

Lammas

"This is the power of gathering: it inspires us, delightfully, to be more hopeful, more joyful, more thoughtful: in a word, more alive."

~Alice Waters



We have come to the cross quarter of Summer where the sun is high and the days are long, though there is an increased awareness that the season is waning. Indeed, this is the time of the first harvest. Lammas is rooted in Saxon origin, meaning "Loaf mass", and is also referred to as Lughnasadh (Irish Gaelic, pronounced: Loo-nas-ah) and refers to the sun God of the same name. This is a time to celebrate hard work done with great feasting and to honor the seed that has come forth as grain. This grain is recognized as the great nurturer. Not only will it fill bellies throughout the winter but the stored seed will bring new life in next year's harvest.

Lammas is a time of great abundance, for this is only the *first* harvest. Days are long, the earth is rich and though darker days are impending, the bounty of the season cannot be denied. It is time to celebrate our work, *through* the work. While certainly not a time to slow down, we can offer ourselves opportunities to celebrate through partaking in the fruits of our labor. It is important to take these moments, for the work is far from over. There is an underlying knowledge that the inward journey has begun. With the cutting of the grain, a sacrifice is made and the doorway to the inner world is opened. Herein lies an origin story of Demeter, the Corn Mother or Goddess of the Grain. Demeter represents the ripe corn and Persephone, the grain-seed that must lie in the dark throughout the winter in order to return in the Spring.

In the days of our ancestors, Lammas probably began with the cutting of the last sheaf of corn and likely lasted until the final grains were gathered. During these times I imagine great gatherings and festivals occurred as neighboring villages celebrated together in markets and fairs, bartering and trading goods and celebrating the "loaf-mass" of the season's harvest.

Like all cross quarter days, Lammas signifies a noticeable change in energy. Although Summer sometimes feels as if it can last forever, with the celebration of the first harvest we have visual representation of transformation at its finest. Life equals death, and death equals life. Green is turning to gold, our plates are full of fresh produce and seeds and plants are gathered in for foods and medicines to see us through the winter. Of course, most of us no longer live on farms and many of us do not or cannot keep gardens. We do not necessarily see the process of the changing seasons in physical

harvest. We can however, begin to absorb and integrate our own harvest; the harvest of our hearts and the fruits of our own labors. We can also understand the transformation occurring through the death of the Sun. The active, outer energy is waning and the inner journey has begun. We must adapt and begin to assimilate into the regeneration process. Our inner harvest will sustain us through the darkness to come.

Honor

- What is being gathered? If we planted seeds in the Spring, can we take time to reflect on what has been manifested, or what has not... and how our hopes and dreams have changed to offer us a deeper appreciation of our actions and our being at this time?
- Lammas is a time to rededicate to your highest ideals. How well have you endured the challenges of maturation? How ripe are the first fruits of the development of your vision of Self?
- Give thanks. Lammas offers us an opportunity to be aware of our blessings and to see how we can take them forward in the next season.
- Celebrate with a feast. Invite family and friends if you're called and ask everyone to bring their favorite harvest dish or ancestral foods.
- Bake bread! Bread and grains are at the heart of any Lammas celebration.
- If you live anywhere where you can collect tall grasses, make a large grain mother or even a corn dollie from grocery bought corn (husks on). As you weave and tie the stalks, give thanks for what you are bringing to harvest in your life.
- Rededicate energy and focus to any projects you've started this summer and finish them up before your energy begins to wane with the sun.
- Make a rattle. Rattles represent new life and can be excellent for clearing out space, renewing energy or drifting into Journey. Be creative and use natural materials whenever possible. Hollowed out gourds work great but so do yogurt containers or tin cans. I'm a big fan of using what you have on hand and giving new purpose to old or garbage items. Add dried grains, seeds, beans or even beads. Experiment with your fillers as different sizes, shapes and weights of things will make different sounds.
- This is an auspicious time to meditate on the balance of feminine and masculine and to cultivate your awareness and own embodiment of them. It is also a good time to celebrate the mothers and fathers in your lives, as well as the children. Even if you do not have children of your own, try to spend time with children and offer your magic and medicines of wisdom just by sharing your presence. And be sure to open your heart to receive the magic and medicine that pours forth so generously from their own hearts.

- Spend as much time outside in nature as possible. Gather grasses and flowers and make head and door wreathes. Collect wild sages and bundle for drying. Visit a you-pick farm to experience the bounty of nature's abundance.