

High Spring Festival of Flowers



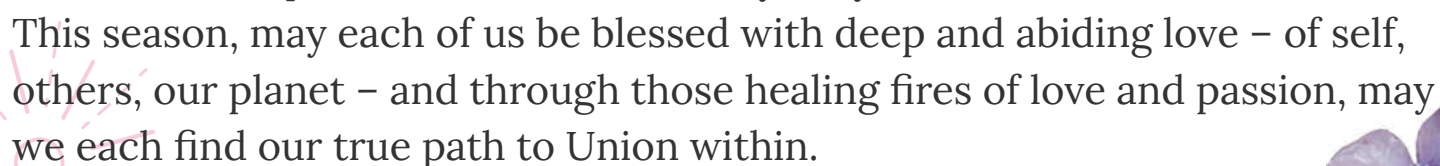



High Spring

In high spring we honour the Lovers, the sacred union of life, the bloom of every wild and glorious desire. Also known to some as Beltane, Bealtaine, Beltain, High Spring is traditionally held on the 31st October/1st November. It is a cross-quarter day, falling halfway between Spring Equinox and Summer Solstice. It marks the peak of Spring and the beginning of Summer. The land we are standing on knows what time it is - a time for revelry, dance, for rites that honour creation, love, and the abundance we can see. We can feel the energy surging, and the flame of passion and creativity burns bright. All life is bursting with potent fertility; flowers are blooming, the earth that is quickening, and the fires of passion are dancing in the air. Traditionally, rituals include, maypoles, handfasting, ceremonies involving fire, making spring flower garlands, or flower crowns/wreaths to honour the 'May-Queen'.

At this time of year in the northern hemisphere Halloween/Samhain is being celebrated. Whilst Late Autumn/Samhain/Halloween honours death, High Spring/Beltane honours life. Let's honour the cycles of the land we live on, not the imported narratives that would have us out of sync with the land. For those who like a little history, the word Beltane is from Gaelic 'bealltainn' May 1, an important Celtic religious rite marking the start of summer, probably literally \"blazing fire,\" from Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root 'bhel' to shine, flash, burn and Old Irish 'ten' fire. Also known as \"Old May Day\", because after the 1752 calendar reform it continued to be reckoned according to Old Style. Other sources name Bel, a Babylonian Earth-god, who is in turn related to Summerian Belili, goddess of trees, the moon, love, and the other world. 'Bel\" forms part of the Latin 'bellus/a/um' beautiful. This festival season encourages us to ask - 'What is life without passion and connection?' It opens us to the extraordinary energy of our desire but also to the deeply empathic nature of our being, one that strives to relate, make connections, open ever further to the mystery of life.

This season, may each of us be blessed with deep and abiding love - of self, others, our planet - and through those healing fires of love and passion, may we each find our true path to Union within.





“In the fields, she stopped and took a deep breath of the flower-scented air. It was dearer to her than her kin, better than a lover, wiser than a book. And for a moment she rediscovered the purpose of her life. She was here on earth to absorb its wild enchantment.” ~ Boris Pasternak

“It is that holy poetry and singing we are after. We want powerful words and songs that can be heard underwater and over land. It is the wild singing we are after, our chance to use the wild language we are learning by heart under the sea. When a woman speaks her truth, fires up her intention and feeling, staying tight with the instinctive nature, she is singing, she is living in the wild breath-stream of the soul. To live this way is a cycle in itself, one meant to go on, go on, go on.”

~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes

folklore



Beltaine was known as Walpurgis Nacht by the Teutons and it fell exactly six months from All Hallow's Eve making it the second most magical time of the time. Germanic legends and folklore tell that on Walpurgis Night witches of all kinds "mountain-witches, wood-witches, marsh-witches, mist-witches, storm-witches, wind-witches, flower witches and herb witches" flew on broomsticks through the night to gather on a high mountain in Germany known as the Brocken. Maibolwe was the legendary libation of choice -an aphrodisiacal celebration of fertility and the spirits of the forest.

Did You Know...

The pious Puritans were outraged by the debauchery of Beltane celebrations. In fact, they made Maypoles illegal in the mid 1600s, and tried to put a halt to the "greenwood marriages" that frequently took place on May Eve. One pastor wrote that if "tenne maiden went to set (celebrate) May, nine of them came home gotten with childe."



Artist: Bonny Hut

The maiden goddess of Spring has reached her fullness; a manifestation of growth and renewal. She is known as the May Queen, Flora, the May Bride. The Green Man, also known as Jack-In-The-Green, and the young Oak King falls in love with her and wins her hand. The union is consummated and the May Queen becomes pregnant. This sacred marriage (heiros gamos), the union of Earth and Sky, has been re-enacted for centuries. This is the night of the 'greenwood marriage' - a time for sensuality, passion, vitality and joy, and conception.



folklore

High Spring has many popular customs relating to new life and fertility but there is also a darker side to this time of the year.

The basis of the following custom is to protect against this darkness and it involves both 'Blood Magic' and performing the protection spell at a specific time - in this case, dawn.

The description comes from the Duchas.ie Schools Folklore Collection and was collected by Eamon Byrne in May 1938.

"The fairies exercise a powerful influence for evil at Bealtaine, or May time, so as a preservative against their malice and the fairy darts, which at this season wound and kill, it was the custom on May morning at sunrise, to bleed the cattle and taste of the blood mingled with milk. Men and women were also bled, and their blood was sprinkled on the ground, but this practice, however, died out, even in the remote West."

There is also specific Bealtaine lore of The Fairy Queen walking among humans at this time of the year.

Some traditions say that you can avoid being seen by her by covering your face, whereas others seem to imply that once you have spotted her it is almost impossible to escape your fate.

The Scottish ballad of Thomas the Rhymer is a good example of this.



Artist: John Collison



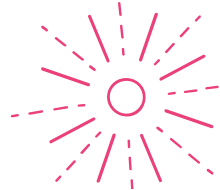
The Maypole

The Maypole dance has been a well known tradition for a very long time throughout Europe. The maypole itself is a tall pole often made of birch, It is inserted into the ground representing the potency of the god. The ring of flowers represent the fertility of the goddess. Its many coloured ribbons and the ensuing weaving dance symbolise the spiral of Life and the union of the Goddess and God, the union between Earth and Sky. Weaving in and out, the ribbons are eventually knotted together by the time the dancers reach the end. The maypole is obviously phallic in nature and the dance usually performed by young women symbolises the sheathing of the male phallus by the feminine. The joyful dance celebrating the Great Rite, as it is often referred to, being the sexual union between Goddess and God.



Handfasting

This time of year is often chosen as the best time for handfasting. Handfasting is a ceremony where a couple will agree to a betrothal period of a year and a day. At the end of that period they would then agree to continue as man and wife, or be free to go their separate ways. Any children produced during that period would stay with the father. During the Celtic tradition of handfasting, the couple will be asked to clasp both hands, crossing their arms first, making the infinity symbol. Alternatively, they can each clasp their right hands with their wrists touching so that their pulses meet. Then the celebrant will drape coloured cords, ribbons or pieces of material over the couples clasped hands. The celebrant would then tie a knot beneath the couple's clasped hands. This is the origin of the phrase "To tie the knot!"

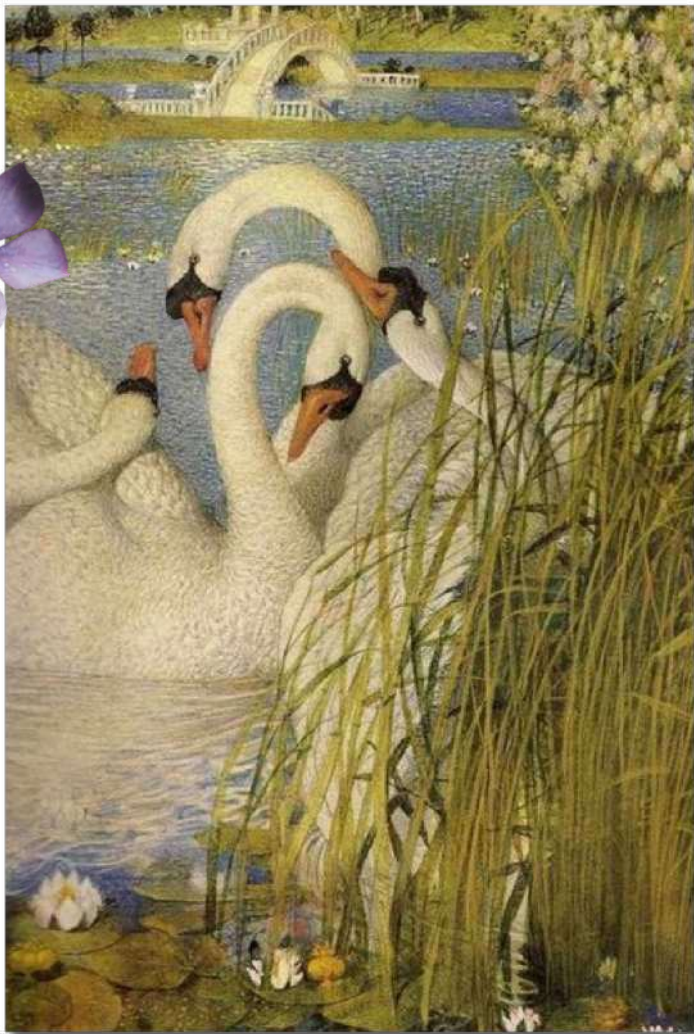


The Swan

We have used images of swans throughout this magazine. Swans have long been a symbol of love and devotion as they mate for life, and with their grace and beauty they are a popular choice in literature, art, and mythology.



Artist: Walter Crane

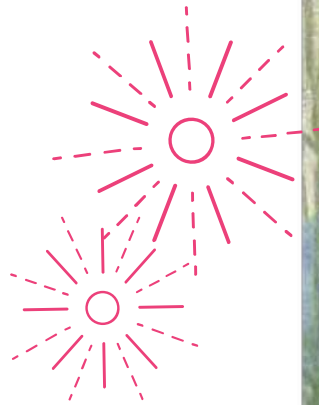
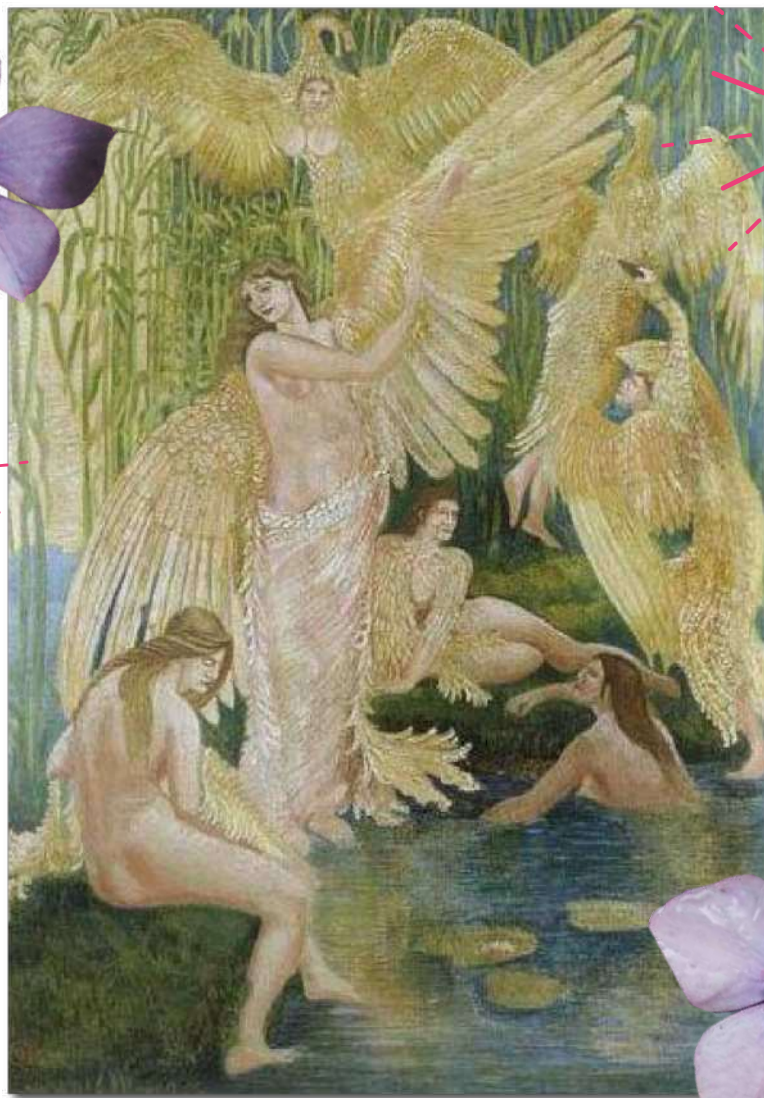


Artist: Gennady Spirin

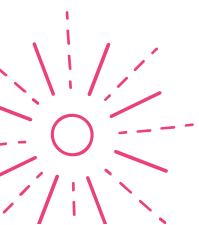
As with all seasonal celebrations, we can find their opposite festival reflected. The festival that stands opposite High Spring is of course Deep Autumn, the time of year when some celebrate Samhain and Halloween, with the thinning of the veils at both festivals. Swans are seen as having links to the Otherworld (Aos Si) community whose world was reached through mists, hills, lakes, ponds, wetland areas, caves, ancient burial sites, cairns and mounds. Within these realms dwelt the Celtic gods with all of their supernatural ability. Association with these deities gave the swan an exalted status linked to the Celtic festivals such as those of Beltane and Samhain.



To see a swan is considered good luck, to see seven would mean seven years of good luck. Conversely, to kill a swan is very unlucky and bound to bring misfortune to the perpetrator's life. Rules governing swan ownership in England date back before the mid-13th century - swans were considered royal fare. The tradition of royal swan ownership carries on today: The king still owns every unmarked mute swan—the white-feathered bird with a knob on its orange beak, the bird that you most likely think of when you think “swan”—on England’s open waters. Killing swans was outlawed in the 1980s, when the population in England was shrinking.



Swans are associated with shapeshifting and throughout the Celtic nations there are myths and legends featuring swans. To read more about the swan and its symbols of love, loyalty and the soul click [HERE](#).



folklore



“May, queen of blossoms,
and fulfilling flowers,
what pretty music
Shall we charm the hours?
Wilt thou have pipe and
reed,
Blown in the open mead?
Or to the lute give heed, in
the green bowers.”

— Lord Edward Thurlow

Handfasted or not, both young and old went A-Maying. Couples spent the night in the woods and fields, made love and brought back armfuls of the first May or Hawthorn blossoms to decorate their homes and barns. Hawthorn was never brought into the home except at Beltane - at other times it was considered unlucky. Young women gathered the dew to wash their faces, supposedly bestowing them with a flawless complexion; made flower crowns, and May baskets to give as gifts. Everyone was free to enact the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God, and there was an accepted tradition of Beltane babies arriving nine months later.



Celebrating *HIGH SPRING*

Decorate your sacred space or altar in vibrant, living color. Use roses and flowers in rainbow hues, and gems and minerals in varying colors and shapes



Craft your own sacred maypole using found wood, rainbow ribbons, and topped with a quartz point or other beautiful gem from your collection. Go as big or small as you like. Alternatively, decorate your favourite tree - winding colourful ribbons round add a chant that is meaningful to you as you do the winding.

If you go out at sunrise on High Spring day, take a bowl or jar to gather morning dew. Use the dew to wash your face, and you're guaranteed a perfect complexion. You can also use the dew in ritual as consecrated water, particularly in rituals related to the moon or the goddess Diana or her counterpart, Artemis.



Celebrating *HIGH SPRING*

Typically, this is a Sabbat to celebrate gods of the hunt or of the forest, and goddesses of passion and motherhood, as well as agricultural deities. Here is a list of gods and goddesses that can be honoured as part of your tradition's rituals.

- Artemis (Greek)
- Bes (Egyptian)
- Bacchus (Roman)
- Cernunnos (Celtic)
- Flora (Roman)
- Hera (Greek)
- Kokopelli (Hopi)
- Mbaba Mwana Waresa (Zulu)
- Pan (Greek)
- Priapus (Greek)
- Sheela-na-Gig (Celtic)
- Xochiquetzal (Aztec)

Indulge in the sensuality of this festival and buy fresh cut flowers, plant seeds for new ones in pots or your garden, drink a flower petal tea, take a flower petal bath, place flower petals all over your home, make a garland, wear a floral perfume or oil blend. In any way you wish and can, let flowers fill your day.



Sit in meditation. Ask yourself, and your guides, what it would look like for the garden of your soul to burst fully into bloom, a thousand of your dreams like flowers spreading their glorious multi-colored petals? Visualize your fire and your blooming in as much detail as possible, and then take the actions needed to bring those visualizations into reality.



Celebrating *HIGH SPRING*


One of the hallmarks of any Beltane celebration is the bonfire, or the Bale Fire (this can be spelled a number of ways, including Beal Fire and Bel Fire). This tradition has its roots in early Ireland. According to legend, each year at Beltane, the tribal leaders would send a representative to the hill of Uisneach, where a great bonfire was lit. These representatives would each light a torch, and carry it back to their home villages. Once the fire reached the village, everyone would light a torch to take into their houses and use to light their hearths. This way, the fire of Ireland was spread from one central source throughout the entire country.



Ronald Hutton writes that "To increase the potency of the holy flames, in Britain at least they were often kindled by the most primitive of all means, of friction between wood." This is known as a need-fire or force-fire. In the 19th century, John Ramsay described Scottish Highlanders kindling such a fire at Beltane, which was deemed sacred.



Fire was seen as having protective powers. Similar rituals were part of May Day or Midsummer customs in other parts of the British Isles and mainland Europe. Frazer believed the fire rituals are a kind of imitative or sympathetic magic. He suggests they were meant to mimic the Sun and "ensure a needful supply of sunshine for men, animals, and plants", as well as to symbolically "burn up and destroy all harmful influences"



A Benediction
by sophie strand

May your heart be as soft as rain
on the hungry soil. May your heart
be hungry soil. May the next year
be today. And every day a kingdom.
May your day be filled with presence.

May presence bloom with such intensity
that you stand transfixed. May there
be snowdrops and trillium and columbine
hung like lace across the limestone
of your closed eyes. May your eyes open
inwards. Downwards. Heart-towards.

May your day be as purple as your own song.
As blue as your own thought. As red as
the string of love you are following,
step by step, through the spiral.

May you trust the seashell curvature
of your becoming. May you feel yourself
becoming the shape and flower
of your own belonging in this one
breath. This welcome, spacious hour.



Introduction To A Goddess

Flora

Flora was the deity of the flowering plants, fertility, spring, and blossoming. Although she was a minor figure compared to other goddesses of the Roman empire, she was important as a fertility goddess. Flora was responsible for the abundance of the crops in spring, so her worship strengthened as this season approached. Her name derives from the Latin *floris*, which means flower, and her Greek counterpart was the nymph, Chloris.



At the beginning of her myth, Flora had associations only with the flowering plants which bore fruit. As time went by, she became the goddess of all flowering plants, both ornamental and fruit-bearing ones.

Flora had two worship temples in Rome – one near the Circus Maximus, and the other on the Quirinal Hill. The temple near the Circus Maximus was in the vicinity of the temples and worship centers of other goddesses associated with fertility, like Ceres.

The Floralia was a festival in ancient Roman religious practice in honor of the goddess Flora, held April 27 during the Republican era, or April 28 in the Julian calendar. The festival included *Ludi Florae*, the "Games of Flora", which lasted for six days under the empire.

The festival had a licentious, pleasure-seeking atmosphere. In contrast to many festivals which had a patrician character, the games of Flora were plebeian in nature.



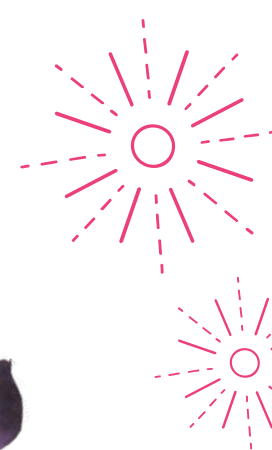
~SONG OF BELTANE~




I AM THE CALM, I AM THE QUICKENING,
I AM THE INTOXICATION AND THE FORCE,
I AM THE SILENCE, I AM THE SINGER,
I AM THE STALLION GALLOPING TO ITS SOURCE.
I AM THE BRIGHT PAVILION AND THE FEASTING,
I AM THE WEDDING COUPLE AND THE BED,
I AM THE MORNING CHORUS AND THE HEARTBEAT,
I AM THE GOAL TO WHICH ALL PATHS ARE LED.



MAY LIFE BE YOURS ABUNDANTLY!


~ CAITLIN MATTHEWS





“Sacred to fairies, witches, and the goddesses of old, no tree is more central to “Going a Maying” than the Hawthorn Tree, the Queen of The May herself. Which makes her the perfect rejuvenating May Cordial. Not only has her fertilizing procreative magic made her the centrepiece of spring rites across the British Isles and Europe – her blossoms heal and strengthen the heart, emotionally, spiritually and physically.” - Gather Victoria (“Queen of the May” Enchanting Hawthorn Blossom Cordial)

As hawthorn flowers may be hard to come by here, we offer you a recipe on the next page for elderflower cordial. If, however, you are lucky enough to be able to source hawthorn flowers, you can visit the above website.



Gardening Goddesses

If you're lucky enough to be blessed with green thumbs and garden space, then here is list of vegies, herbs etc. to plant now in the mid north coast region of NSW. This list is not exhaustive, and there are many other fabulous plants you could add to it. Remember that much of the region is on the cusp of temperate and sub-tropical zones, so you may need to experiment - if you don't already know your garden well. Have fun and happy planting.

Harvesting Elderflower

They are best gathered just as the many tiny buds are beginning to open. Choose a dry sunny day, sever the stalks carefully with scissors and keep the flowers upright so that pollen, the source of much of that unique flavour and fragrance, will not be lost. Place carefully in a bag and have a good pick through at home to remove any bugs rather than washing them. Trim as much stalk off as you can before use.



Instructions

Inspect the Elderflower heads carefully and remove any insects.

Place the sugar and honey in a large saucepan with 1 litre of water. Gently bring to the boil until all the sugar has dissolved, then remove from heat.

Finely grate in the lemon zest and add the Elderflower upside down, ensuring the flowers are completely submerged. Squeeze in the juice of one lemon, then slice the other and add it to the saucepan. Put a lid on the saucepan and leave to infuse for 24 hours.

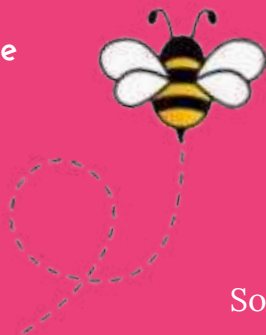
Strain the cordial through a fine sieve lined with muslin into a large bowl.

Store in sterilized bottles or jars. Drink diluted with water, soda or Prosecco.

Ingredients

15 heads of Elderflower
500g caster sugar
4 tablespoons quality runny honey

- Beans - dwarf and climbing
- Beetroot
- Borage
- Cape Gooseberry
- Capsicum
- Caraway
- Chinese Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Fennel
- Hollyhock
- Lemon Balm
- Maize



- Mustard
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Rhubarb
- Rockmelon
- Silverbeet
- Sunflowers
- Sweet Potato
- Thyme
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon





Correspondences

High Spring

Animals

Bees, Cattle, Swan, Dove,
Fairies, Swallow, Lynx,
Leopard



Crystals & Stones

Orange Carnelian, Rose
quartz, Amber, Emerald,
Green Moss Agate,
Moonstone, Ruby, Jasper,
Sapphire, Watermelon
Tourmaline



Herbs and Flowers

Any budding or sprouting plant,
hawthorn, marigold, rose, primrose,
lilac, ivy, basically all flowers

Focus

Marriage of the divine feminine and masculine,
fertility and creativity, conception, the lengthening
hours of light, union and communion, desire,
sensuality, what is required for your dreams to
reach fruition, nature, bonfires.

Elements

Maypole, flowers, activities of
pleasure, feasting, dancing,
making flower garlands,
ribbons, fire

Colours

Green, red, blue, white,
white, pink, yellow, brown

Deities

Aphrodite, Flora, Diana, Pan
Ishtar, Venus, Persephone

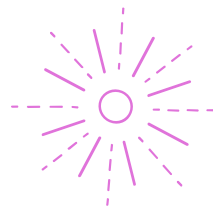


Incense

Jasmine, Rose, Frankincense,
Passionflower, Woodruff,
Sage

Foods

Honey, Strawberries, Wine,
Oatmeal cakes, Bread,
Cereals.



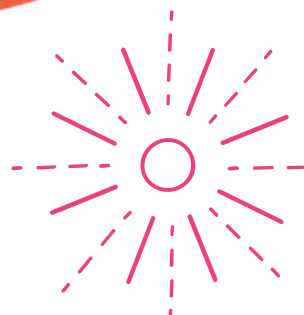


Music for the Season



Between the Bealtaine Fires

A SoundCloud Mix



Handfast Blessing


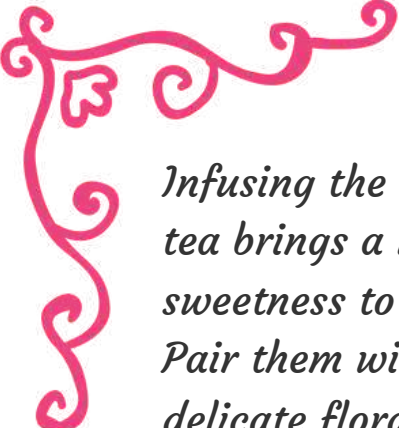
By S J Tucker
From album Blessings



Dandini

By Azam Ali
From Album From Night To the Edge of Day





Infusing the butter with rooibos tea brings a warm, earthy sweetness to these almond cakes. Pair them with rosewater for a delicate floral touch - perfect for a spingtime afternoon tea.



ROOIBOS AND ROSE FRIANDS

Ingredients

- 150g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
- 2 tbsp loose leaf rooibos tea
- 40g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 200g icing sugar, plus extra for dusting
- 110g ground almonds
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 200g egg whites
- 1tdp vanilla bean paste
- 1/2 tsp rosewater
- 2 1/2 tbsp flaked almonds
- dried rose petals, to decorate



Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 210C (190C fanforced). Grease a muffin or friand pan with some melted butter and sprinkle the holes with a little flour, tapping it around to make sure it's evenly coated. Tap out excess and set aside.
2. Add the butter and tea to a small saucepan and heat gently until the butter has melted. Let the butter cool and infuse for 10 minutes, then strain out the tea leaves through a fine mesh sieve, and discard leaves.
3. In a large bowl, combine the flour, icing sugar, ground almonds, and salt

Instructions (continued)



4. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg whites vanilla, and rosewater until frothy. You're not looking for soft peaks here, so this will only take a few seconds. Pour the egg whites into the dry ingredients and stir until combined, then mix in the infused butter.

5. Pour the batter evenly into the holes of the prepared pan and top each one with flaked almonds Bake for 20-25 minutes, turning the tray around halfway through, until golden and a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean.

6. Leave to cool in the pan for a few minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely. Once cooled, dust with icing sugar and top with some dried rose petals.

This is an edited extract
from **A Good Day to Bake** by
Benjamin Ebuehi





Am Beannachadh

Bealltain The Beltane Blessing

In the 19th century, folklorist Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912), collected the Scottish Gaelic song Am Beannachadh Bealltain (The Beltane Blessing) in his Carmina Gadelica, which he heard from a crofter in South Uist. The first two verses were sung as follows:

Beannaich, a Thrianailt fhioir nach gann, (Bless, O Threefold true and bountiful,)

Mi fein, mo cheile agus mo chlann, (Myself, my spouse and my children,)

Mo chlann mhaoth's am mathair chaomh 'n an ceann, (My tender children and their beloved mother at their head,)

Air chlar chubhr nan raon, air airidh chaon nam beann, (On the fragrant plain, at the gay mountain sheiling,)

Air chlar chubhr nan raon, air airidh chaon nam beann. (On the fragrant plain, at the gay mountain sheiling.)

Gach ni na m' fhardaich, no ta 'na m' shealbh, (Everything within my dwelling or in my possession,)


Gach buar is barr, gach tan is tealbh, (All kine and crops, all flocks and corn,)

Bho Oidhche Shamhna chon Oidhche Bheallt, (From Hallow Eve to Beltane Eve,)

Piseach maith, agus beannachd mallt, (With goodly progress and gentle blessing,)

Bho mhuir, gu muir, agus bun gach allt, (From sea to sea, and every river mouth,)

Bho thonn gu tonn, agus bonn gach steallt. (From wave to wave, and base of waterfall.)



IF YOU ARE LOOKING
FOR BEAUTIFUL OR
INSPIRATIONAL
GODDESS PROSE OR
POETRY, DON'T FORGET
ABOUT OUR **BOOK OF**
GODDESS ON OUR
WEBSITE

Last Word

*If you come a-maying, a-straying,
a-playing,*

*we will pluck the little flowers,
enough for you and me;*

*and when the day dies, end our
one day's playing,*

*give a kiss and take a kiss and
go home free." - Unknown*

May your Beltane be joyous!

'Til next time, Blessed be!



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Cover Art: Renee Thompson