

# THE NINE FAITH KINDRED HOLIDAYS.

## THE MAIN HOLIDAYS IN NORSE PAGANISM.

The holiday calendar can get a little overwhelming if you're new to heathenry. The mix of Celtic Pagan holidays, to Wiccan holidays, and some Anglo Saxon holidays all take up space within the calendar year.

NFK tries to keep it simple and tries to keep it original.

First off, the two major holidays to Norse Paganism are the Solstices. During the mid-summer, typically around **June 21<sup>st</sup>** (exact dates may change) is **Midsummer Celebration**, old Germanic countries would celebrate the position of the sun, related to the celestial equator, it holds the date as the longest day of the year and the shortest night. The holiday signified the start of summer for the Norse, and fertility of the coming year. A celebration of power and activity, and the celebration of Sunna, or Sol the sun goddess and her brother Mani, the god of the moon. Midsummer also known as Midsummer blot also signifies the union of Freyr and Freyja, combining their energy to bring forth the fruits of the land. Heimdall and the Bifrost bridge can also be celebrated during this time. Aegir, Ran and the Nine sisters (Waves) can also be celebrated and welcomed in offerings. Baldr may also be recognized as the god of light during the celebration and summer months. Midsummer blot is considered the second biggest Norse Pagan celebration next to the twelve days of Yule.

The second Solstice the Norse would celebrate would be the Winter Solstice, known as **Yule**, or **Yuletide**, marking the start of winter on **December 21<sup>st</sup>**. Yule lasts twelve days and twelve nights, and is the biggest Norse Pagan celebration of the calendar year. The name Yule comes from the old Norse name Hjol, meaning 'Wheel' and it signifies the moments when the wheel of the year is at its lowest point, ready to rise again. It has a Germanic meaning of 'Return of the Sun' as it's wheel rolls across the sky. Yule Celebrations predate Christianity by thousands of years. There are numerous references to Yule in the Icelandic Sagas, and in other ancient accounts testifying to how Yule was celebrated. It was a time for feasting, giving, dancing, and love. The Yule holiday is the holiest holiday and most popular among all pagan holidays. Yule also signifies the return of the god Baldr from the realm of Hel, and the God Freyr rides his boar across the sky bring light and love back into the world.

During this time of year especially around Yule the Wild Hunt goes charging across the sky and the dead are said to range the earth, reuniting with lost loved ones, and causing harm if not welcomed by households. The realm between the spirits, gods, and landvaettir are the physical world is at its thinnest. Odin, leads the Wild Hunt across the sky on his horse Slepnir, hunting the restless dead and in old traditions children would leave their boots outside full of sugar and hay, in case Slepnir would stop in for a bite on his journey. Odin would leave gifts for the children for their kindness, and hospitality. Over time, Slepnir was transformed into a reindeer, and Odin eventually into Santa Clause, Father of Christmas.

The first night of Yule is called Mothers Night, and it's where Frigg and the Disir are honored. Mothers' night represents the rebirth of the world after dark winters. This is the shortest day, and longest night of the year. It is regular that the Norse would stay up all night this night, to ensure the sun rose again.

Oaths at this time are very meaningful, swearing oaths should never be broken. In fact, the New Year's resolution is a diminished form of the Holy Yule Oath. The fir pine tree was brought into the house and decorated is an ancient custom brought to America by German immigrants. The Yule log is also an ancient heathen custom, it was burnt all night to ensure the sun will rise and represented to burn through the longest night of the year signifying life lasting even in dark times.

The Twelve nights of Yule starting the night of December 20<sup>th</sup>:

1. Mothers Night- Sacred to Frigg, Freyja, and the Disir.
2. The Wild Hunt- Sacred to Odin, and Ancestors.
3. Moon Chase- Sacred to Mani, God of the Moon.
4. Earth Night- Sacred to Aegir, Njord and Freyr
5. Community Night- Sacred to community and friends.
6. Healing night- Sacred to Eir and healing, health.
7. Thor's night- Sacred to Thor and Children
8. Frost night- Sacred to Skadi, and Ullr
9. Father night- Sacred to Odin and Fathers
10. Sun night- Sacred to Sunna (Sol) and light
11. Night of Valkyries- Sacred to the Valkyries and Warriors
12. Oath Night- Sacred to all gods, divine friends, and Oath night.

From here we move into the equinoxes.

The first equinox is typically held on **March 21<sup>st</sup>**, known as the Vernal Equinox, and known as **Ostara**. It is the coming of spring to the old Norse. The Celtic goddess Eostre/Ostara is celebrated in festivities and dancing through the fields. Ostara is known to transform birds into hares and the hares would lay eggs for her festival. Ostara was such an integral part of heathen Germanic culture that the Christians stole and absorbed it as their own spring feast which has adapted to Easter. Ostara's name is adapted to Germanic words for "East" and "Glory" she was the embodiment of the springtime and renewal for life. In old Norse culture some may color eggs and lay them on doorsteps to wish good luck for coming seasons. Rabbits were a big celebration in Ostara because this is when they would come out of hibernation and reproduce for summer hunting. Freyja is often hailed at this time as well for the bringer of spring, and the green of her footsteps that follow. Idun is also hailed during this time for her apples and eternal youth. Njord may also be a god that gets hailed and celebrated for his ships take off from the docks out to sea for fishing.

The second equinox is the Autumn equinox on **September 21<sup>st</sup>**, where the days and nights are equal length and the start of Autumn. This is also known as **Fallfeast** or **Haustblot**, and its representation of the second harvest of the season. Bonfires, dancing, and the casting of Skadi's arrow were a popular way of celebrating. The villagers would also extinguish all other fires except one, and light torches off the same fire signifying bonding, and unity under one light. Gods that were celebrated during Haustblot were Freyr, Njord, Jord, and Idun. Skadi was also hailed during this time for her coming of winter by men casting lit arrows into the sky signifying hunting season is coming.

These are the main 4 holidays of the Norse/Germanic Pagan past.

The following holidays are minor holidays, but were still celebrated by Norse Pagans, and Germanic Pagans.

## Disablot

Disablot, also known as Charming of the plow is the first celebration of the new year, and is held typically on **January 31<sup>st</sup>, or February 1<sup>st</sup>**. This celebration represented the coming of the year, and the preparation of the harvesting of the year. All the work to come in the year was blessed during Disablot. However, this celebration was also dedicated to the Disir, female spirits of individuals, groups, homes, and locations. The Valkyries were also hailed and celebrated at this time of year.

## May Eve/ May Day/ Walpurgisnacht

Also known as Majblot, or May blot, or Beltane is a Gaelic holiday festival, that is held on **May 1<sup>st</sup>**, halfway between the spring equinox and the summer solstice. Its celebration represents the beginning of summer, and is also related to Walpurgis Night, the night of witches. For this name, it also known as the second Halloween for villagers would dress up. Beltane is a Celtic word which means 'Fires of Bel'; therefore, villagers would celebrate a custom of jumping over the fire signifying community, what one does, the other does. The big difference between Beltane and Walpurgis night is Beltane is celebrated on May 1<sup>st</sup>, where Walpurgis night is celebrated the night before. Combining the two holidays, Walpurgishacht was born, and in Norse traditions this is the night when the boundary between the world and the spirits world is a bit shaky. The combination of holiday comes from Beltane, a Scandinavian holiday and a Christian holiday from Saint Walpurga, bringing Walpurgisnacht.

Irish farmers and Norse people would decorate their cattle and walk in between bonfires and signify blessing of the animal for a good growth.

## Freyfest/ Freyr's Blot

Also celebrated as Lammas, taken from Anglo Saxon heathen festival which was forcibly Christianized. Freyfest is celebrated on **August 1<sup>st</sup>**. The name Lammas means 'Half Loaf' or 'Loaf Mass' implies It is the feast of breads. Freyr's Blot represents the first harvest of the season, from fruit and grain. Typical celebrations would be held by baking breads, and offering it to Freyr, the bringer of plenty. Freyfest is also know as the Harvest Festival, and giving to all Freyr, Urd, Jord, and Sif. Aegir may also be

hailed at this time for the mead and beer he would bring with the fresh grain just harvested.

### Winter Nights/ HelFest/ Samhain

Winter Nights celebrations is a historical festival marked the beginning of the winter, and involved sacrifices to elves, Hel and Disir. In a modern Wiccan tradition Winter Nights is associated with Samhain, or Halloween on **October 31<sup>st</sup>**. Winter nights represents the end of summer, the start of the winter. Sacrifices would take place thanking the elves and disir for a successful summer or growing season and to ask protection for the winter to come. Villagers would gather around steaming cauldrons of soups, stews and meats, sharing with the gods and goddesses. This was a celebration of victory for successful farmers, and for the animals who couldn't make it through the winter, they were offered as sacrifice to the gods. This was the time of year fields, forests, and mountains no longer belonged to man, but to the spirits of the land, the trolls and elves. Winter Nights also meant that the work outside was done, and it was time to work inside. The women of the homes would clean and prepare suppers, the men would turn to indoor craftsmanship, and the children would tell stories. Winter Nights also **HelFest** was a celebration of the dead as well, for we would remember those that we lost in the past, and honor them with toasts and prayers. Divination was a popular thing to do with village seeress, for people would want to know how the next upcoming year and harvest will be. Hel, Nidhogg and the guarding of the gates of hel Garmr were also celebrated this day, keeping structure after death. Baldr, Nanna, and Hoder may also be celebrated this day due to their after-death form as deities of light to darkness.

These are the major 8 holidays in modern day Norse Paganism. However, some groups and kindreds add historical events into their calendars, where some may only celebrate the equinox and solstices.

NFK looks forward to seeing you at one of our celebrations.