

Imbolc 2012

**eOLAS**  
WISDOM OF THE OAKS



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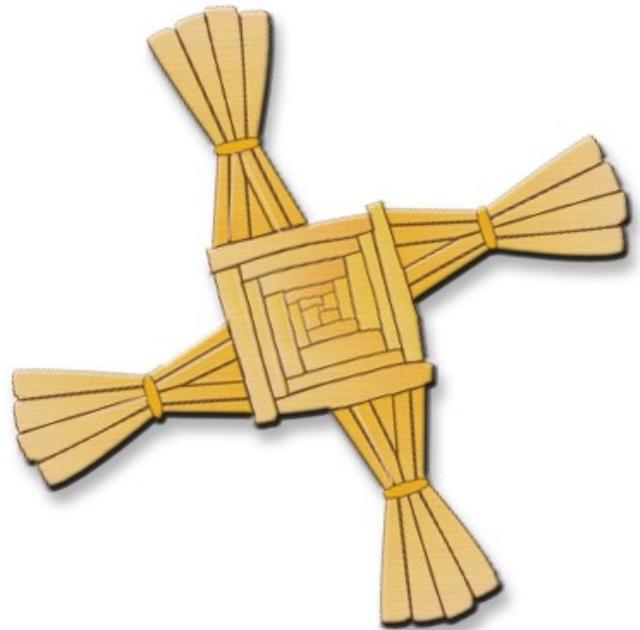
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### Dear Editor

If you'd like to comment on any of the articles, discuss issues or make announcements of interest feel free to drop us a line at [EOLAS@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:EOLAS@whiteoakdruids.org)

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Imbolc 2012



Welcome to the Imbolc edition of EOLAS Magazine containing our usual mix of articles, reviews and interviews.

In the northern hemisphere the bitter cold of winter still surrounds many of us though the delicate flowers of snowdrops and crocuses are appearing from the blanket of winter sleep.

Many people have had a very hard time over the winter months, and I would ask you all to remember others as you light your candles this year. May the blessings of Brigid be upon you.

If anyone would like to contribute to future editions of EOLAS, please send your contributions to [EOLAS@whiteoakdruids.org](mailto:EOLAS@whiteoakdruids.org)

Within the peace of the Oaks,  
J Craig Melia – January 2012

## The Symbolic Cauldron - Steve Tatler

A light breeze blew across the bay. It was a fair morning although clouds gathered and distant thunder rumbled as young Cuinn stumbled along the worn pathway from the settlement down to the rocky shoreline. He wore an amulet of moonstone on a leather thong around his neck and slung across his back was the 'curach' or coracle boat he had built out of ox hide stretched over a framework of ash sticks. This, the elder had told him, was to be a journey of discovery and rebirth. This morning, however, Cuinn's thoughts focused only on returning safely. He had eaten nothing but oatmeal cake for three days but tonight a feast to fill his aching stomach would be awaiting him at the great hall.



The soft breeze grew stronger and was whipping spray from the wavecrests. The sea had appeared calm from the clifftop but as he lowered the little boat into the waves Cuinn became more aware of its awesome power. He touched his moonstone amulet for luck but his first attempt to board the curach failed and it capsized.

“Work with it, not against it” – the druid’s words echoed in his head. His third attempt was successful. Cold and wet, he paddled the boat out into the sea, wondering whether the offshore waves would sink him. His task was to enter the legendary caves that could only be accessed from the sea. Hugging the coastline he worked his way around the headland until the caves were in sight – caves that many spoke of in fearful whispers yet few had actually visited or even seen. The waves lashed angrily at the entrance. Cuinn navigated the boat through the tall narrow opening in the cliffs, taking care to avoid tearing the hide skin of the curach on the rocks. The water was much calmer inside the cave, apart from the rhythmic swell of the tide and a strong undercurrent.

Working his way along the rocky wall with his hands he carefully guided the coracle around a corner into the dripping inner chamber of the cave. It smelt damp and musty and every watery sound echoed and boomed in the darkness. This was the domain of the Sea Goddess and he wondered what spirits might dwell in this dark crevice of her kingdom. Then Cuinn heard the paddle slip from the edge of the curach and splash into the water; he reached out to grasp it but as he did so the boat tipped and he fell in face first. Lights flashed before his eyes as he struck his head on a rock.

His wet tunic and the strong undertow dragged him deeper into the murky water. Desperately thrashing and gasping for breath he took in several mouthfuls of sea water. Panic and fear gripped him as he felt himself sinking. The amulet caught on a jagged

rock and the leather thong tightened, twisting around his throat as he struggled. He knew that death was merely a doorway to the next life but his inner fears now began to surface and he realised that a fear of dying was one of them. He was helpless, drowning, denied whatever hopes his young life had held for he was now at the mercy of unknown forces and descending into the Underworld. His consciousness began to ebb away...

Cuinn couldn't determine whether an eternity or just an instant had passed before his fear gave way and a sense of calm washed over him. He no longer felt cold. He seemed to be dreaming and imagined that he was floating up above the earth into a night sky. He could see swirling masses of fire condensing into bright stars. Atoms colliding and combining to create matter, giving birth to worlds that one by one began to circle around a star. Creation moulded out of chaos in a vast womb. Every movement seemed to influence all matter, like ripples on a lake, until the worlds settled into a harmonious but delicate balance – a rhythmic dance in which he sensed that he somehow played a part.

Cuinn's body had gone limp when he lost consciousness and as his struggles ceased, the amulet and its leather thong had slipped free from the rock. He floated to the surface; the coracle had flipped under him and now he lay straddled across it. The wind had dropped and the little boat was gently floating out of the mouth of the cave on the receding tide. The early afternoon sun warmed his back and Cuinn coughed and spluttered, spitting out the salt water that stung his nose and throat.

Unsure if he was alive or dead and squinting in the bright sunlight to find his bearings, he caught sight of the familiar little beach of shingle where this day had begun. He paddled the curach with cupped hands towards it where the old druid waited for him with warm furs and many questions. A wisp of smoke rose from the roof of the great hall – there would be a fine feast tonight, but Cuinn felt different now – very different – and his thoughts were on much deeper matters than satisfying his hunger.

\* \* \* \* \*

Life offers us many challenges. As symbolised in this tale of Cuinn, some of those challenges may seem daunting and there may be times when we find ourselves descending into the depths of our being to face hidden fears and the darker elements of our inner self before emerging from the experience with deeper understanding. Such transformations are connected to the symbolism of the cauldron.

Cauldrons from Celtic times have been unearthed by archaeologists and the Gundestrup cauldron, discovered in Denmark, is perhaps the most famous, renowned for its fine decorative work depicting battle scenes and deities.

One of these scenes appears to show warriors marching towards a cauldron in which they are immersed head first by a large figure resembling a god to emerge rejuvenated as mounted horsemen. This is reminiscent of the classical writer Lucan's account of a man being plunged into a cauldron head first and drowned as a sacrifice in honour of the god Tuetates.

Various archaeological sites have also given up miniature cauldrons, such as the 'Salisbury Hoard' in Wiltshire which included a total of 46. Approximately one inch in diameter, it is thought that these tiny cauldrons may have been votive offerings.



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The word ‘cauldron’ conjures up images of magic and sorcery to most people, yet beyond the reputation of this icon of fairytale witches as a fire-blackened pot in which to boil toads’ livers, the cauldron is deeply symbolic. Like the cup and the chalice, it is a feminine symbol that represents the womb of the Great Mother. It features in various traditions and cultures worldwide and is portrayed throughout Celtic mythology as a magical vessel. Such cauldrons of folklore possessed great powers – cauldrons of knowledge and inspiration, of healing and rebirth, of sustenance.

Even inexhaustible cauldrons that could feed armies and never be emptied. Dagda’s huge ‘Undry’ cauldron, for example, provided food according to a man’s merit – it would not satisfy those without honour but heroes never went hungry. Bran the Blessed had a cauldron of rebirth which the giant Llaser carried on his back; like other cauldrons of healing it was capable of bringing slain warriors back to life, enabling them to return to battle. Cernunnos was reborn after being torn apart and boiled in a cauldron. The battle fury of Lugh’s Spear was soothed by three cauldrons – the first of which would split, the second would boil and the third just become warm.

The story of Ceridwen, goddess of fertility, is well known for the cauldron of knowledge that she brewed in order that her son, Afagddu, could become the wisest of all men. She entrusted Gwion Bach with tending the cauldron but a drop of its contents spilt onto his finger and without thinking he licked it, acquiring the knowledge intended for Afagddu. Ceridwen in her anger hunted Gwion Bach down and ate him but he was later reincarnated as Taliesin.

The Middle Irish word for cauldron is ‘coire’, defined by the 10th century Cormac’s Glossary as a compound of cói and úirre, meaning ‘a place of liquid’. The words currach (coracle), cailís (chalice) and cornu (cup or drinking horn) also come from the same root, ‘cóí’. It is not surprising that, as a vessel for containing liquid, the cauldron is commonly associated with the sea (muir) in mythology.

The sea was of great importance to our ancestors. To an island race it was the route of contact and trading with other lands and thereby also a front to be defended against attack from invaders and the demonic Fomorii. It was a source of food but it was fascinating as well as dangerous and in its mysterious depths lurked the unknown – even today our oceans remain largely unexplored. The sea has given rise to legends that persisted through centuries of mermaids and monsters.

‘Muir’ may be simply interpreted as meaning ‘sea’ but it embodies somewhat more and has other translations. Rather than consider it in isolation, we can perhaps try to imagine the viewpoint of the early Celtic people and look beyond that literal translation of the word in search of its original context. A clue may lie in an alternative translation of ‘muir’ – ‘spirit’.



We believe that the Celts considered everything to be interconnected – spirit and energy flowed through all things. The Underworld was as real to them as the physical world. Doorways to the Underworld existed where the elements met – at the shoreline between earth and sea and at the horizon between sea and sky. ‘Sea’ perhaps meant more than just a body of water.

It brought to mind everything associated with the sea and all that she represented – her qualities, deities, mysteries, her delights and her dangers. A living entity with a spirit of her own, a place of both sirens and sea monsters. A source of sustenance and

cleansing, yet a potential place of peril to be respected and feared. Constantly ebbing and flowing in tune to the Sun and the Moon, symbolising our emotions and displaying wild fury or serenity according to her mood. She represented the Underworld and was the source of life, the great womb of creation.

Water is essential to life and considered sacred by some cultures. Energies – sound and vibrations are transmitted through it; water touches and surrounds all things immersed in it, each contributing to and subjected to the water's motion and its currents. The sea can therefore give us a tangible metaphor that demonstrates the interconnection of all things. In containing a volume of liquid, the cauldron is symbolic of and somehow captures the essence of the sea in miniature and – all things being connected – so the water in the cauldron is an inseparable part of its source and of all rivers, lakes and seas. It holds the dark mystery of the deep ocean – a gateway to the Underworld – but contained in a single bowl.

We may therefore view the cauldron and its contents as a microcosm of the sea – and in turn symbolic of the swirling ocean of life with the various eddys and currents that sweep us up and mould us. It is a vessel of transformation, of life and death. A melting pot in which our ingredients are brewed and crystallized by its magic into something transformed and new, as if by a transmutation of elements, a chemical reaction... alchemy.

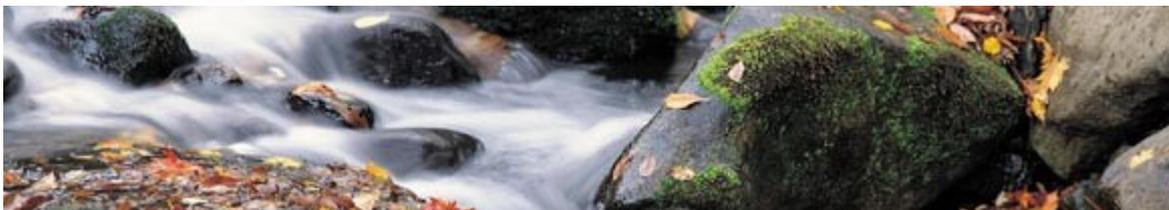
Through the element of water we can connect to our deeper emotions, to our intuition and inner wisdom but this may sometimes uncover feelings and fears that we have turned our backs on. We may be plunged into fathomless depths to face our hidden selves where the immersion in cold, quiet darkness confuses our perspective and heightens our senses, leaving a blank canvas on which the experience will paint a new version of ourselves. Only then may we rise again to the surface, healed and reborn with fresh insight and a deeper understanding of who we are. Perhaps what we find there and what we emerge with depends upon what hopes and fears we unknowingly take with us into the cauldron, but it contains the essence of life itself and has the powers to transform and to give us sustenance, healing and wisdom.

Steve Tatler

Steve Tatler is an artist and writer whose work is influenced by druidry, mythology and the rugged coastline and moorlands of his native westcountry. He has been involved with druid groups for many years and exhibits artwork and gives occasional talks at various pagan events in the UK.

<http://awen.stevetatler.co.uk>

<http://www.merlinscave.org.uk>



## **The Path to Spring: A Meditation for Imbolc – Tony the Prof**

The snow was coming down more heavily, a white blizzard that I struggled through; I was wrapped up with a thick coat and scarf, yet still was felt the chill of the wind, and the cold seeping up from the ground below as my feet crunched the powered snow.

I had been on straightforward path, well mapped out to my destination, a home where I could expect a warm welcome from friends. At some point, I must have taken a wrong turning. As the snow settled on the stone walls and the thin skeletal branches of trees, the whole landscape became different, and the track beneath my feet disappeared from my sight.

The winter had been a time of dark overcast skies, and short days, and I was tired, worn out, and in need of rest. And now it was starting to get dark once more, a purple hue creeping over the land. Whatever track I was now on was climbing uphill, and I was in need of a place to rest.

The birds had long ceased to sing, and the land around was silent except for the soft sound of falling snow. I felt that I was completely alone; it was as if I had crossed into a strange twilight region, another world with no people, no birds or animals. It felt like silent land, that seemed to be on the threshold of some momentous change.

As the path twisted through the fir trees, I happened to look up the hill, and there I saw a dwelling, a lodge house of some kind, with light shining from its window, and smoke drifting from its chimney. There was some kind of shelter, and the promise of warmth and hospitality, a relief for any weary traveller. My pace quickened.

I rang the bell, and an old man answered the door, and invited me in. He welcomed me, and took me down a short corridor into a large living room. Gas light burned brightly from mantles fixed to the walls, bookcases filled with ancient books lined one wall; at its centre was a large granite fireplace, with a blazing fire, and sparks cascading up the chimney. There were three comfortable if old fashioned looking arm chairs beside the fireplace, with a large harp beside one.

He bade me sit by the fireside to warm myself, and dry my damp clothes, while he went off. Presently he returned with a mug of warm rich vegetable broth, which I sipped hungrily, while he sat quietly, puffing away on a pipe, and sending smoke rings towards the fire.

After I had eaten my fill, a young girl entered the room, and he introduced her as his daughter, Brigid. She sat, and began to play the harp, and this is the song she sang:

Now the green blade rises, from the buried grain,  
East brings the cold winds, and the freezing rain  
Love lives again, with feathered touch unseen  
Opening the east, comes time to spring up green.

In funeral pyre now burning, and beyond all pain  
South brings the fires, ends where death has slain  
Ashes scatter on the wind, incense sweet and clean  
Opening the south, after firestorm, spring up green

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Now the green blade rises, from the buried grain,  
West brings the snowfall, and then thaws to rain  
Love lives again, with pure water bubbling clean  
Opening the west, herbs now spring up green.

When our hearts are saddened, grieving or in pain,  
North brings forth rich soil, winter's gods are slain  
Salt brings its flavour, light of the world now seen  
Opening the north, like wheat that springs up green.

The last notes played on the harp faded away, and the old man rose and showed me to a bedroom where I could sleep. It was warm and cosy, snuggled beneath blankets, and listening to the friendly creaking of the house around me. There was a candle on the bedside beside me, and I blew it out, settling down in the darkness. Then a deep sleep fell upon me, and in my sleep, I had a dream.

In my dream, I was standing in a forest clearing, with a bright full moon in a clear sky above. In the dark shade around its edges, I saw rippling moonlight on the ground as the cool breeze blew the branches. In the centre of the forest clearing, I saw a stone well, and a handle to crank to get water from the well.

There was a stone beside the well, and there I saw a young woman, seated, with a green shawl wrapped around her, and a red dress. I saw that she was holding a child in her arms. She had a pole with a lantern on it beside her, its candle burning strongly and her face shone brightly in its yellow light.

I approached her, and she spoke:

Take this candle to light the way  
To take away the darkness of the past  
May it be a light to enlighten you  
To guide you through difficult times  
And shine on the path you seek

Take this candle to light the way  
To take away the darkness of the past  
May it be a fire within you  
To burn out the pride and selfishness  
And shine on the path you seek

Take this candle to light the way  
To take away the darkness of the past  
May it be a flame to bring warmth

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To your neighbours and family  
And shine on the path you seek

Take this candle to light the way  
I cannot stay long with you  
In leaving this candle  
I give something of myself  
To shine on the path you seek

And she hands me the lantern, and tells me to let love and compassion burn within my heart, for then I will find the path to eternal spring.

I take the candle and bow to her, and as I do so, I hear a cock crow; it is dawn, and the dream is gone in an instant. I awake in my bed in the lodge. I got up and dressed, and went to the living room, but the fire was out, just grey ashes, and no sign of anyone. On the table beside a chair, there was a note. I picked it up and read it, and it said "Go with joy and hope."

I stepped outside, and headed down the path. The snow had stopped falling, and the ice was beginning to thaw. Further down, I heard the sound of water, and came across a stream running over a rocky bed. I bent down to cup some of the water in my hand. It was ice cold, but so fresh and pure to drink.

When I looked up the hillside, the lodge had gone, and in its place, only the ruined shell of a building, bricks covered with moss and ivy; it looked as if it must have crumbled away over a hundred years ago. Yet I was sure it had been there, a place for the weary traveller, that perhaps came when need called forth the past.

I carried on walking. The signs were there that Winter was slowly ending. The woods rang with the cries of starlings, serenading their potential mates; I saw the sun break out from behind the clouds, catching the starlings in flight, green whirls of plumage in a blue sky.

A time of transition was in progress, and the music of the birds sang of new life, of seeking nesting for the Spring to come. Snowdrops were rising from the ground. There might be more cold days, and some bitter, but I knew that the reach of Winter was slipping.

Then all at once, I saw where I had turned off the main track, and took once more the path to spring. I did not have the lantern from my dream, but the memories of the night remained, and the candle light burned deeply within me.

Tony the Prof

## **Imbolg Feast Recipes from Grove of the Golden Leaves – Domi O'Brien**

Imbolg is particularly associated with dairy products, lamb, and new greens (such as watercress or peppercress or shav or sorrel). This Grove tries to do all feasts as three realms-- fish (sea), fowl (air) and flesh (earth). This menu of lamb cooked with winter vegetables or grain and beans, roast tarragon chicken, baked honey- glazed salmon, cheese and herb pie, fresh-baked rolls, served with a tossed salad and finished with a dairy dessert, is a typical Imbolg feast and in keeping with our motto: "We're Druids; we feast." Recipes assume American measurement and Fahrenheit temperature settings.

### **Crescent Rolls:**

Melt a stick (1/4 lb) of real butter in a large glass mixing bowl in the microwave or in a saucepan. (You can use 1/2 lb if you want extra-rich rolls)

Add 1 cup milk or light cream, warmed in saucepan or microwave to 100 to 115 degrees (slightly above body temperature, but not hot).

Add 2 to 4 tablespoons sugar. Stir.

Sift over it 4 cups unbleached white flour (you may use half whole-wheat flour but they will not be as light) and 2 packets active dry yeast and a tablespoon of salt.

Add 4 eggs.

Mix with dough hooks at low speed or mix with large wooden spoon, then knead with hands.

When well mixed and a little softer and stickier than a baby's bottom pour 1/4 cup mild oil ( light olive or peanut or canola works) over.

Cover with plastic wrap or waxed paper and a clean dish towel and let rise 45 minutes to an hour in a warm place or until doubled.

Preheat oven to 375.

Line two baking sheets with waxed paper or parchment paper.

Divide dough in quarters. For each quarter, put 1/4 cup flour on pastry board, marble slab or waxed paper sheet.

Shape dough in ball; roll in flour; flatten to 9 to 10 inch circle; butter or oil lightly; cut in 8 wedges; roll into 8 crescent rolls; place on lined baking sheets.

Repeat with the rest of the dough.

Cover sheets; let rise half hour to 45 minutes or until rolls are doubled in size.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until golden. Serve warm or cooled.

For pull-apart loaves, cut each quarter of the dough in 16 to 24 narrow wedges instead of 8 bigger ones. Grease 3 ten inch round pans or one 16 inch pizza pan and arrange small shaped crescent rolls on greased pan(s) to rise. Bake 25 to 30 minutes for smaller round pans or 30 to 35 for pizza pan. This works well for ritual bread.

### **Variants:**

Ham and cheese rolls. Spread circles of dough with thin sliced ham and swiss cheese and prepared mustard before cutting and shaping. Serve warm as appetizer or luncheon dish.

Sweet crescent rolls. Add one half cup sugar or Splenda to dough before rising. Spread circles of dough with jam, cinnamon sugar, almond paste, sweetened cream cheese, lekvar, lemon curd, or prepared poppyseed filling. Roll and shape; let rise. Bake; serve warm or cooled and dusted with powdered sugar.

Herbed rolls: spread dough rounds with olive oil or butter; sprinkle with minced garlic and chopped herbs (rosemary, thyme, parsley, sage are nice) to your taste; shape; let rise; bake.

### **Lamb in the Pot:**

Preheat oven to 400. Arrange in large roasting pan with lid:

6 to 8 lamb shanks (Or a leg of lamb, bone-in)

3 to 4 cups peeled quartered or small potatoes or 4 cups cooked barley or quinoa

3 to 4 cups cut carrots

2 to 3 cups quartered small onions

1 cut-up whole celery head

4 cups cooked or 2 cans white beans

In blender place

2 cups fresh basil leaves

8 cloves garlic

1 tablespoon salt

2 cups fresh parsley

1/2 half cup olive oil  
Blend until chunky.

Pour over lamb and veggies.

Add 4 cups water. (rinse blender container with water)

Cook half an hour uncovered, then cover and reduce heat to 275 and cook 3 to 4 hours or until very tender. (Can also be cooked in an 18 quart freestanding roaster-oven. My experience is it takes longer that way.)

Serve with fresh bread or rolls and a salad with watercress or peppergrass.

To reduce fat, cook 2 or 3 days ahead; chill; remove hardened fat from the top; remove bones if you like; reheat and serve.

### **Salmon of Wisdom:**

Preheat oven to 400.

Arrange 2 lb salmon fillet on baking sheet, skin side down. Brush with honey; sprinkle lightly with coarse salt.

Bake 10 to 20 minutes depending on thickness, or until done to your liking.

### **Herb and Cheese Pie:**

One one-lb box phyllo (fillo) dough, thawed if purchased frozen  
3 lbs whole-milk ricotta cheese  
half lb shredded mixed Italian cheeses (Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, etc)  
half lb feta cheese, crumbled  
salt and pepper to taste  
8 cloves garlic, minced  
2 sweet onions, diced small  
bunch fresh parsley, minced  
bunch fresh dill weed, minced  
1 lb fresh spinach, washed, dried, and chopped (baby spinach is best)  
one lb unsalted butter, melted  
one dozen eggs, preferably free range

You will need 2 baking pans 9 by 13 inches and a pastry brush and a large wire whisk.

Preheat oven to 400. Butter the pans using the pastry brush.

In large bowl, mix cheeses, herbs, spinach, onion, garlic; salt and pepper to taste. Then use the wire whisk to beat in the eggs one at a time. Layer about a third of the phyllo sheets into the two pans, buttering each second sheet.

Spoon half of the egg and cheese mixture on top of the phyllo in the pans. Layer another third of the phyllo in the pans, buttering every second sheet. Add the rest of the egg and cheese mixture. Layer the rest of the phyllo on top, buttering every second sheet. Make sure edges are tucked and top is buttered. If you have any extra butter pour it on top

Bake about an hour to an hour 15 minutes, or until deep golden brown and set. Let sit 15 to 20 minutes before serving-- filling will be very hot when it comes out of the oven.

### **Roast chicken:**

6 to 8 lb roasting chicken.  
3 lemons  
fresh tarragon  
coarse salt  
paprika  
olive oil

Preheat the oven to 400.

Remove giblets from chicken (you can simmer them to make stock for gravy if you like).

Place chicken in roasting pan. Rub it with olive oil inside and out. Cut lemons in half; squeeze them all over the chicken; place the remaining peels/pulp inside the chicken. Place several sprigs of tarragon in the chicken; chop the rest finely and sprinkle it all over the chicken. Sprinkle the chicken with paprika and coarse salt. Roast for 2 and a half to three hours, until golden brown, crispy-skinned, and thoroughly cooked.

### **Simple salad:**

Mixed spring greens including watercress or peppergrass if available, tossed in bowl with pitted drained black olives, sliced red onion, and segments of oranges or tangerines. Drizzle with olive oil and vinegar or Italian dressing; sprinkle with coarse salt. Serve immediately.

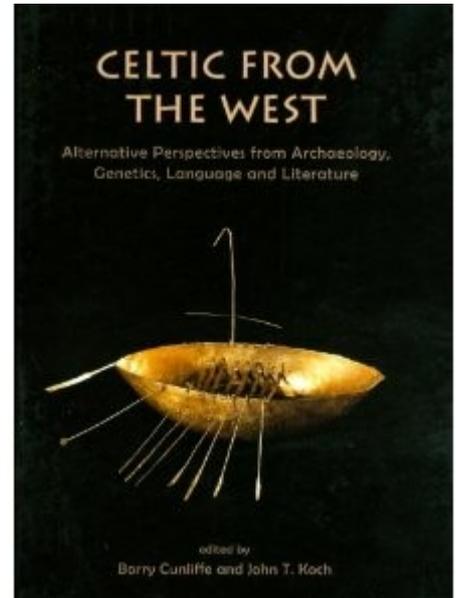
### **Mock Syllabub:**

Just before serving, whip a quart of heavy whipping cream to slightly more than soft peaks; fold in a half cup of semi-sweet white wine such as reisling and a token for luck (such as a clean shiny dollar coin). Serve immediately from the bowl into individual dessert dishes with a large spoon. If you want it a little more firm, when you whip it, whip in a packet of whipped cream stabilizer or a packet of instant pudding mix (vanilla, cheesecake, or lemon).

**Book Review: Cunliffe, B. and Koch, J. T. (ed.) Celtic from the West: Alternative Perspectives from Archaeology, Genetics, Language and Literature (2010) Oxbow Books: Oxford**

For many years, Dr. Cunliffe has been working on the theory that Celtic language likely evolved on the Atlantic Coast of Europe during the Bronze Age. The previous theory of ‘celticization’ from the east has not been successful in explaining how Celtic language is found in Ireland, or in the Iberian peninsula, for example. In this volume, the papers presented at the ‘Celtic from the West’ conference are made available to all.

A lengthy introduction by Cunliffe sets the scene, and introduces previous work, and thought. The very first essay, also by Cunliffe, delineates the contribution of archaeology to the theory of ‘celticization’ from the west, while not arguing with the documented movement of peoples from the east, referred to as Keltoi, Celtae, Galli, and Galatae in Greek and Roman literature. He mentions the presence of a tribe named Keltoi in Iberia in the 5th or 6th centuries BCE, also well-documented. Colin Renfrew’s statement, in 1987, that Celtic languages likely developed where they continued to be found, served as a “starting point” for this examination of Atlantic coastal language development.



According to Cunliffe and other presenters, the Mediterranean served as the vehicle for early seafarers, such as Pythias and his ancestors, to explore and colonize the known world from the Middle East, and Greece through Italy and Northern Africa/Carthage into the unknown west, even passing the Pillars of Hercules. These waters were even open during the last Ice Age, but far smaller in extent. Massilia was founded in Gaul, Tartessos in Iberia. These loci are proposed for the possible development of Celtic language. Trade was the stimulus. It was far simpler to navigate the coast in boats than to walk overland. It has been speculated for some time that the “Tin Islands”, mentioned in early literature, were the Cornish coast of the British Isles. Not dealt with in this book is the “new” speculation that Atlantis existed on the Iberian coast, just south of Tartessos. (National Geographic)

Other presenters give evidence from inscriptions, mainly in the area known to have been Tartessos (Guerra), read those inscriptions utilizing words from Celtic roots (Koch), list ancient references to Tartessos (Freeman), and even refute or question the theory of ‘celticization from the west’ based on Indo-European language development which “could only have been going on the Eastern Europe.”(Isaac).

The book contains bibliographies with each essay, constituting a rich and varied body of references. It is an expensive book, even from Amazon (~\$70.) but well worth the read. I found Cunliffe’s first essay to be quite exciting.

Ellen Coutts Waff - Eilidh