

Fall Equinox Fire Cider and Descent Ritual

Preparation:

The organizer has somehow gathered all the supplies needed to make fire cider. Usually we organize a google doc with a signup sheet that lists all the ingredients (with quantities, so you will need to know how much fire cider you want to end up with) and supplies needed. People sign up to bring what they want. You will need to decide how you want to run the fire cider – we have done it so that each person makes their own quart jar full – and we have done it where we make 2- or 3-gallon jars full of community fire cider and arrange to decant it and share it, maybe planning a potluck in November to do it ritually. I have also thought about just charging money for this ritual and gathering all the supplies myself. You pay \$15 to come and you take home a quart of fire cider?

In addition to fire cider supplies, each person is asked to bring:

Yoga mat, blanket, pillow, supplies to make yourself comfortable for a long trance journey

Your journal and something to write with

Welcoming: XXX

The wheel turns yet again, and we find ourselves here at the autumnal equinox. The gateway to winter has opened. We begin to make our preparations. We are replete, after a long and full summer. We are in abundance and brimming with gratitude.

Ritual run through and logistics

Simple Land Acknowledgement

Container Creation: XXX leads

Call for someone to cast a circle

Call for someone to call in east

Call for someone to call in south

Call for someone to call in west

Call for someone to call in north

XXX then calls in Mother Earth and Father Sun, especially in their aspect of harvest and abundance

Fire Cider Blending: XXX leads

Talk a bit about why we make fire cider every fall:

Using the bounty of the harvest to prepare an immune boosting tonic for ourselves, our beloveds. Doing this in community, making medicine together, reminds us we are empowered to keep ourselves healthy and support each other in many ways as we begin our descent into winter, into the dark, cold and rainy time of the year. As we blend this physical tonic, might we set the intention that we can also support each other in other ways? Can we be tonic for each other, helping each other through any loneliness or isolation or depression we might be experiencing in the dead of winter?

The Blending: (these instructions are for blending a large batch of community shared fire cider – you can alter this if you are having each person blend their own individual quart)

(There are many ways to do this – a lot of it depends on how many people you have at this ritual and how much time you want it to take. This version was done at a smaller, more intimate gathering of 17 people, so we could take the time to have each person contribute a layer to the jar and offer a short blessing. I encourage you to get creative in how you structure this part!)

XXX introduces each item, in the pre-determined order of layering. The ingredient has been divided into two equal parts. They call for 2 volunteers to come up, each of them will place one share of the ingredient in one of the two gallon jars we are making fire cider in. After they have placed the ingredient, they can offer a blessing or intention for the fire cider or for the community supporting each other this winter. Cycle through, making sure everyone gets a turn that wants to, then calling on people to come up for a second turn if needed.

Once all the ingredients are in the 2 gallon jars, someone will come up and pour the apple cider vinegar over the top.

The 2 full jars are moved into the center altar and all the ingredient mess is cleared away.

The energy raising to charge the Fire Cider:

XXX teaches the song We all Come From the Goddess

We all come from the Goddess

And to her we shall return

Like a drop of rain

Flowing to the ocean

Hoof and horn hoof and horn

Those who die shall be reborn

Corn and grain corn and grain

Those who fall shall rise again

We all come from the sun god

And to him we shall return

Like a spark of flame

Rising to the heavens

Hoof and horn hoof and horn

Those who die shall be reborn

Corn and grain corn and grain
Those who fall shall rise again

Begin a simple circle dance around the central altar and the fire cider. Chant gets progressively faster, transitioning eventually to just the lines “Hoof and Horn All that dies shall be reborn”, which becomes more chant like as it gets faster and louder. The circle dance stops and becomes stationary, just chanting. All gather in close to put a hand on the fire cider, the leader at some point directing the energy into the fire cider and ending the chant.

Cakes and Ale: XXX

After the energy raising, XXX brings out a harvest plate and shared drinks.

XXX does a food blessing on the “cakes and ale”

The central loaf is passed around, each person taking a piece and eating it

The central chalice is passed around, each person taking a small drink from it

Then all are invited to eat and drink (this is not a dinner, just a substantial snack)

Move inside for the journey:

XXX invites everyone to move inside and prepare themselves a space for a long guided journey. They have been asked to bring yoga mats, blankets, pillows, etc.

Story Channel: XXX

(once everyone has settled in for the journey, XXX begins drumming a slow and steady rhythm)

On Fall Equinox, we take the first step on the journey, beginning the long descent into winter, into the dark half of the year. We begin the journey inward. We are hearing the first call, the first stirring, to leave behind the joys of summer, exchanging them for the rich, more quiet joys of winter. From this place of gratitude, this place of abundance and thankfulness for the blessings of the harvest, we begin to turn inward. Preparing ourselves for the long nights of deep dreaming. The Autumn Equinox is a time of great energy, a time for allowing reflection, encouraging transformation, and setting intentions for the coming season.

Common fall equinox stories include trips by deities into the underworld, and their struggle to return from the Land of the Dead to earth. When they eventually do return, they have a new life – literally and figuratively. The descent into the underworld has allowed them to shed certain aspects of themselves, creating room for a new story to be born.

On some of these descent journeys, the journeyer must pass through layers or gates to arrive at their center. Each gate represents a part of ourselves that is outside our true essence, our true nature, our soul. As we remove something at each gate, we are removing barriers to parts of ourselves. Each gate represents

some part of yourself you are letting go of or putting to rest. This is what is asked of you as you enter the underworld – to lay these pieces down at the altar of your own belonging. To die from your old self in order to be reborn into something greater.

The Journey: XXX

Begin your journey right where you are...in your body...with your breath. Feel your connection with the earth under you. Take a couple of deep breaths, strengthening your connection with the earth under your seat. Relaxing into the sacred space we have created here, knowing you are safe and secure, ready and willing to take this autumnal equinox journey. Letting go any leftover thoughts of the day, any to do lists left undone, concentrating on feeling your breath as it enters your body and leaves your body. Deepening your connection with yourself, with every breath in and every breath out.

Today is the day of equinox, the time when day and night are in equal balance. There are many human stories and myths which help us make sense of the mysteries, of the ever-turning wheel of the year. One common story for this time of year is that of a journey. A journey by a deity into the underworld. A metaphorical journey that we will take tonight, to confront and help assimilate the shadow side that resides in each of us. The descent of Inanna into the Underworld ruled by her sister Ereshkigal. The Descent of Persephone, abducted by Hades and forced to journey with him to his Underworld realm. These are metaphors for our own journeys into the darkness of our unconscious world. Our beloved Goddesses, they struggled to return from the Land of the Dead to the Earth. When they eventually do return, they have a new life – literally and figuratively. But first, they – and we as well- must leave behind the trappings of old story, our protective masks that serve us no longer, old ways of being that keep us in suffering.

Just as every journey begins, we take the first step.

Find yourself walking. It's dark and quiet. The air is still, the sounds deadened, you hear nothing but your footsteps leading you down a darkened path. You begin to notice the path is leading downward, descending. Maybe your path spirals as it snakes down into the earth, maybe it is straight and steep. It is your path to walk, notice what form your creation takes. In the darkness, with only the dim light of the beautiful full Harvest moon to guide you, your journey is quiet. You are heading down, dropping down into the earth. Leaving behind all that is familiar and comfortable, you go down. Dropping into the mystery of what was, what may yet be, dropping down into the dense silence of the unknown. You notice your body feels heavy as you walk. You feel full and weighted, carrying the burdens of excess, the extra load of unsolved problems, ungrieved griefs, long carried

misunderstandings. All these extra burdens are weighing you down, slowing your progress, making it more difficult than it need be to complete this journey. And you continue down the way, slowly, heavily, descending.

Ahead of you, in the very dim light, you see some kind of obstruction in the path. Your feet continue to move you forward, almost of their own volition. With each step down you draw closer to what is blocking your path. You begin to make out a gate. You can see that it is glowing reddish. See it in your mind's eye. Is it large...small...thick walls or diaphanous material...is it made of darkness? Light? What you know is that you can't go around it – you must go through it. Each step draws you closer, closer to the gate, more details becoming clear as you draw near. You begin to make out a gatekeeper standing in front of the gate. Who is this gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the first gate of the descent, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your root chakra, the place of your security, your grounding, your footing in the world.

The gatekeeper of the red root chakra gate is asking you to think about your physical form, your connection to the earth, your sense of security. To pass through the first gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. Something in the realm of your body or your feeling secure in the world. What is it you would like to let go of? Some illness in your physical being? Some way you are allowing fear to rule your life? Is there some craving for security that hinders you in healthy relationships? Sit for a moment with muladhara, your root chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at muladhara, the gate to your root chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

Continuing downward, following the path into the deep mystery, descending ever further into the depths of the unconscious realm. Still feeling weighted and bulky, carrying more load than you really need to carry, you plunge further into the unknown, each step carrying you down, each labored breath gravitating you under. You begin to make out another obstruction in the path ahead of you. Yes, it's another gate, the second gate on your descent journey. This gate is glowing orange, take a moment and notice what this gate looks like. Once again, you know that you can't go around it – you must go through it. Each step draws you closer, closer and closer you get to the gate, and you begin to see clearly a second gatekeeper standing in front of the orange gate. Who is your second gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the second gate of the descent, the Swadhisthana chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your sacral chakra, the place of your creativity, your sexuality, your perceptions and views of the world. The gatekeeper of the Swadhisthana gate is asking you to think about your sexual being, your creativity, your relationship to shame or guilt. Are you limiting yourself, finding it difficult to step outside your comfort zone? To pass through the second gate, you

must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you. What is it you would like to let go of? Are you carrying old wounds from a previous sexual trauma? Old story that limits your ability to be a vibrantly creative person? Some shame or guilt you have been lugging around forever? Anything preventing you from boldly seizing that which you really want? Sit for a moment with swadhisthana, your sacral chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this swadhisthana, gate to your sacral chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

So you continue on the dark path. You are beginning to understand what this downward and inward journey entails. What is being asked of you. You begin to have a sense of the freedom and lightness this may bring to your life. So you continue, cascading down the path, sinking further and further with every step, with every breath. You notice a faint yellow glow down below, ahead of you. It's another gate, the third gate on your descent journey. This gate has yellow glow about it, take a moment and notice for yourself what this gate looks like. Each step draws you closer, stepping resolutely to the gate, and the third gatekeeper standing in front of the yellow gate becomes clear. Who is your third gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the third gate of the descent, the Manipura chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your solar plexus chakra, the place of your self esteem, your willpower, your ability to transform, to set personal boundaries, your gut.

The gatekeeper of the Manipura gate is asking you to think about your relationship to your own sovereignty. How healthy your boundaries are in different areas of your life. Habits you may have that do not feed your vibrancy. Your personal power to change. Any barriers you have erected to your own radical self expression. To pass through the third gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. Something in the realm of your self esteem, your habits, your ability to change and create healthy boundaries. What is it you would like to let go of? Sit for a moment with manipura, your solar plexus chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this manipura , gate to your sacral chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

Once again you are moving on the dark downward path. Feeling infinitesimally lighter, your step still heavy and weighted but it's noticeable to you that you have shed some unwanted aspects of yourself, and this fills you with the desire to continue. Continue you do, down the path, sinking further and further with every step, with every breath. This time, you notice a faint green glow down below, ahead of you. It is the fourth gate on your descent journey. This gate has greenish glow

about it, take a moment and notice for yourself what this gate looks like. Each step draws you closer, closer and closer you get to the gate, and the fourth gatekeeper standing in front of the green gate becomes clear. Who is your fourth gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the fourth gate of the descent, the Anahata chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your heart chakra, the place of forgiveness, a sense of hope, of deep and abiding love for self and for others.

The gatekeeper of the Manipura gate is asking you to think about how you reach out and connect with others and how you allow the joys of life to touch you. If there is something or someone you need to forgive? Something you need to forgive yourself for? To pass through the third gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. Something in the realm of love, the ability to feel full joy, some undone forgiveness work, maybe walls you have built that keep you from being vulnerable? What is it you would like to let go of? Sit for a moment with anahata, your heart chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this anahata, gate to your heart chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

Further down you go. Down deeper into the mystery of what it is to be human. The mystery of what it is to be divine. The mystery of this beautiful earth we call home, and the deep unconscious that our shadow nature calls home. So you continue, down the path, sinking further and further with every step, with every breath. And you notice a faint blue glow down below, ahead of you. The fifth gate on your descent journey. This gate has bluish glow about it, take a moment and notice for yourself what this gate looks like. Each step draws you closer, closer and closer you get to the gate, and the fifth gatekeeper standing in front of the blue gate becomes clear. Who is your fifth gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the fifth gate of the descent, the Vishuddha chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your throat chakra, the place of the bridge between your heart and mind. The place of your strong and healthy voice. The place of your will, your power of choice and your sense of truth.

The gatekeeper of the Vishuddha gate is asking you to think about how you take responsibility for your decisions and speak up for what you believe in. What you might shed that would allow you to step fully into your unique power. To pass through the third gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. Maybe there is some truth you are having trouble acknowledging? Something you are doing to keep yourself small, to choke off your voice, something you are lying to yourself or others about. What is it you would like to let go of? Sit for a moment with Vishuddha, your throat chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min

of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this Vishuddha, gate to your throat chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

You're dropping down further, further and further you continue, down the path, going deeper with every step, with every breath. You are coming to the sixth gate on your descent journey. This gate has a deep indigo glow about it, take a moment and notice for yourself what this gate looks like. Each step draws you closer, closer and closer you get to the gate, and the sixth gatekeeper standing in front of the indigo gate becomes clear. Who is your sixth gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the sixth gate of the descent, the Ajna chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your third eye chakra, the place of imagination, dreams, thoughts, wisdom, intuition and clear focus.

The gatekeeper of the Ajna gate is asking you to think about your dreams – are there some you don't dare to have, others you are able to let go of? Do you have an inner critic that likes to cut off your intuitive self? An inner perfectionist who shuts down your imagination? Do you know what your desires and passions are or is something keeping you from recognizing them? Is there something you are doing that muddies your thoughts or makes you feel really unclear? To pass through the sixth gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. What is it you would like to let go of? Sit for a moment with Ajna, your third eye chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this Ajna, gate to your third eye chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper and continue on your journey.

You're dropping down further, down the path, going deeper with every step, with every breath. You are coming to the seventh gate on your descent journey. This gate has a deep violet glow about it, take a moment and notice for yourself what this gate looks like. Each step draws you closer, closer and closer you get to the gate, and the last gatekeeper standing in front of the violet gate becomes clear. Who is your seventh gatekeeper? What is their form? As you arrive at the seventh gate of the descent, the Sahasrara chakra, the gatekeeper greets you. You feel a glowing in the area of your crown chakra, the place that connects your individual awareness with infinite consciousness.

The gatekeeper of the Sahasrara gate is asking you to think about your connection to the divine and how vibrant it is. About the health of your prana or life energy. To pass through the sixth gate, you must leave some piece of you behind, something that is no longer serving you or your life. What is it you would like to let go of? What is keeping you from making magic in your life? What do you need to surrender in order to step into something bigger than yourself? Do you need to let go of cravings for sensual pleasures or material goods? Can you step into the darkness of the mystery not knowing what awaits you? Sit for a moment with Sahasrara your crown

chakra energy, and see exactly what it is you are ready – or not ready – to let go of. When you have a clear sense of what you are ready to shed, hold it out as an offering to gatekeeper. 2 min of silence. Now, begin to finish your time at this Sahasrara, gate to your crown chakra. Leaving behind that which no longer serves you, bid farewell to the gatekeeper.

And you realize there is no further path for this journey. You have come all the way. Just as the earth is descending into fall and winter, so you have descended into the underworld. You have come to the place where everything meets nothing.

(the Journey leader cues the Story Channel leader, making sure they are ready to take over)

Story Channel Leader:

Where everything meets nothing.

In your descent through the gates, you have shed..and let go...and unburdened.

You have created room for a new story to be born.

You have let go and put to rest.

You have laid these pieces down at the altar of your own belonging.

To die from your old self

in order to be reborn into something greater.

I now invite you back, back into the world of conscious thought

Bring yourself back, back into this room

Bring yourself back, back into your own physical body

Begin to wiggle your fingers and toes

Pat yourself on your body, patting your legs, your arms, your torso, your face

And when you are ready, slowly sit up

We will now have some time to reflect on the journey we have just taken, maybe you wish to write in your journal, maybe you wish to just process quietly.

At the end of the 10 minutes, the Container Creation Lead gathers everyone into a circle, they can be seated if that feels right.

The Lead then softly, in their own way, does a short thank you to the Goddess and God, and the directions.

They invite everyone in the circle to envision pulling some of the energy of this gathering, the energy of this container, into their heart, to be carried with them during this fall season and into winter.

And with that, the circle is open

Depending on the energy in the room, people can move back into writing, quietly go home, gather in circle to share some of their experience, etc.

