

Chapter 1 : 8 Winter Solstice Celebrations Around the World - HISTORY

The December solstice is the Winter Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere and the Summer Solstice in the Southern Hemisphere. The day has astronomical, cultural and religious significance. Lapland in mid winter.

Rituals for a Simple Celebration This year, let your winter solstice celebration be an occasion to look deeply at small things, to feel at home in the world and to be just where you belong. Photo By Joe Coca Early nightfall. The sharp silhouette of leaf-bare branches. Orion marching across the evening sky. These are some familiar signs of winter. We often speak of turning inward during these darker months, becoming quiet and introspective, staying home more often, sleeping longer. Perhaps this year, with some preparation and planning, we can plant the seeds for a more intuitive, simpler, and natural holiday season. Winter solstice, which takes place in late December, can be a profound way to tune into the magic and beauty of the season. For people throughout the ages—from the ancient Egyptians and Celts to the Hopi—midwinter has been a significant time of ritual, reflection, and renewal. Creating a meaningful celebration of winter solstice, either in place of or in addition to other holiday activities, can help us cultivate a deeper connection to nature and family and all the things that matter most to us. Winter can become a time of feeding the spirit and nurturing the soul, not just emptying our bank account and fraying our nerves. And some ancient peoples performed sacred rituals and made offerings when the sun dipped below the horizon to ensure its daily return, especially during the darkest days. For example, the idea of Santa Claus may have come from the story of the first shamans who were said to climb high into the upper worlds and return with gifts of wisdom and prophecies, postulates Tony Van Renterghem in *When Santa Was a Shaman* Llewellyn, Richard Heinberg, author of *Celebrate the Solstice: In ancient Rome, where it was called Dies Natalis Invicti Solis, or the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, masters even celebrated as equals with their slaves.* Throughout history, celebrating the solstice has been a way to renew our connection with each other and with the numinous through acts of goodwill, special rituals, and heightened awareness. This longest night of the year, followed by a renewal of the sun, demonstrates the cyclical order of the cosmos. In this way, celebrating the solstice can be a beautiful remembrance that our lives are part of a larger order, always changing, always renewing. By performing simple rituals with personal meaning to celebrate the solstice, these rituals will serve as touchstones to help us cultivate an attitude of receptiveness and appreciation that will carry us through the holiday season with more ease. A good starting point might be to make a promise this winter to spend more time listening, watching, and honoring the slower, quieter rhythm of the season. Consider watching the sun rise or set from your little patch of the world. Reflect on your aspirations for the coming months. Throw the I Ching. Sing an original song. Sharing food, an important part of any celebration, is particularly meaningful during the solstice, as it represents faith in the return of the sun and the harvest. Silence is another beautiful way to celebrate the shortest day of midwinter. Reflect the stillness of the day by cultivating stillness in yourself. Consider honoring the threshold of solstice with an hour of intentional silence for you and your household. New traditions Creating a new tradition that brings more peace and heart to your holidays could also bring you closer to family and friends. Sharing a ritual founded on love of nature, on respect for the always renewing cycles of life, and on faith in the future has a way of bringing out the best in people. You might make a wreath with evergreens collected by loved ones on a walk through the woods. Or build a circle of candlelight, one for each participant, and then blow them out and sit together in the darkness for a few moments offering gratitude before lighting one central, larger candle to symbolize your unity over the coming year. Ring a collection of bells at sunrise and sunset or offer seeds to winter birds and other outdoor creatures. Or watch together from a warm window as the sun sets and give thanks for both the darkness and the light.

Chapter 2 : Celebrating Winter Solstice - Circle Sanctuary

The Solstice, also known as Litha, happens this week, on the 21st June What is the Solstice and why is it also know as Litha?. Ancient cultures knew that the sun's path across the sky, the length of daylight, and the location of the sunrise and sunset all shifted in a regular way throughout the year.

Solstice Feast Prepare favorite family foods and beverages. Before beginning the dining experience, do a family prayer of thanksgiving. End the feast with a cake or pie with a sun image on it. Birthday candles can be put on this solar dessert. Each family member can light a candle and make a wish for the holiday season or the upcoming calendar year. Once all candles are lit, the family as a whole can blow them out to send wishes on their way. Then call out "Happy Solstice" or "Good Yule" in unison. Candlelight Circle Can be done as part of a feast or separately. Family gathers in a circle around a card table or dining table. There is an unlit new red taper candle in a candleholder for each family member, plus a larger new red taper or pillar candle in a candleholder to represent the family as a whole and the Solstice Sun. Candles are arranged evenly around the central larger candle. Parents begin the circle by sharing some background about Winter Solstice, such as how it has been celebrated across time and cultures, and how its celebration is reflected in contemporary secular and religious Christmas customs. Family stands or sits in darkness for a few moments and contemplates the reduction of daylight at this time of year, the importance of the Sun to life on the planet, and the symbology of light as indicators of renewal. Then, parents light the central candle with a blessing of renewal for the family and the planet and guide a short meditation on light and renewal. When all the candles are lit, the family joins hands and chants or sings. The song, "We wish you a Merry Christmas" can be adapted to "We wish you a Merry Solstice" and sung to end the circle. Candles can be left burning if in a safe, attended location, throughout the rest of the Solstice celebration, if there are other component parts. Candles can be extinguished by everyone doing it simultaneously after one of the family members states that the light of renewal remains in our hearts. Yule Log An oak log, plus a fireplace or bonfire area is needed for this form of celebration. The oak log should be very dry so that it will blaze well. It can be decorated with burnable red ribbons of natural fiber and dried holly leaves. In the fireplace or bonfire area, dried kindling should be set to facilitate the burning of the log. Begin by having parents or some other family member describe the tradition of the Yule log. The tale of the Oak King and Holly King from Celtic mythology can be shared as a story, or can be summarized with a statement that the Oak represents the waxing solar year, Winter Solstice to Summer Solstice, and the Holly represents the waning solar year, Summer Solstice to Winter Solstice. Lights are extinguished as much as possible. The family is quiet together in the darkness. Family members quietly contemplate the change in the solar year. Then the Yule Log fire is lit. As it begins to burn, each family member throws in one or more dried holly sprigs and says farewell to the old calendar year. Once the Yule Log itself starts blazing, then the facilitator invites family members to contemplate the year ahead and the power of possibilities. When this process is done, the family sings a song together. The traditional carol, "Deck the Halls," is good because it mentions the Solstice, the change in the solar year, and the Yule log. Let the Yule Log burn down to a few chunks of charred wood and ashes. Following an ancient tradition, save remnants of the fire and use them to start the Yule Log fire the following year. Bell Ringing This can take a simple form of the family ringing bells together at the moment of Solstice, or it can be a circle ceremony in and of itself. Each family member chooses a bell to ring. Bells can be of varying sizes and types, but should blend well with each other when rung together. For a bell ringing Solstice Circle, the family gathers together in a circle. Each has a bell in hand to ring. Parents or some other family member serves as facilitator. The facilitator then describes how bells have been rung in connection with many types of celebrations. Bells have been rung at this time of year to ring out the old year and to ring in the new year. Then the facilitator invites the family to celebrate the Solstice with bells. If the family is used to honoring the directions as part of spiritual practice Wiccan, Native American, Buddhist, Hermetic, etc. Then the family rings bells in the three directions connected with the center: In place of or in addition to individual direction honoring, the family rings all their bells together to celebrate their connection with each other as a family; then they ring them in

unison again to celebrate their connection with the cycles of Nature; and then they ring them a third time in unison to celebrate their connection with life on planet Earth and all of Nature. Then from the oldest to the youngest, each family member speaks a vision or wish for the planet for the coming year. After all have shared, the ceremony ends as the family calls out "Happy Solstice" or "Good Yule" three times and rings bells.

Yule Tree Decorate an evergreen tree as a Yule tree. The tree can be a living tree growing in the yard of the home or in a container indoors to be planted outside in Spring. Or, the tree can be a harvested one purchased or cut yourself from a tree farm. The Yule Tree can be decorated prior to or on Solstice for the entire holiday season. If decorated prior to Solstice, on Solstice day, family members can each add an ornament. Members may want to speak a blessing on the Solstice celebration as they add their ornaments. Ornaments can be of any type, but those that represent the Sun, such as sun figures or shiny red or golden balls, are very appropriate because of their symbolism. A star, sunburst, or light at the top of the tree is another traditional Solstice symbol. Electric lights on the tree can also play into the Solstice celebration. They can be first turned on during the Solstice celebration. Or, if the family custom is to have a lit holiday tree for much of December, the lights can be turned off during a celebration as the family focuses on the year passing and the longest nights of the year and then turned on to represent renewal and the new Solar year. After the holiday season is over, the Yule tree can be burned in a bonfire, chopped up and used as mulch, or placed in the wilds as additional habitat for wild creatures.

Winter Nature Communion Grains and seeds, and the feeding of creatures have been associated with Yuletide holidays for hundred of years in Europe. To continue this tradition, gather some sunflower seeds in a large basket or bowl. Go outside next to the home or to a place frequented by wild birds and other wild creatures. The family gathers around a bird feeder, a tree stump, a rock ledge, or other spot where the seeds are to be placed. Someone in the family serves as facilitator and guides the family in a Nature attunement meditation. First, the family silently focuses on the experience of being outdoors in the Winter at this Solstice time. Next, the family silently focuses on being part of the fabric of life of Nature. Then the family silently focuses on expressing appreciation for the beauty of Nature and the relationships with other lifeforms. Each family member then takes a handful of seeds and focuses on the seeds as symbols of life and as messengers of goodwill toward other parts of Nature. Now, each family member in turn places the seeds in the feeder or on the stump, ledge, or other spot, and speaks an appreciation of Nature. After all the offerings have been made, the family joins hands and says together several times, "We are part of the Family of Nature! Parents and other relatives also can speak about their ethnic roots and share whatever they know of Yuletide folk customs of their ancestors. If little or nothing is known within the living extended family itself about ancestral folk ways, prior to Solstice, one or more family members can do some research into customs connected with ancestral nationalities, ethnicities, spiritualities, and other cultural forms. Some places to check for information include bookstores and libraries, gifts shops with ethnic themes, cultural societies, folklore centers, museums, and multicultural centers at universities. To facilitate passing this family heritage on to future generations, the family may wish to tape record or videotape the story sharing.

Gift Giving Across many cultures for at least several thousand years, gifts have been exchanged among family and friends at Solstice time. Even if the family already has a tradition of exchanging gifts at Christmas or Epiphany, some gifts can be exchanged on Solstice as well. Having gift giving occur over a period of time extends the holiday celebration and is a time honored tradition, as commemorated in the song "Twelve Days of Christmas. When all family holiday gifts are displayed under the Yule tree for several days, each family member can select one gift with their own name on it to open on Solstice night or morning. In cases in which family members give each other multiple gifts, each member can select a gift to give each other member. Another method of gift distribution is to have family members place their names in a hat or basket, and when this is done, to each draw a name, which indicates the person to whom they will give a Solstice gift. Still another alternative is to have a gifting experience unique to Solstice. A group of similar, yet distinctive small gifts, individually wrapped can be placed in a large basket or cauldron. There should be one for each family member. At least one extra gift could be included and this could be kept for the family as a whole or later given to a family friend. Some examples of gift groups include an assortment of pieces of tumbled agate or quartz crystals, a collection of animal figurines or exotic sea shells, an array of candles or bells, or a variety of pieces of candy

or other food treats. Gift picking can be according to age: The gift exchange, when involving Nature gifts, can have an educational component. For example, if bird images are the gift form, the family can talk about each type of bird after each figure is unwrapped. A good way to bring closure to the gift exchange on Solstice night is for the family to join hands together in a circle and spend a few moments focusing together on the sharing of love, a on-going gift that transcends time and physical presents. Focus on appreciating each other strengthens the family as well as imbues the gift giving and other Solstice celebration experiences with a spiritual context.

Chapter 3 : Winter Solstice Traditions: Rituals for a Simple Celebration

*Celebrate the Solstice: Honoring the Earth's Seasonal Rhythms through Festival and Ceremony [Richard Heinberg] on theinnatdunvilla.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. This book is an accessible, engaging tool to help people enrich their lives through the observance of ancient.*

Celebrating Winter Solstice by Selena Fox Winter Solstice has been celebrated in cultures the world over for thousands of years. This start of the solar year is a celebration of Light and the rebirth of the Sun. In old Europe, it was known as Yule, from the Norse, Jul, meaning wheel. Today, many people in Western-based cultures refer to this holiday as "Christmas. Emperor Aurelian established December 25 as the birthday of the "Invincible Sun" in the third century as part of the Roman Winter Solstice celebrations. Shortly thereafter, in , the Christian church selected this day to represent the birthday of Jesus, and by , this Roman solar feast day was Christianized. January 6, celebrated as Epiphany in Christendom and linked with the visit of the Magi, was originally an Egyptian date for the Winter Solstice. Additional resources Most of the customs, lore, symbols, and rituals associated with "Christmas" actually are linked to Winter Solstice celebrations of ancient Pagan cultures. While Christian mythology is interwoven with contemporary observances of this holiday time, its Pagan nature is still strong and apparent. Pagans today can readily re-Paganize Christmastime and the secular New Year by giving a Pagan spiritual focus to existing holiday customs and by creating new traditions that draw on ancient ways. Here are some ways to do this: Celebrate Yule with a series of rituals, feasts, and other activities. In most ancient cultures, the celebration lasted more than a day. The ancient Roman Saturnalia festival sometimes went on for a week. By adopting this perspective, Pagan parents can help their children develop an understanding of the multicultural and interfaith aspects of this holiday time and view "Christmas" as just another form of Solstice. Have gift exchanges and feasts over the course of several days and nights as was done of old. Adorn the home with sacred herbs and colors. Decorate your home in Druidic holiday colors red, green, and white. Place holly, ivy, evergreen boughs, and pine cones around your home, especially in areas where socializing takes place. Hang a sprig of mistletoe above a major threshold and leave it there until next Yule as a charm for good luck throughout the year. Include holiday herbs in it and then place it on your front door to symbolize the continuity of life and the wheel of the year. If you choose to have a living or a harvested evergreen tree as part of your holiday decorations, call it a Solstice tree and decorate it with Pagan symbols. Convey love to family, friends, and associates. At the heart of Saturnalia was the custom of family and friends feasting together and exchanging presents. Reclaim Santa Claus as a Pagan Godform. Decorate your home with Santa images that reflect His Pagan heritage. Honor the Goddess as Great Mother. Place Pagan Mother Goddess images around your home. You may also want to include one with a Sun child, such as Isis with Horus. Honor the new solar year with light. Do a Solstice Eve ritual in which you meditate in darkness and then welcome the birth of the sun by lighting candles and singing chants and Pagan carols. Because of the popularity of five pointed stars as holiday symbols, this is a good time to display a pentagram of blue or white lights. Contribute to the manifestation of more wellness on Planet Earth. Donate food and clothing to poor in your area. Volunteer time at a social service agency. Put up bird feeders and keep them filled throughout the winter to supplement the diets of wild birds. Meditate for world peace. Work magic for a healthier planet. Make a pledge to do some form of good works in the new solar year. Living the Magical Life. LLewellyn, , pages Hale, , chapter Cornell University Press,

Chapter 4 : How to Celebrate the Winter Solstice: 7 Steps (with Pictures)

The winter solstice occurs on the day that we are furthest from the sun's light. It is the shortest day and the longest night of the year. In the winter solstice is on December 21, at UTC.

The Solstice, also known as Litha, happens this week, on the 21st June. The document describes a lot of Anglo-Saxon Pagan ideas, including their names for the months. It is here where we get the term Litha in reference to this time of year. It is the longest day for the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest day for the Southern Hemisphere. Either way it is a wonderful time to celebrate! Honouring the Sun. The day is celebrated by Pagans and Druids, with rituals of rebirth performed throughout history on the day across the world. In many cases, the rituals are linked with themes of religion or fertility. This is because the day falls halfway between the start of the planting and harvesting seasons. Midsummer is not only a time of fire magic, but of water as well. Crucially the rising sun only reaches the centre of the ancient stone circle on one day of each year. Tree worship has always played a large role in Midsummer festivities and trees near wells and fountains were decorated with coloured cloths. The Oak King who has ruled the waxing of the year represents strength, courage and endurance, and the Oak has always been particularly significant at Litha. We are crossing the threshold, entering the doorway into the second, waning part of the year. Depending on your individual spiritual path, there are many different ways you can celebrate the Solstice Litha, but the focus is nearly always on celebrating the power of the sun. Celebrate the power of light over darkness and life at its fullest. I am running an attunement event to celebrate Litha on Thursday 21st June at 6pm UK time, which also includes any healing we need as a collective. This energy can help you celebrate your achievements, your life and YOU! This is important as we have been through so much already during and it is not over yet! We need to take time to celebrate and bring in the joy. We can use this energy to light our inner fire for the rest of the year! Please click here if you would like to celebrate with me! Here are some other suggestions on how you can celebrate the Solstice: Celebrate with a big bonfire as a tribute to the sun. Get sparklers too, and light them after dark! Be sure to follow basic Bonfire Safety Rules, so no one gets hurt at your celebration. Honour the sun by saying the prayer above and lighting a candle. Use a bright yellow or orange candle to represent the sun, and hang solar symbols around your house. Watch the Litha sunrise and sunset. Decorate an oak tree with ribbons and flowers. Place sun catchers in your windows to bring the light indoors. Begin the day by offering a prayer to the rising sun, and end your day with another one as it sets. Place an offering in a well, stream or spring to encourage the water supply to Mother Earth. Go for a walk in nature either alone or with friends or family. Enjoy the sounds and sights of nature. However you choose to spend the Solstice, please take a moment to celebrate how far you have come on your journey!

Chapter 5 : Winter Solstice Celebrations for Families and Households - Circle Sanctuary

Celebrate the solstice with this cool solargraph. This solargraph is a single long-exposure photo of the sun over a 6-month period, between a December solstice and a June solstice.

Many websites and apps calculate this and there is a widget on the homepage and the Events page that does this. The exact time of the solstice or equinox can be converted to the local time in a given area using the above-mentioned widget. It also provides the functionality to work out which day the ceremony would occur, and to calculate the closest sunrise or sunset depending on the ceremony. For example, if a solstice occurs at 3pm, and sunrise at that location is at 5am, the ceremony would be planned for that same day. Creating a Sacred Space A modern sacred circle in Lithuania. Having a sacred space in which to practice the religion of the sun is especially conducive to getting in touch with the spiritual aspects of the sun and the spiritual within. These sacred spaces can be reserved for ceremonies, rituals, and gatherings for those practicing the religion of the sun. Learn more about creating a sacred site Ceremonial Clothing and Items Natural, handmade clothing is best for these ceremonies. Symbols of the spiritual sun are good to incorporate, and can be worn on necklaces and belts. Druids celebrating rituals at Stonehenge. White is the base color for ceremonies in the religion of the sun. The standard dress used for the ceremonies in this book is white with a yellow or gold trim or sash. The white symbolizes the sun generally. The yellow or gold is the color of the Spiritual Sun, as the golden, yellow light of the spectrum that reaches our eyes on Earth has a symbolic significance. It represents the light of the Spiritual Sun as being the mediator between heaven and earth, as it is the color of the sun that we can see from Earth. They have been based on the spiritual meaning of each solstice and equinox, and incorporate ancient symbols, mantras, and readings from sacred texts from around the world. They can be adapted to the local culture, readings from sacred texts to do with the ceremony can be incorporated, and different mantras and chants can be used if appropriate. The ceremonies are given as a guide. Another option apart from creating a ceremony is to attend one run by a group listed on this website. Conclusion Romuva Participants celebrating the morning sun. Photo by Flickr user Mantas LT. The religion of the sun is based on the actual experience of the spiritual path of the sun. A great way to do this it is to attend celebrations of the solstices and equinoxes, where its possible to reflect on their significance on a personal level and gain new insights from the experience. This can allow someone to relate to the spiritual messages conveyed by these natural events in a new and more profound way. Through the experience of ceremonies, practices , and applying any insights and knowledge within daily life, its possible for people today to be part of the very same stream of spiritual knowledge as those who practiced the original global religion of the sun. After all, it is the same sun today tracing the same path through the sky that those ancients celebrated; it still speaks of the same spiritual message which is as relevant now as it was in the past. The rapport between Lara and Jennifer really comes across. Glad to see Glastonbury taking centre stage. I love the golden light and warmth, and how the Sun looks so powerful over the Latest Posts.

Chapter 6 : A Guide to Celebrating the Solstices and Equinoxes - The Spiritual Sun

Edit Article How to Celebrate the Summer Solstice. In this Article: Article Summary Embracing Nature Finding Balance Spending Time With Others Community Q&A The summer solstice has been celebrated for centuries, with all sorts of traditions growing up around it.

How to Celebrate the Summer Solstice This post contains affiliate links for your convenience. Read my full disclosure policy here. Summer solstice celebrations can be traced back to pre-Christian times and mark the shortest night of the year. Celebrating Midsummer is a great way to connect children with nature, as it highlights the transitions that are taking place on Earth as the crops are starting to grow in earnest, daylight is at its peak and one season morphs into another. These are my tips for making the most of this beautiful time of the year: Make flower wreaths Homemade flower wreaths are to Midsummer what the American flag is to the 4th of July. If you only have time to do one thing to celebrate the longest day of the year, make a flower wreath for your hair. And yes – boys wear them too! Making a wreath is easy peasy, just check out these instructions for a pretty DIY Midsummer flower wreath. Eat seasonal foods In Sweden, the arrival of the first local new potatoes and strawberries is almost treated with religious reverence. This usually coincides with the summer solstice, which means both are a mandatory part of a traditional Midsummer dinner. Midsummer is also believed to be a tribute to the fertility of the crops, so what better way to honor it than by eating local produce. Try creating something using mostly local and seasonal ingredients – maybe it will be the start of a new tradition. Pick seven kinds of flowers This one is for the girls. Swedish legend has it that if you pick seven kinds of flowers and put them under your pillow on Midsummer Eve, you will dream about your future husband. Not to be taken too seriously, of course, but a lot of fun for kids! Raise a maypole The so called maypole is a given focal point of the Midsummer celebration in Sweden. A maypole is basically a wooden cross with two circles, clad with greenery and flowers; Acorn Pies has great instructions for how to make one. After the ceremonial raising of the maypole, people typically dance around it in a big circle, while singing traditional songs accompanied by folk musicians. Have a bonfire In Norway, Denmark and Finland, people light bonfires to celebrate the summer solstice. According the old pagan tradition, the bonfires would to scare off witches and other evil creatures, but today people gather around them to eat, drink and dance in a circle, just like with the maypoles in Sweden. Bonus points for ambiance if you have it by the coast or a lake in the countryside. Make sun art OK, this is technically not a Scandinavian Midsummer tradition, but I think creating sun art is a wonderful way to celebrate the longest day of the year and the star that makes it all possible. Use natural objects like tree nuts, leaves, grasses, rocks and flowers to create your design, then wait and let the sun create an imprint. Apartment Therapy has detailed instructions here. This post includes affiliate links.

Chapter 7 : Should Christians Celebrate the Solstice? - Beliefnet

Christmas falls within a few days of the winter solstice every year. Easter is usually within a few short weeks of the spring equinox. The date of Pentecost Sunday varies from year to year like.

Should Christians Celebrate the Solstice? Is it against the Christian faith to celebrate nature based holidays? Easter is usually within a few short weeks of the spring equinox. The date of Pentecost Sunday varies from year to year like Easter, but it is usually roughly two weeks from the summer solstice. Every year, Christians celebrate holidays that are just on the cusp of important natural events. Christians remember the birth of Christ just days before the longest night of the year. The joyful festivities that surround the anniversary of the Resurrection come shortly before the day is split into equal parts light and darkness. The remembrance of the flame of Pentecost falls just before the longest day of the year. These holidays, however, are purely Christian holidays. They are tied to the events in the life of Christ, and the dates of both Easter and Pentecost are calculated based on the Jewish calendar and New Testament references. Christmas, however, was deliberately placed near the date of the winter solstice. Scholars agree that it is extremely unlikely that Christ was actually born during the ancient equivalent of the month of December. According to scholars, it is highly doubtful that Jesus was born in midwinter. When these facts are combined with references to the birth month of John the Baptist and the dates of astrological events that are the most likely suspects for the Star of Bethlehem, the general consensus among scholars is that Jesus was probably born in late summer or early autumn. So why does Christmas fall during December? The answer, rather simply, is politics. Instead, both early and modern Christians had to estimate when Christ was born. The actual date, of course, is of less importance than the recognition of the incredible events that took place. As such, Christians chose a date that was very close to a popular pagan holiday: Christians were routinely rounded up, arrested, tortured and then murdered in a variety of creatively grisly fashions. Rome knew how to turn pain, fear and death into a spectacle that simultaneously entertained a bloodthirsty populace and cowed them into submission. As such, Christians had to be careful how and when they worshiped. For much of its early life, the Christian religion essentially existed underground. Despite their collective status as persona non grata, especially after the Great Fire of Rome in A. The average Christian living in what was essentially hostile territory, however, recognized the need for discretion. So, they chose to have Christian celebrations around the same time as pagan holidays. No one would question another family who was feasting or making merry around the winter solstice. Most of Rome was doing the same. As such, Christians who were celebrating Christmas instead of Saturnalia or the birthday of the Unconquerable Sun went unnoticed by Roman authorities or neighbors with a grudge. Christians were afforded special privileges while those of pagans slowly declined, culminating with the anti-pagan decrees and persecutions of pagans under the rule of Emperor Theodosius I. In these years, placing Christian holidays close to traditional pagan celebrations served a new purpose. It allowed for a smoother, easier conversion of the general pagan populace to Christianity. Pagans were already celebrating near those dates, so it was a smaller matter to introduce a new God to these pagans and then slowly whittle away at the other gods mentioned in the celebrations until only Christ was left. Interestingly, nearly two millennia after early Christians carefully replaced solstice celebrations with inherently Christian holidays, the question of celebrating the solstice has arisen once more as Neopagan religions grow. Can Christians celebrate the solstice or should they refuse to recognize the longest and shortest days of the year in any more than an interesting quirk of the changing seasons? Nature itself is worshiped. These practices, obviously, are off limits for Christians. So, Christians should not celebrate the solstice in the traditional pagan sense, but Christians can recognize the significance of the date. The solstices represent the natural shifts between increasing light and increasing darkness. During the longest and shortest nights of the year, there is no reason Christians cannot marvel at the world God has made and give thanks for His creation. A Christian who is endeavoring to read the whole Bible in a year could note that they need to have reached a certain book by the solstice. A Christian who wants to cease sinning in a particular way could use the solstice as an easy deadline. This would give them roughly six months to accomplish whatever goal they had, such as stopping their usage of pornography.

Actual worship of the solstice, however, remains off limits to Christians. Not that a Christian really needs a holiday. After all, God can be honored and celebrated any day of the year, regardless of how long or short a time the sun is out.

Chapter 8 : How to Celebrate the Summer Solstice - Rain or Shine Mamma

How to Celebrate the Winter Solstice The winter solstice is a very special day to many people, celebrating the natural cycle of the Earth's seasons. This nature-based holiday is also known as Yule, and there are many traditions and ways to celebrate.

Revelers watch as the sun rises over the standing stones at the prehistoric monument Stonehenge Image: Getty
Get daily news updates directly to your inbox [Subscribe](#) Thank you for subscribing We have more newsletters
Show me [See our privacy notice](#) Could not subscribe, try again later Invalid Email The weather is scorching,
Wimbledon is on the way and now the summer can really begin. As well as being the longest day of the year,
the solstice is also a time for shenanigans at Stonehenge , general celebrations, and school holidays to look
forward to. Tomorrow the sun will move southwards and the nights will get longer. What is Summer Solstice
? The summer solstice is generally understood to mark the first day of summer. Crowds gather as dawn begins
to break at Stonehenge on the longest day of the year Image: PA During the winter solstice, the northern
hemisphere is tilted furthest away from the sun, hence fewer hours of daylight and the shortest day. Where to
spend Summer Solstice: UK location that will have the latest sunset on the longest day of the year When is
Summer Solstice ? In the northern hemisphere, the summer solstice takes place between June 20 and The
shortest day of the year is known as the winter solstice, and occurs between December 20 and This year it is
on Friday, December Of those who attend, many are druids, but some are tourists Image: Getty In London, on
the summer solstice, the sun will rise at Near Stonehenge in Salisbury, sunrise will be at Stonehenge is an
ancient prehistoric site, which may have been a place of worship and celebration at the time of summer
solstice for thousands of years. The giant stones are believed to have stood in the same spot since 3, to 2, BC,
and are positioned to align with the sunrise on the two annual solstices. If you stand in just the right place
inside the Stonehenge monument on the day of the summer solstice, you will see the sun rise directly above
the Heel Stone, which stands just outside the circle to the north-east. Every year, thousands flock to the
English Heritage site to witness the spectacle. White cloaked and hooded druids among the standing stones to
welcome the first rays of the sunlight. Read More Who was Maria Reiche? Legendary mathematician who
spent life studying mysterious Nazca lines celebrated in Google doodle A reveler called Mad Alan celebrates
the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, at sunrise at the prehistoric monument Stonehenge Image:
Getty The monument field at Stonehenge is open from Admission is free, but parking fees apply. The Solstice
Car Park opens at The car park will close at 12 noon on June 21 Visitors, including sunrise-worshipping
Druids for whom it is a religious occasion, are encouraged to use public transport or arrange to car share. The
solstice is also celebrated at the Avebury stone circle from Tuesday, June 20, until Thursday, June The
holidays, festivals and rituals do tend to have themes of religion or fertility. Read More How to chill a bottle
of wine in just three minutes - by adding one ingredient to ice Midsummer: Wianki happens in Poland, with
roots in a pagan religious event, and Kupala Night happens in Russia and Ukraine, where people jump over
the flames of bonfires in a ritual test of bravery and faith. Are the days going to be shorter now? When does
summer end? This year the summer season - which has hopefully been filled with BBQs and sunbathing - will
sadly come to an end on Friday 22 September Like us on Facebook.

Chapter 9 : Winter solstice - Wikipedia

The summer solstice is generally understood to mark the first day of summer. Technically, it's when the northern hemisphere of the Earth is most inclined towards the sun, and that's why we get the.

Celebrating Ivan Kupala Day the summer solstice in Russia. This article is an extract taken from the book *The Path of the Spiritual Sun*. Ancient people across the world have celebrated the solstices and equinoxes as evident in hundreds if not thousands of ancient sites, myths, and texts, and the most famous spiritual figures of the world such as Jesus, Osiris, Hu Gadarn, Mithras, Dionysus, Hun Hunahpu, Quetzalcoatl, etc. While some of these traditions were simple and based on an appreciation of the natural world, many celebrated the profound and universal spiritual significance of these special times of year. Many ancient people knew that the natural world and its cycles contain the principles of creation, and that these principles are spiritual in their nature. We are undeniably part of the universe, and so too therefore is the process of awakening. The sun and stars is the source of light and life in our universe, just as the spirit is the source of light and life within us.

Why Celebrate the Solstice and Equinox? The ancient order of the Pythagoreans in Greece, celebrating the rising sun. Some ancient peoples and mystics throughout history were in touch with a different way of gaining knowledge than most are familiar with. This way of learning is timeless, and is gained through individual practice, experience, and observation of the natural world, rather than just reading. Today, although we have become distant from and even hostile toward our environment, the principles of creation remain eternal. They are there within and all around us for anyone who opens their eyes enough to see. Although the solstices and equinoxes are celestial events, they are also very personal ones. They communicate not only cosmic principles, but inner ones too, as the inner and outer world are connected. Each individual can have their own reasons for celebrating the solstices and equinoxes, but these celebrations give everyone participating an opportunity to experience spiritual principles directly. The spirit in life teachesâ€”through these celebrations an individual can learn something personal about their own journey of consciousness, and a group celebrating can learn and perceive something together. Some people who celebrated the ceremony for the summer solstice given here for the first time found afterward that they had all felt something powerfully spiritual and significant from it, and that they had been so moved by it that they would never be the same again.

In a Group at a Dedicated Location The ideal way to celebrate any solstice and equinox is out in the open air, where the sun is clearly visible, with a large group of people who are open to the spiritual side of the event. Chanting mantras becomes especially moving with lots of voices, and the energy of a focused gathering of people can be really uplifting. It would be great if every city had a place where people could go and celebrate together in a large group. There are many examples of ancient peoples celebrating in this way. For example, the Pueblo peoples of North America created kivas which were their temples that were entirely enclosed except for a window that let in a shaft of light on the winter solstice. A cheap do-it-yourself tepee or cabin could be put on a site and its door aligned to the solstice or equinox. Then, only the door need be opened, or perhaps a cabin window could be aligned instead.

In a Group at a Public Location If you only have venues open to you where people who are not involved in the celebration may be staring or even insulting, then you will probably want to simplify the ceremony to the point where you feel comfortable, and may omit special clothing and ceremonial itemsâ€”perhaps just chanting mantras together and doing readings. Another idea could be to find ancient or sacred sites in your area and watch the sunrise or sunset together there. For example, there are ancient standing stones, mounds, mountains, springs, etc. North and Central America are also full of sacred sites and places. Make sure not to climb on or walk over things that are fragile and liable to break or move, nor to remove anything from the site as a souvenir, or to show someone, etc. You could even create a very simple outdoor sacred space with stones and candles. Alternatively, you could also celebrate indoors in a room that catches the sunlight and make a simple sacred space there by incorporating the colors related to the ceremony, using candles, aromas, and even music. For the event, you could try constructing your own simple ceremony, or chant mantras, or sit in quietness, prayer, or reflection. You could even just sit and be in the present moment while watching the sun. However, there is no substitute for attending an actual ceremony with other

people, which is why pilgrimages to sacred sites were so important to ancient people at these times of year. The Day and Days Surrounding the Event In ancient times, celebrations for the solstices and equinoxes not only consisted of a special ceremony at sunrise or sunset, but carried on throughout the days and nights surrounding them. Depending on the meaning of the occasion, the days surrounding the event can be filled with lots of spiritual practice, singing spiritual songs, pilgrimages to sacred sites, processions by candlelight, readings of sacred texts, spiritual dancing, mantras, music, bonfires, times of prayer, reflection, meditation, etc. Fire itself is living and divine, and very much connected to the sun and its own fire, as well as to the fire of the spirit within. This is why fire held a special place in the rites and places of those who practiced the Religion of the Sun. With that in mind, the ceremonies in this book could form just one part of a much larger and longer celebration. There are many websites that give upcoming dates for the solstices and equinoxes , which occur more or less on the same days every year, giving plenty of time to prepare the celebrations for each. One thing to be aware of is that the solar calendar in the Northern Hemisphere is opposite to the one in the Southern Hemisphere. Likewise, the autumn equinox in the north is the spring equinox in the south. So although the world celebrates Christmas at the time of the winter solstice around December 21 in the Northern Hemisphere, those in the Southern Hemisphere who wish to celebrate Christmas according to its true meaning should celebrate it at the time of their actual winter solstice, which would instead be around June 21 the solstice and the three days following. The same applies to Easter, which is a celebration of the spring equinox. Once you do that, you will probably end up with a time that is not exactly sunrise or sunset. To work out when to celebrate the solstice or equinox, simply find the sunrise or sunset closest to the local time you have. So for example, if the time given is 3am in your local time zone and you are celebrating the winter solstice sunrise, then celebrate it the morning of that day a few hours later. Make sure you have your sacred space and things for the ceremony prepared well in advance so you are not rushed beforehand. Creating a Sacred Space Having a sacred space is very important. A dedicated space like this helps us to move from an ordinary state of mind, full of the thoughts of the day, etc. A sacred space can be all the way from a huge temple to a room in your house that is dedicated to practice and prayer. Whatever the resources, the principle is the same. It becomes an energetically focused place for connecting with the spiritual. Keep reading in the book *The Path of the Spiritual Sun*.