

Celebrate the Solstice

The word Solstice means 'the sun stands still' in Latin. The Summer Solstice is celebrated in June, where all people living north of the equator experience the longest day of the year, which also marks the first day of summer. It is sometimes referred to as Midsummer as it falls roughly in the middle of the growing season throughout much of Europe. The Winter Solstice occurs in December, where the Northern Hemisphere experiences the shortest day and this marks the first day of winter. This is the opposite for people living south of the equator.

Different countries celebrate the solstice in different ways but generally it is a time where families celebrate the Nature cycles, their heritage and a time where families can strengthen family bonds and have fun!

Try celebrating either the Summer Solstice or the Winter Solstice this year:

Summer Solstice:

- make your own Stonehenge in the sandpit aimed at the rising sun
Stonehenge is a famous summer solstice structure in England, erected as gateway aimed at the rising sun)
- make a cake and decorate as a sun. Each child can light a candle and make a wish. Once all the candles are lit, everyone blows them out in unison to send their wishes on their way and call out "Happy Solstice"
- dress up in summer clothes and have a summer picnic
- play lots of summertime songs and eat summertime foods such as ice-cream!
- have a teddy-bear picnic and give prizes to the oldest and most-loved bears

Winter Solstice:

- make wreaths from paper (traditionally evergreen are used) with red bows and hang on doors, walls or use as a table centrepiece
- decorate a "Yule tree" which can be a living tree outside or in a container indoors. Place a star, sunburst at top, which are traditional symbols.
- make simple ornaments such as lolly ornaments by cutting squares of tissue paper 12cmx12cm. Take at least 2 square of different colours and place a wrapped lolly into the centre and twist the tissue paper to hold lolly in the centre. Attach some coloured ribbon to one end of the ornament and hang on your Yule Tree.
- make some Yule Potpourri by combining equal parts of whole nutmeg, whole cinnamon stick and cloves. Add 1 vanilla bean and fresh pine needles. Crush ingredients in a mortar and add mixture to a hot, boiling cauldron on an oil burner!
- Drink hot chocolates and eat freshly baked cookies!

