

# Winter Solstice Ritual

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Our cosy heaters and pot belly stoves help make the colder months warm and comfortable. Many of us look forward to hibernation and the slower pace of winter days. Not so our ancestors, who prepared for the coming of winter long in advance, knowing the challenges of finding food and keeping warm. The midwinter solstice was a vital turning point in the seasonal calendar, marking the longest night of the year and from midwinter to the summer solstice six months later, the nights would grow shorter and the days longer. Many of the customs associated with the winter solstice (and with other midwinter festivals such as St Lucy's Day, Saturnalia, Hanukkah, New Year and Twelfth Night) originate from stories of a fierce battle between the dark and the light, where the light finally conquers the darkness. Other traditions record this as the time that a saviour or sun-child is born to a virgin mother.

Many people suffer from depression and a lack of energy during the winter months. Winter is a natural part of the seasonal cycle, and just as nature slows down in winter, we need to slow down too. In practice this means conserving energy, eating warm, nourishing foods, spending more time in bed, taking hot baths and allowing our bodies to rest and recuperate. In Chinese Medicine, the meridians associated with winter are the kidneys (yin) and the bladder (yang). The kidneys are responsible for filtering waste from the blood and sending the waste product to the bladder for elimination. In winter it is vitally important to keep the kidney area warm to avoid stiffness, coldness and aching joints. Make sure your midriff and lower back are always well covered.

In Australia, our winter solstice is marked by the passage of the sun into Cancer on the 21st June. Observe the point at which the sun rises from the 21st-23rd June and you will see that it is in exactly the same place over these three days. Solstice means "sun standing still". The winter solstice is the perfect time for a ritual to cleanse and release old energy and honour winter, the season of death and decay. And with Pluto, Uranus, Jupiter and Saturn forming a grand cross with the solstice sun (material stress and tension), while the sun, moon and Neptune simultaneously form a grand trine (spiritual ease and flow), we can expect the 2010 winter solstice to be even more potent and transformational than usual.

## A Warming Winter Solstice Ritual

What you will need

- Bowl of water
- Large Candle
- Small Candle or Tea Light for each person
- Glitter & Essential Oils
- Wine / Juice

Decorate a room with winter greenery. Place a large bowl of water and a lighted candle in the centre of the room. Have some golden glitter and scented oil nearby

and a candle for each person. Sit in a circle with a lighted candle in front of each person and talk about what you wish to release at this dark time of the year, blowing out your candle once you have finished speaking. Once everyone has had their turn, blow out the central candle and sit in the darkness reflecting on what you are leaving behind. After a long silence, relight the central candle, which represents the sun, and sprinkle golden glitter on the water. Then each of you light a candle from the central candle and place it by the water so you can watch the glitter sparkling. Pass around a glass of wine and offer a toast to the sun, the bringer of new light. Then go round the circle again, each of you talking about a dream for the future or a new attitude you wish to embrace. Finally sprinkle scented oil on the water and choose someone to anoint each person with sunshine by dipping their hand into the sparkling, scented water and sprinkling it over each person's hair. Hold hands and offer thanks.