Samhain Correspondences & Altar Guide

S A M H A I N

"Summer's End" • The Witches' New Year
October 31 – November 1

"The veil between the worlds grows paper-thin; the fire of the year wanes, and the wisdom of the ancestors draws near."

ELEMENT: Water & Earth
CELESTIAL: Sun enters 15° Scorpio (Astrological Cross-Quarter)
DIRECTION: West (Twilight, ancestral memory, descent)
ARCHETYPES: The Crone, The Horned God of the Underworld, Ankou, The Morrigan, Hekate, Cerridwen

ALTAR SYMBOLS	BOTANICALS	STONES & METALS	SPIRIT ANIMALS
• Small cauldron	• Mugwort	• Obsidian	• Raven & Crow
• Carved turnips	• Wormwood	• Jet	• Black Cat
• Black candles	• Rosemary	• Smoky Quartz	• Barn Owl
• Apples & nuts	• Dried Sage	• Black	• Bat
• Bat	• Ronat	• Tourmaline	• Stag
• Pomegranates	• Rowan Berries	• Carnelian	• Wolf
• Ancestor photos	• Allspice & Clove	• Wrought Iron	

COLORS: Obsidian Black, Deep Blood Red, Pumpkin Orange, Orange, Harvest Gold, Russet Brown, Bone White

INCENSE BLEND: Myrrh, frankincense, mugwort, torangon, cedar, and crushed clove

THE LORE OF SAMHAIN

History of the Great Celtic Fire Festival

I. THE CELTIC THRESHOLD

To the ancient Gaels, Samhain marked the fundamental transition of the pastoral calendar. The herds were brought down from highland pastures, culling took place to ensure winter survival, and the dark half of the year officially commenced. In Celtic reckoning, each day began at sunset; likewise, the year began in winter.

II. THE SACRED TLACHTGA FIRES

All household hearths across Ireland were ceremoniously extinguished. On the Hill of Ward (Tlachtga), the Druids gathered to kindle a singular, sacred flame into the gathering dark. From this central blaze, runners carried embers across the land to rekindle every domestic hearth, uniting the community under one shared, protective warmth.

III. THE UNRAVELING OF TIME

Samhain was considered an un-time: neither the old year nor the new, neither summer nor winter. In this liminal gap, the sidhe (fairy mounds) opened, spirits wandered the crossroads, and departed ancestors walked among the living to warm themselves by familiar hearths. Guising (the precursor to costume-wearing) was practiced so wanderers could blend with passing spirits and avoid being carried into the otherworld.

IV. EVOLUTION TO ALLHALLOWTIDE

In the 8th century, Pope Gregory III shifted All Saints' Day to November 1 to assimilate the festival. October 31 became All Hallows' Eve (Halloween), while November 2 commemorated All Souls' Day—preserving the ancient custom of prayer, remembrance, and offerings for the dead.

PRACTICES & OBSERVANCES

Welcoming the Season of Introspection

1. THE ANCESTOR TABLE (DUMB SUPPER)

Lay an extra setting at your evening table. Serve small portions of each harvest dish and a cup of clean cider or dark wine. The meal is eaten in sacred silence, inviting beloved ancestors, forgotten kin, and guide spirits to take their place of honor at the feast.

2. THE HEARTH FIRE CEREMONY

Turn off all lights in your home just before sunset. Stand in darkness to acknowledge the quiet of the coming winter. Strike a single new flame on a designated pillar candle, reciting words of gratitude, and carry its light to kindle every other candle throughout the house.

3. THE TURNIP LANTERN (TRADITIONAL JACK-O'-LANTERN)

Before pumpkins became common, large rutabagas and turnips were hollowed out, carved with grimacing guardian visages, and lit by coal or candle on doorsteps and windowsills to warn off mischievous roaming wights.

4. ROOTS & RESTING OF THE SOIL

Give back to the earth: bury an apple, pour a libation of dark ale at the base of an oak or elder tree, and cease major outdoor planting. It is a time of fallow rest, composting, and letting seeds dream below.

5. CROSSROADS DIVINATION

The veil's thinning makes this the premier night for Scrying (water or black mirror), Tarot, Ogham, and Runes. Ask not for worldly wealth, but for spiritual direction, ancestor counsel, and unseen truth.

SPELLS & CHARMS OF SAMHAIN

✦ RITUAL OF RELEASE (THE CULLING OF BURDENS)

Tools: Black candle, slip of parchment, iron nail/pen, fireproof bowl

1. Light the black candle, ground yourself, and face West.
2. On parchment, write that which has decayed: toxic grief, outdated habits, or emotional baggage that cannot survive the winter frost.
3. Pass the paper over the candle flame until it catches, drop it into the iron bowl, and state firmly:

"What served its time now turns to dust,
To earth and ash, as all things must.
I cut the thread, release the hold;
I walk unburdened to the cold."

4. Scatter the cold ashes outside into running water or at a tree's roots.

✦ THE APPLE PEEL DIVINATION (SCOTTISH FOLK CHARM)

Apples are symbols of Avalon and the Underworld. Carefully pare an entire apple in one unbroken spiral peel. Swirl the peel thrice around your head, then toss it over your left shoulder. The shape it forms on the floor reveals the initial of an influential spirit, incoming mentor, or path in the new year.

✦ CHARM OF THE ROADSIDE ROWAN & IRON

Hang a sprig of red rowan berries bound with red thread alongside an iron key above your doorway on Samhain Eve. This ensures no uninvited phantom crosses your threshold while the gateway between worlds stands open.

KITCHEN WITCHERY FOR SAMHAIN

Baking for Ancestors & Kin

✦ TRADITIONAL SOUL CAKES

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups plain flour (Earth / Stability)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar (Sweet remembrance)
- 1/2 cup cold butter (Nourishment & comfort)
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon (Protection & warmth)
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg (Psychic vision & clarity)
- 1/4 tsp ground allspice (Compassion & healing)
- 1 egg yolk + 2-3 tbsp whole milk (Vitality)
- Currants or raisins (To score the crossroads cross)

THE BAKING RITUAL:

1. Rub cold butter into flour and sugar until fine crumbs form.
2. Mix in spices while speaking names of ancestors you wish to honor.
3. Add egg yolk and milk; knead gently into a smooth dough.
4. Roll to 1/2 inch thickness, cut into rounds with a cup or cutter.
5. Press currants into the top of each cake in the shape of an equal-armed cross (+) to mark the sacred crossroads.
6. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 12–15 minutes until pale golden.

✦ WARM SPICED CIDER OF EMBERS

Simmer cloudy apple cider with sliced oranges, cinnamon sticks, whole cloves, star anise, and fresh ginger. Stir clockwise to bring protection, health, and comfort into the home through the dark season. Leave the first steaming mug on your outdoor altar for the wandering spirits.