



The Promise of Spring Imbolc



Image Credit: WallpaperAccess.com

Imbolc Prayer

by Author Unknown

*The Festival of Lights brings the promise of spring,
Amid the cold of winter's dire sting.
Snowdrops poke their heads through the soil,
To herald the breaking of winter's bleak toil.
Our spirits are stirred by the waking light,
To focus our senses and strive for clear sight.
Bride the Healer and Poetic Muse,
Brings inspiration to conquer the blues.
The grain is blessed and ready to plant,
As we look ahead and plan the year's harvest.
Joyfully we banish the word "can't".
We kindle our resolution with inner light,
And know we have the power to make a solution.*

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Druid's Corner



Tidings of Imbolc

Dear people of sanctuary, and the manifold blessings of the Exalted Brighid upon you and upon your hearths and homes! Here we are, having made it to the halfway point between the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox, that which is the holy feast of Brighid and has been since the ancient days of our distant, Neolithic ancestors. While the snows of An Cailleach's cloak still shroud the land and the winds blow with a fierce chill, each day the light of the life-giving Sun shines a little brighter, a little longer, and we make ready to greet the impending spring with hope and endurance. For so many of us, this winter has been especially difficult as we face the stark realities imposed by the Covid-19 epidemic, social upheaval, the stresses of an unusual transition in our nation's federal administrations, and the emotional and spiritual hardships that are in some ways the norm of this point of the Wheel of the Year. Yet, not in spite of those hardships but in honor of them, we make ready to kindle a new flame upon our hearths and in our hearts to hold back the fear, sadness, uncertainty with a mighty blaze of steadfast commitment to life! As our friends among the Druids of ADF so often sing, "we will kindle a fire, bless all and with harm to none."

Since ancient days lost in the mists of time, the tending of a sacred flame has been the heart of this feast day. Indeed, the flame of Kildare had burned upon that sacred hill from the Neolithic age in unbroken succession of the care and commitment of holy women all the way into the sixteenth century, until King Henry VIII of England ordered the suppression of the monasteries so that he could channel their wealth to fund his wars. Yet even after such sacrilege, the memory and power of that commitment continued to inspire men and women alike to seek out the example of Brighid, either as goddess or as saint, and to tend her flame in the world, both at Kildare and in so many places across the globe. As a testament to that inspiration, that flow of Awen, in 1993 the flame at Kildare had been rekindled in an act of devotion and unity by both Pagan and Christian people who honor the lessons of Brighid and make manifest her work in the world once more. That flame continues to shine forth with brilliance, a small part of the power of the great goddess who shapes the world at her forge.



Image Credit: joannapowellcolbert.com

So just as She of the Forge, of the Hearth, of Poesy, continues to shape the world with her mighty flames, let us turn ourselves inward and ask, "in what ways am I shaping the world?" However large or small our sphere of influence, the words we speak, the actions we take, hold a power all their own to shape the world anew, for good or for ill. It is in this season when we are called to sit in stillness with the hearthfire and examine our own inner realms and meet them with understanding so that when the season of darkness finally gives way to the light of the Sun and the awakening of the Land, that we may stand ready to work towards a brighter, more equitable and sustainable harvest for us all, whatever paths we walk.

I invite you, dear ones, wherever you may find respite, to kindle a flame and join me in prayer:

*"Mighty Brighid, keeper of the flame, blazing in the darkness of winter.
O goddess, we honor you, bringer of light, healer, exalted one.
Bless us now, hearth mother, that we may be as fruitful as the soil itself,
And our lives abundant and fertile."*

Let us give thanks for the lessons of a hard winter, continue to carry true hope, and honor our commitments that are rooted in love, respect, and reciprocity. May the glory which rests upon all who love you, bless you and keep you, and may mighty Brighid grant her presence upon your hearths ensuring gracious abundance and abundant graciousness.

Your servant through darkness and light,
Jeremiah /|\
Archdruid of the Nemeton of the Ways



The Wizard and the Spring Maiden

by DJ Conway (excerpt from *The Ancient Art of Faery Magick: Stories for Adults and Children*)

The winter snows still lay thick over the frozen ground, as the cold wind whistled through the bare limbs of the trees. Even the new Sun felt cold to the little birds that huddled together in the trees to keep warm.

"The wizard isn't awake yet, is he?" asked a tiny chickadee.

"No, the door to his house is still closed and locked." A blue jay cocked her head and stared down at the little hill in the meadow below. "I haven't seen so much as a hair of his beard at the window either."

"I wish the Maiden would awake. Then we would know spring will soon arrive." The chickadee fluffed its feathers as it looked off across the snow-covered fields.



Image Credit: [Woodland Tales](#)

A gray squirrel suddenly poked his head out of a hole in the tree and chattered at the birds in a grumbling voice. "What is all the noise out here?" he asked. "I'm trying to sleep you silly birds!"

"The wizard is still asleep, and the Maiden hasn't awakened yet," the chickadees all answered at one time.

"Perhaps there will be no spring this year." The blue jay flew to a limb nearer the squirrel and looked at him with her black eyes.

"Nonsense," the squirrel answered as he squeezed out of his hole to sit on the bare branch. "Spring always comes." He rubbed the sleep from his eyes, then fluffed his tail with his little paws.

"We're so hungry," chirped the chickadees. "If the Maiden doesn't wake up soon, we will starve."

The squirrel cocked his head, listening for the sweet song of the Maiden as she calls everything in the and to begin waking up, He heard nothing but the whistle of the cold wind and the rattle of the bare tree branches.

In the meadow just beyond the wizard's hill he saw a flock of sheep and

heard their bleating, but he saw no baby lambs.

"This is the right time of year for the Maiden to awake and the young Sun King to dance through our forest," the squirrel said. He scratched his head as he thought. "I'll go wake the wizard and ask him if he knows why the Maiden still sleeps."

The squirrel dashed down the tree trunk and leaped across the snow. In long leaps, he ran across the ground until he reached the rocks surrounding the hidden door to the wizard's home. He stopped and listened, but he heard no movement within the hill house.

"Wake up! Wake up! Wizard!" The squirrel pounded on the door. "Sleepy old wizard," he grumbled to himself. "Wake up you lazy gnome! We need your help." He pounded on the door with both paws.

Green Leaf, the little gnome wizard, stirred restlessly in his downy bed. Someone was pounding on his door, making a terrible racket that echoed through the rooms and halls of his snug little hill house. He opened one eye and looked around the room.

One beam of pale sunlight crept through a crack in the shutters over the windows and lit up the face of the strange clock beside the wizard's bed. Instead of hours and minutes, the clock face had the names of the seasonal festivals: Imbolc, Spring Equinox, Beltane, Summer Solstice, Lunasa, Autumn Equinox, Samhain, and Winter Solstice.

Green Leaf yawned, then opened both eyes to stare at the clock. "It's Imbolc!" he said, as he sat up suddenly in bed. "I've over slept. Oh my, oh my."



The Wizard and the Spring Maiden

by DJ Conway (excerpt from *The Ancient Art of Faery Magick: Stories for Adults and Children*)

The little gnome wizard scrambled out of his warm nest of blankets and hurriedly dressed. The pounding kept banging through the hill house.

"I'm coming," Green Leaf shouted as he hopped toward the door, pulling on his boots. He fumbled with the lock, finally opening the little door. "Stop that noise!" he said as the squirrel jumped around and chattered at him. "I haven't had my tea yet!"

"No time, no time!" said the squirrel. "The Maiden is still asleep! There are no lambs in the fields! The young Sun King hasn't arrived! Hurry, wizard, hurry!"

Green Leaf sighed as he put on his heavy green cloak and his tall pointed red hat. With his wooden staff in one hand, he trudged out into the snow and headed for the thickest part of the forest. Soon he was deep inside the old forest of bare tree trunks and snow-covered firs and pines. Behind him the pale rays of the Sun began to creep through the trees, as if they followed his tiny footprints in the snow.

"I wish the Maiden would sleep in the same place each year," he grumbled, but he knew She didn't. It was his job each Imbolc to find Her sleeping place and wait there until the Sun King arrived.

He searched and searched for the sleeping Maiden until he at last found her curled up in the shelter of a hawthorn thicket. She looked so beautiful, her long hair falling down over Her arms, that Green Leaf couldn't be grumpy anymore. He smiled, then raised his arms and began to sing his Imbolc greeting to the Sun King.

The forest suddenly lit up with brilliant sunbeams as the young Sun King danced through the trees toward him. The glow about Him was so bright that Green Leaf had to squint his eyes to see.

"Blessed Imbolc, Green Leaf." The deep voice and loving smile of the Sun King warmed the little gnome wizard.

"Blessed Imbolc, Lord," Green Leaf answered as he bowed to the Sun King. "I thought I was late."

"No my little friend. Everyone knows when Imbolc comes, all the animals and plants and even gnomes." The Sun King's smile lit up the trees around them. "Awake, my Lady," He said, as He knelt to kiss the sleeping Maiden.

The Maiden sat up, stretched Her arms, and smiled. "It is time for all the world to awake," She said, and the Sun King nodded as He helped Her to Her feet. They went off together through the forest, dancing to awaken the life-energy of the Earth.

As Green Leaf trudged back through the snow to his hill home, he could still hear the wake-up song of the Maiden and feel it spreading out through the world. Around him the life-energy in the trees began to stir. Deep in the ground he could feel the little burrowing creatures starting to wake from their winter sleep. New life was stirring all around him. The gnome wizard crossed the meadow where the sheep were and found the first of the newborn wobbly-legged spring lambs blinking in the sunlight.

"Welcome to the world," Green Leaf said to the little lamb. Soon everything will be wide awake and growing. The grass will be sweet and green. and you will have other little lambs to play with." The lamb and its mother looked at the gnome wizard and blinked their eyes.

"Yes, the life-energy from the Maiden is once more running through the world, making everything new," Green Leaf said, as he tramped down the path to his house. Suddenly, he felt the energy flowing through his own body. He leaped into the air and clicked his heels together in joy. "The Maiden is awake!" he shouted to the squirrel and birds waiting for him near his door.

Green Leaf went back inside his hill home and hung up his cloak and hat. "Now I am going to have a cup of tea, then go back to bed and have a nap until Spring Equinox." And the little gnome did just that.



Deep Breathing Meditation – Part 2

by Brandi Collesides

Elongate the Breath

Last issue we spoke of using the entire lung to take full breaths in and relaxing to release the full breath out. So congratulations! You are breathing from your belly, and feeling your lungs expand and relax from belly to chest. Now we are going to link your inhale to your exhale and elongate your breaths.

Most people inhale quickly and exhale slowly. Or hold their breath. This exercise will help you slow down and link up your inhale and exhale.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your knees the same height or lower than your hips.
2. To start, just breathe naturally without trying to change your breath.
3. Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out through your mouth. This helps you to regulate the speed of your breaths.
4. After a few breath cycles, count your inhale. If you only count to 4 on your inhale, exhale for 4 counts.
5. You want to breathe in slowly and evenly for the full 4 counts. Not inhale for 2 counts and hold for 2 counts. Same for the exhale. Exhale slowly and steadily for a full 4 counts.
6. Do this for a few breath cycles, then move to 5 counts in and out. Once that feels comfortable, move to 6. And so on.



Illustration by: Irene Lee

I usually breathe to a count of 12 comfortably (after I work my way up), but getting beyond 12 is a struggle for me. But my lungs are small. Other people have much larger lung capacity and can easily go to a count of 20 or more without much difficulty.

If you get tired, let go of the control and let your body just breathe naturally for a few breaths. You don't want to tire your diaphragm out.

Practice for 20 minutes at a time. Work your way up if 20 minutes is too much. If you feel like 20 minutes isn't enough, sit for longer. At the height of my meditation days, I would sit for 45 minutes to an hour every day doing this exercise.

A Useful Exercise for Calming & Sleep

Next time you are having a difficult time falling asleep, try this exercise in breath control:

1. Inhale through your nose for a count of 4.
2. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
3. Exhale through your mouth for a count of 8.
4. Repeat this for 2-3 cycles and reassess how you are feeling.

I find myself relaxing very quickly after taking a few 4-7-8 breaths. Did it work for you?



Formal Hellenic Libations

by Amy Lupinski, Voice of Yew

For more a more formal libation ritual, there is a relatively basic outline to follow:

1. **Purification** of miasma. Miasma is spiritual pollution gained by just being a human being and is gained through the touching of a dead body, the birthing process, or sexual intercourse. The purification can occur by washing hands and/or the face with khernips. Khernips can be made by taking a lit match or herb, such as a bay leaf, and dousing it in the water.
2. **Procession** from outside of the ritual space into the ritual space. This can be a few steps or a few miles, depending upon the location of the ritual space.
3. **Invocation of Hestia, Daemons, Ancestors, & all of the other Gods.** In addition to invoking these entities, libations and offerings may also be given.
4. **Hymns and Stories** of the particular deity of focus for the libation. At this time, hymns and stories are told to understand the different faces and aspects of the god/goddess of focus. Libations may be given during this time.
5. **Reversal of the Invocation of Hestia, Daemons, Ancestors & all of the other Gods.** At this time, we thank these entities for their blessing and attendance at our rite in the reverse order (Gods, Ancestors, Daemons, and then lastly, Hestia).
6. **It is done!** Be merry with the other participants and go forth with the blessings of the Theoi (Gods)!



Image Credit: HellenicGods.org

Upcoming Nemeton of the Ways Libation: February 13, 2021 - *Aphrodite*

Aphrodite (Αφροδιτη) is best known as the Goddess of Love and Beauty. From theoi.com:

“Ancient mythology furnishes numerous instances in which Aphrodite punished those who neglected her worship or despised her power, as well as others in which she favoured and protected those who did homage to her and recognized her sway. Love and beauty are ideas essentially connected, and Aphrodite was therefore also the goddess of beauty and gracefulness. In these points she surpassed all other goddesses, and she received the prize of beauty

from Paris; she had further the power of granting beauty and invincible charms to others. Youth is the herald, and Peitho, the Horae, and Charites, the attendants and companions of Aphrodite.”

Please join the Nemeton of the Ways **Libation to Aphrodite** Event on Facebook for more information regarding the upcoming event!



True Locals!

Getting to Know Your Neighbor
by *Brandi Collesides*

Well, we are definitely in the height of winter, and the birds are in full-on eating mode! I'm filling my birdfeeders probably every 5 days, and that's still not keeping up with the voracious appetites of these feathery creatures.

On a regular, I am visited by Northern Cardinals, White-Breasted Nuthatches, Tufted Titmice and Black-Capped Chickadees. These are what I like to call our True Locals. You know, the birds that live here with us year round. Our truly native species. Of course there are others, but these 4 make up very common sightings almost anywhere feeders are out.

If you have these guys at your feeder, keep your eyes out for the White-Breasted Nuthatch's display dance. If a nuthatch is on a feeder, and another bird hops on as well, you may see the nuthatch face the intruder and spread its wings and sway side to side to make itself look much bigger in hopes to scare off the other bird. I was able to see a display last week. It's really cool!



There is a somewhat uncommon occurrence with the Titmice, Chickadees and Nuthatches. Even Downy Woodpeckers. In the winter months they will actually flock together, even roosting together at night. Once the winter months are over, they break off and go their separate ways, but during the winter months we get to see this mixing of their flocks for ourselves as they travel together feeder to feeder.



I've been putting out peanuts on my deck to satiate the ravenous appetites of the squirrels and blue jays. To my surprise, the tufted titmice decided to get in on the action. They find a stem on the peanut that they can grip with their beaks and take off with a food stash that looks way too large for their small body size. They are a very clever little bird.

One of the tamest birds is the Black-Capped Chickadee. If you have the patience, you can actually train them to take seeds from your hand. When I'm filling the feeders, I can stand 12" away without moving and the chickadee will be the first brave bird to visit the feeder with me that close.

Keep your eyes on your feeders this winter and let me know what cool behaviors you see in your flocks! I'd love to hear. Email me at now.mg.newsletter@gmail.com.



Ten Things You Can Do for Racial Justice

by Amanda McDowell

Do you want to learn more about racial justice, and what you can do to help? Here are ten steps to get you started. This list has been excerpted from the Medium article, [103 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#), and is only a start. I encourage you to peruse the article for many more ways to learn and get involved.

1. Watch this YouTube video, [5 Tips For Being An Ally](#).
2. There are [varied approaches to ending police violence](#). The best thing to do is to follow your local Black Lives Matter chapter or other local Black-led organization to find out the proposed policy and funding changes in your city or town. Donate to your local BLM chapter, sign up for updates, volunteer, and take action when asked.
3. Campaign Zero has [ten evidence-based solutions](#) to address police violence. Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to advocate for these policies.
4. Within the evidence-based solutions in #2, Campaign Zero has a project called 8Can'tWait, with [eight specific policies](#) to be prioritized to end police violence. The website has a fantastic tool wherein you can see which of the policies your city or town have been enacted. Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to advocate for the policies that have not yet been enacted.
5. Find out your city or town's policy on no-knock warrants (the [policy that led to Breonna Taylor's murder](#)). Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to ban no-knock warrants.
6. Write to your state representative and senator to end qualified immunity like [Colorado recently did](#). [Qualified immunity](#) permits government officials performing discretionary functions to be immune from civil suits unless the official violated "clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." In recent years, qualified immunity has been successfully used to defend the use of excessive or deadly force by police, like [in this case](#). Thank you to [Claudia S. Murray](#) for the suggestion.
7. Understand and share what "defund the police" really means. It's about a new, smarter approach to public safety, wherein we demilitarize the police and allocate resources into education, social services, and other root causes of crimes. What we're doing now isn't working — there are so many innocent people who have been harassed or killed by the police unjustly, and nearly every Black American has experienced some form of harassment by the police. Some good resources for this are [this video by BLM](#), [this Washington Post article](#) and [this Facebook post](#).
8. More and more stories of Black folks encountering racism are being documented and shared through social media — whether it's at a hotel, with the police, in a coffee shop, at a school, etc. When you see such a post, call the organization, company, or institution involved to tell them how upset you are. Then share the post along with the institution's contact information, spreading the word about what happened and encouraging others to contact the institution as well. Whether the company initiated the event or failed to protect a POC during an onslaught by a third party, they need to hear from us.
9. Donate to anti-white supremacy work such as your local Black Lives Matter Chapter, the [National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls](#), the [NAACP](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), [United Negro College Fund](#), [Black Youth Project 100](#), [Color of Change](#), [The Sentencing Project](#), [Families against Mandatory Minimums](#), [A New Way of Life](#), [Equal Justice Initiative](#), and [Dream Defenders](#). Join some of these list-serves and take action as their emails dictate.
10. Support Black businesses, [as advocated by Killer Mike](#) among countless others. Find them on [WeBuyBlack](#), [The Black Wallet](#), and [Official Black Wall Street](#). Another good list is [here](#). Find [Black-owned bookstores](#), [florists](#), and [restaurants](#). Yelp now has a feature to search for Black-owned businesses, and Etsy features Black-owned businesses [here](#). Thank you [Corinna Tricarico](#) for the info on Etsy.

If you have any questions or want to learn more, please don't hesitate to reach out!



Seasonal Recipes

Mulled Wine by Jamie Oliver

[Imbolc Recipes](#)

Mulled wine is one of the best drinks on a cold day. Take it outside to warm you up while you appreciate that the winter will soon be turning to spring.

Ingredients

- 2 clementines
- 1 lemon
- 1 lime
- 200 g caster sugar
- 6 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 fresh bay leaves
- 1 whole nutmeg, for grating
- 1 vanilla pod
- 2 bottles Chianti or other Italian red wine
- 2 star anise



Method

1. Peel large sections of peel from the clementines, lemon and lime using a speed-peeler.
2. Put the sugar in a large saucepan over medium heat, add the pieces of peel and squeeze in the clementine juice.
3. Add the cloves, cinnamon stick, bay leaves and about 10 to 12 gratings of nutmeg. Halve the vanilla pod lengthways and add to the pan, then stir in just enough red wine to cover the sugar.
4. Let this simmer until the sugar has completely dissolved into the red wine, then bring to the boil. Keep on a rolling boil for about 4 to 5 minutes, or until you've got a beautiful thick syrup. The reason I'm doing this first is to create a wonderful flavour base by really getting the sugar and spices to infuse and blend well with the wine. It's important to make a syrup base first because it needs to be quite hot, and if you do this with both bottles of wine in there, you'll burn off the alcohol.
5. When your syrup is ready, turn the heat down to low and add your star anise and the rest of the wine. Gently heat the wine and after around 5 minutes, when it's warm and delicious, ladle it into heatproof glasses and serve.



Seasonal Recipes

Braided Bread

[Learn Religions](#)

Braided bread is found in many forms, [in many cultures](#). This recipe is a simple one, and is perfect for serving at your Imbolc [feast](#). The braid symbolizes [Brighid](#) in her aspect as the bride, representative of her fertility and position as a hearth goddess. Serve this tasty braided bread with warm butter for dipping.



Ingredients

- 1 batch of your favorite homemade dough, or a loaf of frozen bread dough, thawed (this is in the frozen foods section at the grocery store), or a
- 1 egg
- Water
- Sesame seeds

Directions

If you're using frozen dough, allow it to defrost at room temperature. If you're using your own homemade recipe, start working with it after you've kneaded it out into a ball. Before it begins to rise, cut your dough into thirds with a large pizza cutter or a knife. Roll each piece out until it's about 18" long, and about an inch thick. You'll end up with three of these long strips.

Take the strips, and braid them together, trying not to stretch them out too much. When you've reached the end of the braid, tuck the ends underneath themselves. If you want to make a really big braided loaf, use two batches of dough, which will yield six strips—then simply continue the braiding until it's the size you want. Place the braid either on a baking stone, or on a pan that has been sprinkled with cornmeal.

Beat the egg in a small bowl, and add 2 Tbsp. water. Lightly brush the egg and water mixture over the braid, and then sprinkle with sesame seeds. Let it rise in a warm place for about an hour, or until doubled in size. Bake at 375 for 30 minutes, or until a light golden brown color. Remove from baking sheet, and allow to cool for 15 minutes or more before serving.

** Note: if you want to really jazz this up, use different types of bread, such as white and wheat. The end result is visually very appealing, with the different colors braided together.



Seasonal Recipes

Feta, Ricotta and Spinach Lasagna

By Sarah Tuck

[Imbolc Recipes](#)

Ingredients:

- 400 grams baby spinach, washed
- 400 grams ricotta
- 100 grams feta, crumbled
- finely grated zest of 1 large lemon
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/3 cup finely chopped parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Béchamel sauce:

- 40g butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 2 1/4 cups milk
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 1/4 cups grated Parmesan
- 2 bay leaves

To assemble:

1 pack of dried Lasagna Sheets. You may not need the whole packet but better to be on the safe side than to run out! You can also use fresh pasta sheets if you prefer.

Method:

1. Steam the spinach until wilted but still vibrant green. Squeeze out any excess water and cool. Chop roughly and place in a bowl. Stir through the ricotta, feta, lemon zest, garlic, parsley and nutmeg.
2. Béchamel: Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour, whisk to a paste and add half the milk, continuing to whisk. Add the remaining milk and the nutmeg and season with salt and pepper. Continue to whisk over the heat until the sauce is thick and smooth. Stir through 1 cup of the Parmesan and add the bay leaves. Cool for half an hour and remove the bay leaves.
3. Preheat oven to 180°C.
4. To assemble: Smooth 2 tablespoons of béchamel over the base of the baking dish. Line with pasta sheets. Spread half the spinach mixture over to form an even layer. Top with 3/4 cup of béchamel and smooth out. Repeat with a second layer, finishing with a third layer of lasagna sheets. Top with the remaining béchamel and Parmesan and bake for 40 minutes, or until the top is nicely browned and the edges are crispy. Rest for 10 minutes before serving.



Tip: You can make béchamel in the microwave too if you prefer! For a quick microwave method for making béchamel sauce, melt the butter in a large microwave-proof jug. Add flour, whisk to a paste and add half the milk. Microwave 2 minutes on high, whisk and add remaining milk, salt and pepper and nutmeg. Microwave in minute bursts, whisking in between until thick and smooth. Stir through 1 cup of the Parmesan and bay leaves. Cool for half an hour and remove the bay leaves.



Seasonal Recipes

[Learn Religions](#)

Baked Custard

The word "Imbolc" comes in part from the phrase "ewe's milk," so dairy products become a big part of February celebrations. For our ancestors, this time of year was hard - the winter stores were running low and there were no fresh crops. The livestock was typically preparing for birth, and the lambing season would begin soon. At that time, the ewes came into milk, and once milk arrived, you knew your family would have a source of food again. Sheep's milk is highly nutritious, and sheep were considered a dairy animal long before cattle. If you have eggs, then you've got the makings of custard, a perfect dairy dessert.

Ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 3 C. milk
- 1/2 C. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt



Directions

Preheat your oven to 350. Combine all the ingredients into the bowl of a food processor, and blend for about 15 seconds, or until well mixed. Pour custard mix into ramekins or custard cups. Place the ramekins into a baking dish, and fill the dish with hot water up to a depth of about $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Bake the custards for one hour.

Bacon and Leeks

Bacon is one of those foods that's so good people like to wrap other foods in it. However, if you're a purist and appreciate your bacon simple, this is a great recipe to whip up at Imbolc. The fiery taste of onions and garlic is offset by the smokiness of the bacon. Enjoy this heaped onto some nice warm Braided Bread.

Ingredients

- 1 pound of bacon
- 3 fresh leeks, chopped
- 1 medium onion
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- Salt
- Pepper



Directions

Fry the bacon and drain off excess fat. Remove from pan, and then chop into small pieces. Return to pan, and add garlic, leeks and onions. Season with salt and pepper to taste. When onions are opaque, remove from heat and serve scooped onto warm, soft bread. If you're a vegetarian, try this with strips of sliced zucchini or hash-brown style potatoes in place of the bacon. It's still delicious!



Arts & Crafts [Learn Religions](#)

Make a Brigid Corn Doll

In one of her many aspects, Brigid is known as the bride. She is a symbol of fertility and good fortune and is seen as yet one more step in the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Traditionally, the Brigid doll is made of woven grain such as oats or wheat. This version, however, uses corn husks.

If you make a doll at Lughnasadh, you can re-use it in six months, dressing it up in spring colors for Imbolc. This way, the Harvest Mother becomes the Spring Bride. Some traditions, however, prefer not to re-use their harvest doll, and instead choose to start fresh and new in the spring. Either way is fine.



To make this simple doll, you'll need some corn husks—and clearly, in January or February, you probably won't be able to find a lot of those growing outside. Check your grocery store's produce section to get husks. If you're using dried-out husks, soak them for a couple of hours to soften them up (fresh husks need no special preparation). You'll also need some yarn or ribbon, and a few cotton balls.

Take a strip of the husk and fold it in half. Place two or three cotton balls in the middle, and then twist the husk, tying it with string to make a head. Leave a bit of husk in the front and back, below the head, to create a torso. Make a pair of arms for your doll by folding a couple of husks in half, and then tying it at the ends to make hands. Slip the arms between the husks that form the torso and tie off at the waist. If you like your dolls plump, slide an extra cotton ball or two in there to give your Brigid a bit of shape.

Arrange a few more husks, upside down, around the doll's waist. Overlap them slightly, and then tie them in place with yarn—it should look like she has her skirt up over her face. After you've tied the waist, carefully fold the husks down, so now her skirt comes downwards, towards where her feet would be. Trim the hem of the skirt so it's even and let your doll completely dry.

Once your doll has dried, you can leave her plain or give her a face and some hair (use soft yarn). Some people go all out decorating their bride doll—you can add clothing, an apron, and beadwork, whatever your imagination can create.

Place your Brigid in a place of honor in your home for Imbolc, near your hearth or in the kitchen if possible. By inviting her into your home, you are welcoming Brigid and all the fertility and abundance she may bring with her.



Arts & Crafts

[Learn Religions](#)

Brew a Batch of Imbolc Oil

If you're unfamiliar with blending magical oils, be sure to read [Magical Oils 101](#) before getting started. This oil blend combines Ginger, Clove, and Rosemary, representing the elements of fire, with Cypress, associated with the astrological sign of Aquarius. To make Imbolc Oil, use 1/8 Cup base oil of your choice. Add the following:

- 3 drops Ginger
- 2 drops Clove
- 1 drop Rosemary (you can, alternatively, use a sprig of fresh rosemary instead)
- 1 drop Cypress

As you blend the oils, visualize what the Imbolc season means to you, and take in the aroma of the oils. Know that this oil is sacred and magical. Label, date, and store in a cool, dark place.



The Brigid's Cross

The cross has long been a symbol of [Brigid](#), the Irish goddess who presides over hearth and home. In some legends, the girl who became St. Bridget wove the first of these crosses as she explained Christianity to her father, a Pictish chieftain. In other stories, the cross is not a cross at all, but a wheel of fire, which explains why it's a bit off-center in appearance. In parts of Ireland, Brigid is known as a goddess of the crossroads, and this symbol represents the place where two worlds meet, and the year is at a crossroads between light and dark.



In Ireland, homes traditionally had a hearth in the center of the house. This was where much of the household activity took place—cooking, washing, and socializing—because it was a source of both light and warmth. A Brigid's Cross was hung over the hearth as a way of honoring Brigid at Imbolc. Most people today have multiple sources of heat and light, but because Brigid is a domestic sort of goddess, you may want to hang your Brigid's Cross over the stove in your kitchen. A Brigid's Cross hung over a hearth traditionally protected a home from disasters such as lightning, storms, or floods, as well as keeping family members safe from illness.

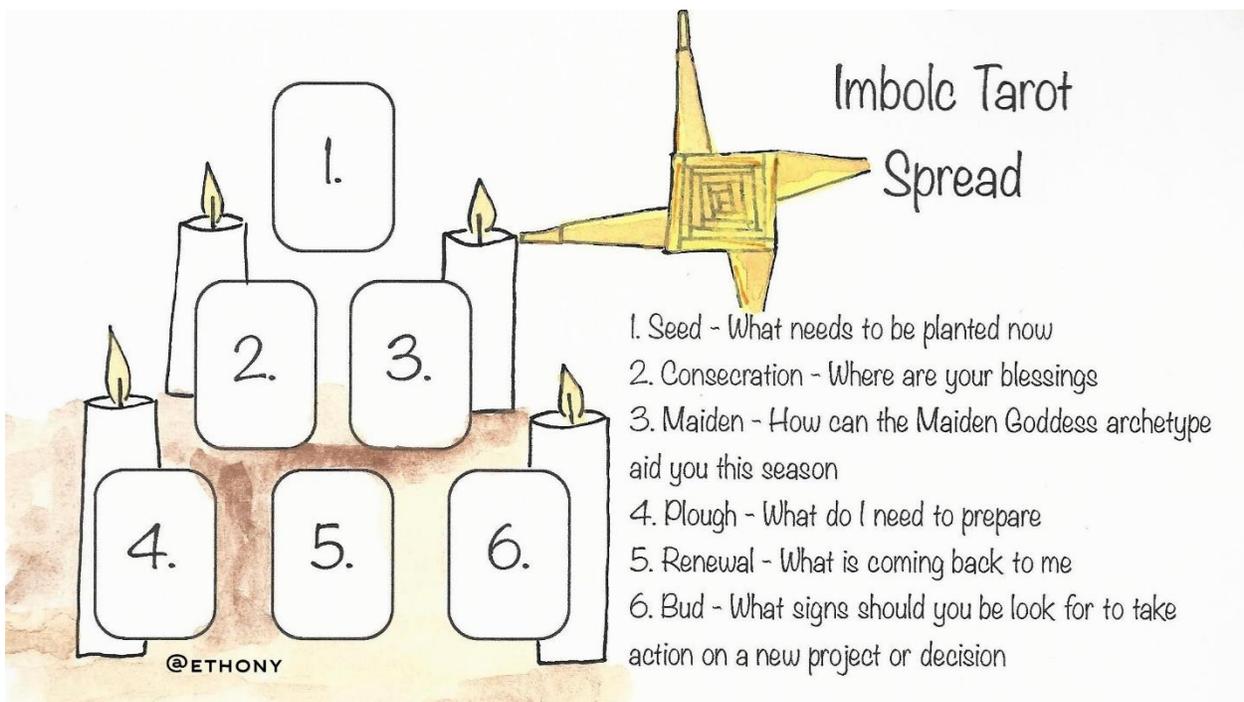
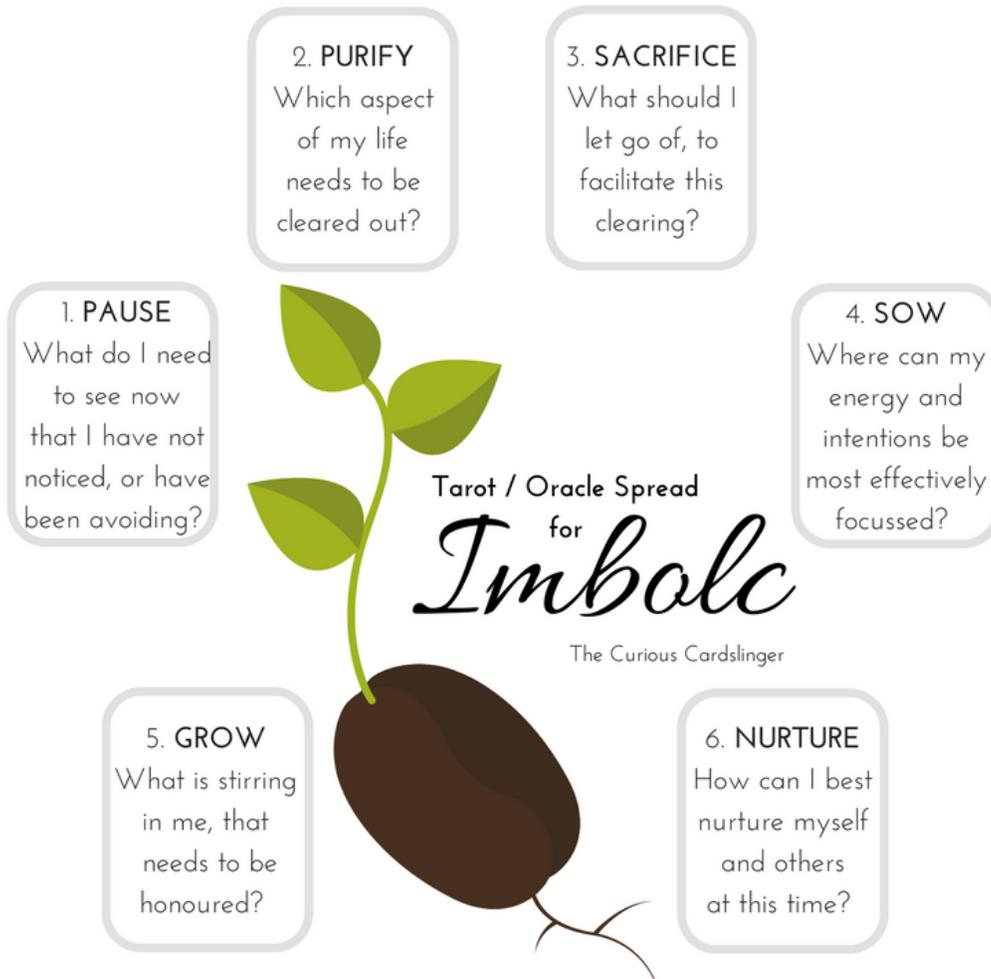
While these can be purchased in many Irish craft shops or at festivals, it's actually pretty easy to make your own. You can incorporate the creation of your Brigid's Cross into your Imbolc rituals, use it as a meditative exercise, or just put one together with your kids as a fun craft activity.

To make your Brigid's Cross, you'll need straw, reeds, or construction paper—if you're using plant material like straw or reeds, you'll want to soak it overnight so it's pliable when you go to make your Cross. Your end result will be about the length of one piece of your material—in other words, a bundle of 12" reeds will yield a Brigid's Cross just slightly longer than 12". For a super-easy, kid-friendly edition of this project, use pipe cleaners. Use the excellent tutorial from Scoil Bhríde NS in County Laois, or Joe Road's YouTube video to learn how to make your own cross.

Once you've completed your cross, it's ready to hang up anywhere in your home, to welcome Brigid into your life.



Tarot Spreads





Holiday & Lunar Observances



At this time all in-person gatherings are suspended due to the need for social distancing. Live online rituals and libations held via Zoom will be posted to our [Facebook Events Page](#) when they are scheduled, so please check that page regularly for updates. If you haven't already downloaded Zoom, click [here](#) to download and sign up.

Observance	Date	Event Date	Location
Full Moon in Leo	Thursday, January 28 th	Thursday, January 28 th	Zoom
Imbolc (Brigid's Day)	Mon, Feb. 1 st - Tue, Feb. 2 nd	Saturday, January 30 th	Zoom
New Moon in Aquarius	Thursday, February 11 th	Thursday, February 11 th	Zoom
Libation to Aphrodite	Saturday, February 13 th	Saturday, February 13 th	Zoom
Full Moon in Virgo	Saturday, February 27 th	Saturday, February 27 th	Zoom
New Moon in Pisces	Saturday, March 13 th	Saturday, March 13 th	Zoom
Libation to Hephaistos	Saturday, March 13 th	Saturday, March 13 th	Zoom
Feast of Nemetona	Friday, March 19 th	Friday, March 19 th	Zoom
Vernal Equinox (Ostara)	Saturday, March 20 th	Saturday, March 20 th	TBD

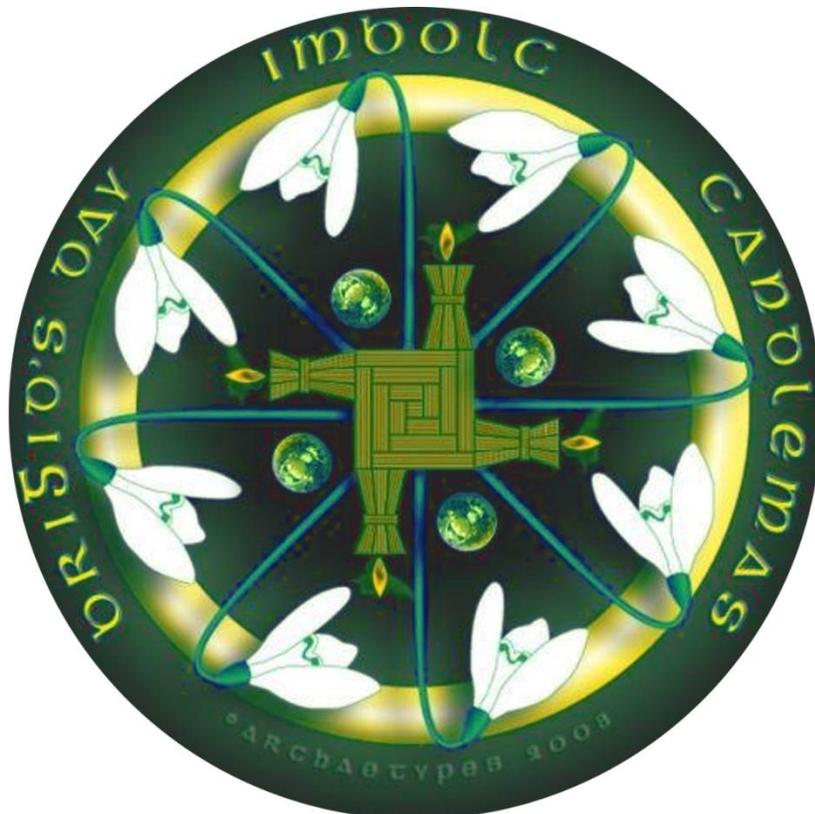


Image Credit: hipwallpaper.com