



**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- Saturnalia
- Chants
- Yule Ritual
- Yule Recipes

Y U L E 2 0 0 8

## Saturnalia

In pagan Rome, the celebration of the Winter Solstice began on December 17 with the feast of Saturn -- also called the Saturnalia. Through December 23rd, the Roman world engaged in merrymaking and the exchanging of gifts in honor of father sun and mother earth.

The Saturnalia festival has an astronomical character, referring to the completion of the sun's yearly course, and the commencement of a new cycle. Saturn, from whom we get the word for the day of the week, Saturday, represented by the sun at its lowest aspect at the winter solstice. The earth is cold, most plants are dead, and it was believed that the sun might also be approaching death. Today winter solstice is around December 21, but because of calendar changes, it was originally December 25th. Saturnalia celebrated the sun overcoming the power of winter, with hope of spring when life would be renewed. In Roman times, Bacchus, the god of wine, became the lord of these festivals.

### Deities honored around Winter Solstice time

# Saturn - equivalent to Greek Kronos the son of Uranus (Heaven or Sky-Father) and Gaea (Ops) Earth-Mother) and the youngest of the Twelve Titans, God of Agriculture.

# Ops - Mother Earth, Goddess of Plenty; partner to Saturn and Consus. In the syncretic Roman polytheistic view, associated with their other great mother deities, Cybele and Juno. The followers of Opis paid their vows sitting and touching the earth of whom she was goddess.

# Sol Invicta - Sun God; Feast of Sol Invicta, the Unconquered Sun, set in 274 A. D. (December 25) The dominant cult among Rome's elite during the rise of Christianity. A sophisticated use of archetypal symbols and rites of initiation to effect high moral standards; "temperance, self-control, and compassion -- even in victory". A early model of Masonry which also has roots in the Egyptian temple system.

# Consus - God of Storebin of Harvested Grain. Consualia, end of sowing season festival (December 15).

# Juventas - Dies Juvenalis Goddess of Young Manhood; related to Greek Hebe of Youthful Beauty. Coming of Age for Young Men (mid-December).

# Janus - God of Beginnings and Gates; Solar God of Daybreak; Creator God. Janus Day and Beginning of Calendar Year (January 1), set in 153 B.C.; again in 45 B.C.

# Bacchus (Dionysus) Brumalia, Winter Solstice on pre-Julian calendar (December 25) originally the Greek winter holiday associated with Dionysus and wine. By the time of the winter Brumalia, the wine was ready to be poured into jars for drinking.

# Christ Christmas (December 25), Christians move Christ's birthday to this date in 336 A.D.

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Saturnalia festivities began with ritual and sacrifices in the Temple of Saturn. The statue of the god was hollow and refilled with fresh olive oil, as a symbol of his agricultural functions. The woolen bonds which fettered the feet of the ivory cult statue within were loosened on that day to symbolize the liberation of the god. There was a public banquet, which Livy says was introduced in 217 BC (there also may have been a lectisternium, a banquet for the god in which its image is placed in attendance, as if a guest. After the rituals, the celebrants shouted the cry of "Io, Saturnalia!", a sign for the happy festivities of the season to begin.

### **Saturnalia Myth**

In the Greek myths, Kronos (Saturn) was the Roman Deity of Time and an ancient Italian Corn God known as the Sower. Male ruler of the Roman Gods prior to Jupiter, Saturn's weapon was a scythe or sickle. Kronos was one of the twelve titans. Upon the advice of Gaea (who understood the changes of life and knew that Uranus would never, of his own accord, yield to the younger generation), Saturn castrated his father and thus separated Heaven from Earth. Gaea created out of flint...a mineral of her own substance...a sickle with which to complete the deed. It was the tool by which life was cut down at the time of harvest and was crescent-shaped like the moon, symbolic of cyclic rise and fall. It was believed that the spilled blood of Uranus formed such creatures as the Giants and the Furies, and that his genitals (which were tossed into the sea eventually produced the beautiful Venus/Aphrodite).

With his sister-wife, Rhea (Ops) Kronos (Saturn) is said to have sired six of the twelve gods and goddesses of Olympus. However, Kronos was jealous of his children, and, fearing that they would seek to overthrow him as he had done to his father, swallowed his first five children. Rhea tricked Kronos by substituting a stone for the baby Zeus (Jupiter) and secreted the infant off to Crete. When he reached adulthood, Zeus forced Kronos to regurgitate his siblings. United, the siblings waged war and defeated their father and imprisoned him and the other Titans in the underworld.

### **Recalling An Ancient Age**

According to some folktales, Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto were representative of Air, Water and Death...the three things that time itself cannot kill...and the overthrow of Saturn symbolized the demise of the old culture which worshiped this ancient God. According to Roman mythology, after Saturn was dethroned by his son Jupiter (Zeus), he hid himself (latuit) in the countryside, called Latium in his honour. At the invitation of the god Janus, he reigned, together with his wife, Ops, over Rome's golden ages, bringing prosperity, abundance, and civilization. The Romans nostalgized that legendary state as the Golden Age of Latium. Many of the rites of the Saturnalia were intended to restore that long lost utopia--if only for a short time each year.

### **Time cuts down all Things**

Since ancient history, time has been identified with Saturn. The sickle (and later, the scythe) became representative of the cruel and unrelenting flow of time which, in the end, cuts down all things.

### **Roots of the Christmas Tree**

Rome borrowed most of its mythology from its conquered people, primarily the Greeks. However the Saturnalia has strong roots in the central Egyptian mythological story.

The Sun-god Osiris and his consort, Isis, together with Re-Atum, the "Father of the Gods," were regarded by the ancient Egyptians as the supreme rulers of a Golden Age of plenty called Zep Tepi or the "First Time." Their kingdom ended abruptly when Osiris was murdered by his evil brother, Seth. The childless Isis searched for the dismembered body of Osiris, which she then reassembled and resuscitated long enough to conceive a son named Horus. Horus was believed to be the reincarnation of Osiris, and the

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new husband of Isis, whose destiny it was to repossess the Kingdom of Osiris from the control of Seth. The tradition of the Christmas tree symbolically portrayed the death and reincarnation of Osiris in his son, Horus.

The Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in Pagan Rome and Pagan Egypt. In Egypt it was the palm tree; in Rome it was the fir; the palm-tree denoting the Pagan Messiah, as Baal-Tamar, the fir referring to him as Baal-Berith. The mother of Adonis, the Sun-God and great mediatorial divinity, was mystically said to have been changed into a tree, and when in that state to have brought forth her divine son. If the mother was a tree, the son must have been recognized as 'Man the Branch.' And this entirely accounts for putting the Yule Log into the fire on Christmas Eve and the appearance of the Christmas tree the next morning. As Zero-Ashta, 'The seed of the woman,' ...he has to enter the fire on 'Mother night,' that he may be born the next day out of it, as the 'Branch of God,' or the Tree that brings divine gifts to men.

-Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1916,

## Orgia

Among Christians the (lower case) word "saturnalia" came to mean orgy; Orgy = Orgia = Secret Worship "The word "orgy" comes from the Greek word "orgia" meaning "secret worship". Since most secret worship involved sexual rituals, and Christians were opposed to anything sexual the word orgy came to have the debased meaning it has today, rather than the noble, spiritual meaning of the original word.

Many words that are used to describe extreme religious fervor are also used to describe great sex, such as passion, bliss, and ecstasy. There were many orgies throughout the year as celebrations in the religion of the Goddess. Many of these celebrations have been taken over by the Christians who removed their sexual nature. The best known is undoubtedly Christmas taken from the pagan festival of Saturnalia.....

"In Roman times, Bacchus, the god of wine, became the lord of these festivals. During the Bacchanalian festivals the everyday rules were turned topsy-turvy. The masters waited on the servants. All sexual prohibitions were lifted. It was a time of true good will towards all men. Even dresses were exchanged with men dressing as women. Erotic dances were performed with a large erect phallus being carried around in the dancing processions."

-Mary Ellen Tracy, aka Sabrina Aset, High Priestess of the Egyptian Church of the Most High Goddess

## Mithraism & December 25th: natalis solis invicti

(birthday of the invincible sun)

Before the 4th century, December 25th was best known as the birthday of the Persian hero and sun-god, Mithra. The myth tells that he sprang up full-grown from a rock, armed with a knife and carrying a torch. Shepherds watched his miraculous appearance and hurried to greet him with the first fruits of their flocks and their harvests. The cult of Mithra spread all over the Roman empire. In 274 AD, the Roman emperor Valerian declared December 25th the Birthday of Sol Invictus, the Unconquerable Sun.

Mithras, the sun-god, was born of a virgin in a cave on December 25, the winter solstice and worshipped on Sunday, the day of the conquering sun. He died and was resurrected in order to become a messenger god, an intermediary between man and the good god of light, and the leader of the forces of righteousness against the dark forces of the god evil.

"The great god, cut off in the midst of his power and glory, was symbolised as a huge tree, stripped of all his branches, and cut down almost to the ground. But the great Serpent, the symbol of the life restoring Aesculapius, twists itself around the dead stock...and lo, at its side sprouts a young tree - a tree of an entirely different kind, that is never to be cut down by a hostile power - ...and thus shadowed forth the perpetuity and everlasting nature of his power, how that after having fallen before his enemies, he has risen triumphant over them all. Therefore, the 25th of December, the day that was observed in Rome as the day when the victorious god reappeared on earth was held at the Natalis invicti solis, 'The birthday of the unconquered Sun.'"

-Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1916

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### **Greek Counterpart: Lesser or Rural Dionysia**

During the last half of December a festival known as the Rural Dionysia was held. Everyone including slaves would be expected to participate. According to Plutarch, there would be a procession comprised of the carriers of a jar of wine and a vine, someone leading a he-goat, next the Basket-bearer [Kanêphoros] carrying a basket of raisins, then the carriers of an erect, wooden phallus-pole, decorated with ivy and fillets, and finally the singer of the Phallic Song [Phallikon]. The god was carried into the city to represent Dionysus coming into the city. This was a distinctly fertility oriented ritual, with genitalia shaped cakes and orgiastic revels. but at a time determined by each village.

Four thousand years ago or so, ancient Egyptians celebrated the rebirth of the sun at this time of year. They set the length of the festival at 12 days, to reflect the 12 divisions in their sun calendar. They decorated with greenery, using palms with 12 shoots as a symbol of the completed year, since a palm was thought to put forth a shoot each month. Sun-worshipping Egyptians had the idea.

Sacaea was the Persian version. The annual renewal festival of the Babylonians was adopted by the Persians. One of the themes of these festivals was the temporary subversion of order. Masters and slaves exchanged places. A mock king was crowned. Masquerades spilled into the streets. As the old year died, rules of ordinary living were relaxed.

In the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine designated December 25, the birthday of the Roman Sun-God Mithra, as the birthday of Jesus Christ, thereby placing the Christian Savior among the pantheon of Roman gods. Constantine succeeded in drawing Christians into the pagan celebrations of Rome, which procured the religious unity needed for the success of the Holy Roman Empire.

### **Depraved Customs anew**

Some of the most depraved customs of the Saturnalia carnival were intentionally revived by the Catholic Church in 1466 when Pope Paul II, for the amusement of his Roman citizens, forced Jews to race naked through the streets of the city. An eyewitness account reports, "Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators. They ran... amid Rome's taunting shrieks and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily." As part of the Saturnalia carnival throughout the 18th and 19th centuries CE, rabbis of the ghetto in Rome were forced to wear clownish outfits and march through the city streets to the jeers of the crowd, pelted by a variety of missiles. When the Jewish community of Rome sent a petition in 1836 to Pope Gregory XVI begging him to stop the annual Saturnalia abuse of the Jewish community, he responded, "It is not opportune to make any innovation"

---David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, p. 74.



## Yule Recipes

### Wassail

The traditional, classic Yuletide hot mulled cider drink.

4 litres apple cider or juice (fresh milled organic is excellent!)  
 1 orange, chopped  
 1 lime, chopped  
 1 lemon, chopped  
 4 cinnamon sticks or 1 t. ground cinnamon  
 1 inch-square piece of fresh ginger or 1/4 t. ground ginger  
 1 t. cloves, allspice and/or star anise

Heat all and simmer in an enamel pot (aluminum can impart a metallic flavor) on low for an hour, then serve to cold, caroling folks.

brandy or rum for adults, optional

### Cocoa Snowballs

3 eggs 1 1/2 cup sugar  
 1/2 cup powdered cocoa  
 3/4 cup milk  
 1/4 cup butter  
 1 tsp vanilla  
 pinch of salt  
 1 1/2 cups flour  
 1/2 tsp baking soda  
 2 containers of white frosting  
 2 3/4 cups flaked coconut

Beat eggs, gradually beat 1/2 cup sugar into the eggs and set aside. Combine remaining sugar, cocoa, milk and butter in a pan and cook on low heat until sugar is dissolved and butter is melted. Remove from heat and add vanilla and salt. Pour egg mixture into that. In a bowl, put remaining dry ingredients and slowly add the

cocoa mixture, beating all the while.... fill 30 , 2 1/2" muffin cups about 1/2 full and bake 20-25 mins at 325 degrees. Cool completely and frost bottom, top and sides. Then roll them in the coconut. Let them stand at room temperature until the frosting is firm, then serve or store in a container.

### Danish Gingerbread Recipe

1 cup butter  
 2/3 cup brown sugar  
 1/3 cup light corn syrup  
 2/3 cup honey  
 1 teasp grated lemon rind  
 1 teasp vanilla extract  
 1 teasp ground ginger  
 1/2 teasp ground cloves  
 1 teasp ground cinnamon  
 1 teasp salt  
 1 teasp baking soda  
 4 1/2 cups flour

Cream butter and sugar. Add syrup, honey, lemon rind & vanilla, spices, salt & soda. Add enough flour to make soft dough. Chill until firm enough to roll.

Set oven to 350 degrees. Grease & flour baking sheets. On floured cloth roll dough 1/8 inch thick. Cut shapes with cookie cutters. Bake 8 min or until puffed and dry. Cool on a rack and decorate with colored icing.

## Simple Yule Ritual

from ÓMorag of the Shadows

### Materials Needed:

Dirt from the land you live on (to represent the Earth)  
A candle (bright yellow to represent fire, and the sun)  
Water (to represent, of course water. From your tap is fine)  
Incense (to represent air. Any scent you feel is appropriate will do)  
An evergreen branch (small or large will do)  
A small offering to the Reborn God (incense, something handmade by you, a string of beads, etc.)  
And most important, a quiet ritual space where you will not be disturbed.

Additional materials, such as pinecones, antlers, flowers, etc. can be added to the ritual space as desired. I usually have many things around me, that have special meaning to me, but this is meant to be a very simple ritual for the newcomer, so I will forgo adding more than needed.

Place the Earth element in the North, the Air in the East, the Fire in the South, and the Water in the East. Try to place them so that you can reach each of them easily from one position. This can be on a small table, a tree stump, or the ground. If you wish, cover the area with a cloth that you will only use for ritual to help put you in the right frame of mind for it. Light the Fire candle, and meditate on what Yule means to you.

After meditating, pick up the bowl of Dirt, and say (or think), "I am of this Earth, forever linked to the Gods." Draw a pentacle in the dirt. Replace.

Next pick up the Incense, drawing a pentacle in front of you with it say, "This is the breath of the Gods, which gives me life." Replace.

Picking up the candle, say, "This is the Flame that warms our heart, just as the love of the Goddess and the God warms our souls." Replace.

Last, pick the bowl of Water up, and say, "And this the ever-changing waters and nourishes life, without which we would not be." Replace.

Think on the God's rebirth, and the lengthening days that follow the Winter Solstice. Say what is in your heart at this time to the Goddess and the God. If you are in a situation that you are not comfortable to speak aloud, then think those words.

Next, take the offering you are giving to the Gods up in your hands, hold it to the sky and say, "This is my gift to you, for you have given many gifts to me. This symbolizes my pledge to you." Replace. Add why to this why you chose this offering.

Now for the closing of your ritual. Take up the Earth again, saying, "Thank you for watching over my rite." Pour the dirt back onto the ground if outside, if not, wait till you are completely finished then do it. Say the thank you for each of the elements. Pour the water out onto the ground as well. Take your offering to a favorite tree or plant of yours, and either place it on the branches where it won't be disturbed, or bury it near the roots. Place the incense under/over the offering, and leave it to burn itself out.

Take the candle inside, and place in a window. Let it burn all the way out. (Make sure there aren't any curtains or other flammable materials nearby that could catch fire. Be safe.) Spend the rest of the day aware of the significance of the day.

If you have any changes that you would like to make for yourself in this ritual, go ahead. Paganism is a living religion, always growing and expanding. Go with the Gods, Blessed Be.

## Yule images and pictures



## What books have you read, that you would suggest for the rest of us to read?

**The Winter Solstice** by Ellen Jackson

**The Return of the Light: Twelve Tales from Around the World for the Winter Solstice** by Carolyn McVickar Edwards

**The Winter Book** by Rotraut Susanne Berner

### Pagan Chants

#### Infinite Sun

We Are One With The Infinite Sun  
Forever And Ever And Ever

#### Lady Of The Winter Night

Lady Of The Winter Night Fill Our Souls With  
Dreams Of Light  
Lady Of The Falling Snows Beauty Tells Us All She  
Knows  
Lady Of The Sleeping Land Call The Sun From Sum-  
merland  
We Stand Between The Light And Dark Singing For  
The Newborn Spark ( 3 X)

## 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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