

Winter

By Leaf Running-rabbit

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Medicines, Ceremonies, Celebrations, Fires, Blankets, Sharing, Hot Drinks, Soups and Broths, Family, Friends, Elders, Children, Pets, Love...

These are just a beginning to the very long list of things that I love about Winter and the long journey toward Winter Solstice. The Shortest Day and the Longest Night, some call it. The Day when the Sun Stands Still, others might call it. Some even call it Mid-Winter's Day, while others yet will hold firm to it being the calendar's technical "First Day of Winter." Regardless, however, and no matter what you call it, Winter Solstice is something like the climax and pinnacle flavor of the Winter Season in general.

For those of us living off-the-grid and being solar dependent, it means other things too.

With the Great Ball of Fire that we call the Sun being so much lower in the sky and retreating southward for us here in the Northern Hemisphere, with the days getting shorter and shorter, and with the snows continually covering over our precious photovoltaic surface areas, those of us living with the small PV array system are constantly on the chase. We are chasing the Sun. We are standing our panels more upright to try and get more energy. We are checking our system's voltage and amp hours before we go to bed at night and right after we wake-up in the morning. We are minimizing our use and demands on the system as much as possible, i.e. we are trying to use less. We are trekking out into the bitter pre-sunrise cold in order to brush the snow off our panels. We are turning our fridges off at night and turning them back on in the morning as soon as we can see that yes, oh thank goodness yes, the Sun IS willing to return, to rise up over that horizon and give us the precious energy we need! Yes! And that is why the Sun is one of our Medicines, why it deserves Thanks and Gratitude, why it deserves Celebration.

The Medicines that we use over the course of the Winter are many, are various, are wonderful, are practical. I, for example, harvest Bear Root (Osha) in the late Fall in order to steep and use over the Winter in teas and honey, in tinctures, or just straight. I also harvest Usnea, or Grandfather's Beard off the pine trees; fire making materials such as inner Birch Bark, Cattail Fluff, and dry grass; pine sap resin; and many more. Mostly for Health and Ceremonial purposes.

Medicines that we ALL share more in common, however, but that we may not "look" at as Medicines per se, are ones such as chicken broth on a stove, a warm fire, hot herbal teas and hot apple cider, sharing a meal with friends and family around a table, hugging our children and each other, snuggling under a blanket, frolicking on the floor with our pets, etcetera... Believe it or not, these are all Medicines, they are all Ceremonies, and the more we look at them as such, the more intention we put into them, the more gratitude we have for them, the more joy these small and daily actions give to us and to all those who surround us. These are some of the Medicines and simple pleasures, if not offerings, of Winter.

On the other hand, Winter offers its share of "hardships" too, yes, I understand and well know. Bitter colds to bear, snowy roads to maneuver, ice to be careful on, winds to protect

ourselves from, wood to cut and chop and carry, messes around the wood stove to clean-up, etcetera...And as I sit here right now beside my wood stove writing this piece, feeling the left side of my body become too hot next to the stove, fidgeting around with wood debris mess on the floor with my feet in wool socks, dealing with my coffee cup and [read how to start a cleaning business](#) ;being too hot sitting on top of the wood stove, watching the snow whirl around in the wind outside my TV windows, yes, as I sit here right now it is hard for me to consider all of these things a "hardship."

It is a "Loveship," actually, this whole Winter thing. It encourages me to change my perspective about what matters, about what is important in the moment. It grants me the time and slowness to more fully enjoy some of the simple pleasures of Life. It fosters a stronger awareness of Presence, Mindfulness, and Consciousness. Whereas Summer is like an outward explosion of all there is to do, all there is to see, all there is to experience, all the places there are to go go go, Winter is an inward contemplation and re-grounding toward what it means to be a basic Human, toward what is personal, toward what is wholesome, nutritional, vital, and reconnective. Winter is for self-care and self-love, which in turn allows us to more fully care for others and to love others more fully.

So, Happy Winter and Happy Winter Solstice! Go chase some Sun, smile at People and hug them, share some warm liquids and hot food, split some firewood, brush snow off of something, walk slower on the ice and hold hands for more safety, breathe slower and deeper, sit closer to the fire, snuggle with someone under a blanket, and tell them that you love them. These are the Ways of Winter. These are the Medicines. The Ceremonies. The Wonders that make Life so real. So go ahead, take your Medicine! Peace!

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Medicine Basket:

The World is a basket full of Sacred Medicines.

We are a part of those Medicines, wild-harvested, wild-crafted.

It is up to us, The People,

to choose how to use these Medicines.

As in All Things,
there are right ways
and there are wrong ways.

Our Ancestors
are praying for us
to choose a Right Way.

Some of our future ancestors are not praying at all.

Love means
flourishing toward Source.
Fear means
withering away from Source.

Our Basket
is a Sacred Web of Life.
Medicines must be used, Medicines must be replenished.
Everything, always, in a Good Way.
Please, My People,
let us continue to Pray.
Wild be.