

## Imbolc ~ New Life, The Wiccan Way

Contributed by Julie Forest

Celebrating Imbolc (Brigid/Candlemas) can be a sacred rite rich in meaning and symbolism. Here, Julie Forest, New Forest Witch, describes how she chooses to celebrate this half-way point between mid-winter and the Spring Equinox. **IMBOLC**

(Brigid/Candlemas) - 2 February (immol'squo;g - meaning 'in the belly') I love Imbolc. To me it feels like a major turning point in the year. Spring is just around the corner, new life is beginning, and other nature is stirring from her winter sleep. The days begin to feel longer and we cast the long dark winter days and nights behind.

Imbolc signifies the halfway point between mid-winter and the spring equinox, and celebrates the purity and innocence of the virgin maiden. It is the Festival of Lights, the fire festival celebrating the Goddess of Fertility (Brigid). We welcome the Goddess who is renewed and reborn as the Flower Maiden, she has passed through her phase as the Hag, Crone or Wise One and is a Maiden again. Traditionally this festival was the time when all the candles for the coming year would be made (Candlemas), to symbolize the light coming out of the darkness. The Oak King and Holly King have equal power now, but the Oak King is starting to gain ascendancy, while the Holly King's power wanes.

Imbolc is a time to state your objectives for the year ahead, to dig foundations, to set yourselves tasks and challenges and to do fertility dances for yourself or for crops. It is a time for developing new skills and attaining new goals. Think about the old and unhelpful parts of yourself which you wish to get rid of, and think how they can be transformed into useful material for growth.

To mark Imbolc, on my altar I will have a symbol of the Wheel and a bowl of soil with seeds for planting - to represent the things I wish to grow in my life. I will hold the seeds in my hand and ask the Goddess to bless the seeds and as I plant them in the soil I will ask for my goals to come to fruition.

I will have a Besom by the Altar. The sweeping out of the old is symbolized by the sweeping of the magick circle with a besom.

My Cauldron will have a candle burning in it placed to the side of the south candle (representing Fire). And besides the Cauldron, a few sprigs of evergreen vegetation such as holly, ivy, rosemary, bay, or mistletoe).

To represent the Goddess Brigid - a bundle of straw or corn dolly, dressed in woman's clothing (dolls dress or piece of material wrapped round). To represent the maid, mother and crone - a small bouquet of greenery, including spring flowers, a crown of lights, and a dark coloured scarf or cloak.

As with all Sabbats I will have a feast with friends which will include foods from dairy products spiced with onion, leeks, garlic and olives. Fertility bread, poppy seed cake, sage wine or spicy wine, bread puddings and creamy soups.

Other activities will include burning the Yule greens (which have been consecrated and saved from the Yule festival) to send winter on its way. Leave buttered bread in a bowl indoors for the fairies who travel with the Lady of Greenwood. Pour milk onto the ground as an offering and a token of fertility. Place 3 ears of corn on the door as a symbol of the Triple Goddess and leave until Ostara. Light a white candle in each room in honor of the Sun's rebirth.

With Imbolc, hold the thought that Spring is just around the corner and new life beginning.

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Julie Forest is a fully initiated New Forest Witch, qualified Aromatherapist and a Reiki Master. Julie gives talks on witchcraft and runs witchcraft/ Wiccan workshops once a month at her home in the New Forest, as well as giving Reiki healing and attunements. She is a dedicated vegetarian and has been interested in alternative therapies, natural healing and natural magick all her life. Julie uses her own herbs, essential oils and natural products for healing, casting spells and for making her own cosmetics and soaps. Julie's hand made products, soaps, spell kits and magick oils are well known in the New Forest and sold at a selection of outlets. Julie first moved to Burley in the New Forest when she was 25, and it was during her years there that her love of nature and natural folk lore expanded. Julie has appeared on BBC television in connection with Sybil Leek and Witchcraft in the New Forest. She has also been interviewed for radio, various TV chat shows and numerous newspapers. [www.intrinsic-magick.co.uk](http://www.intrinsic-magick.co.uk)