleen O'Gaea and Carol Garr
- ***Mabon: Pagan Thanksgiving** by Kristin Madden

Pagan Chants

Autumn Time

Lyrics by: author unknown
Tune: original
Date: 1986

Autumn time, red leaves fall
While the weeping sky looks over all
Demeter sadly walks the land
Dying grasses in Her hand

Herne

Lyrics by: Circle in the Greenwood
Tune: original
Source: <http://www.earthspirit.com/mtongue/chtlib/chtlifr.html>

Herne, Horned One,
Hunter 'neath the Northern Sun,
Watcher at the Gates of Winter,
Flame on the Wind.

Newsletter Submission Due Dates

Imbolc Issue—January 2nd
Ostara Issue—February 22nd
Beltane Issue—April 2nd
Midsummer Issue—May 20th
Lammas Issue—July 2nd
Mabon Issue—August 21st
Samhain Issue—October 2nd
Yule Issue—November 21st

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