



CELEBRATE

# Winter Solstice

WILDCARD CHALLENGE

**Consider switching up your holiday traditions this year by celebrating Winter Solstice!**

Winter solstice marks the moment when the Earth's poles are at maximum tilt, resulting in the shortest day of the year. Typically, winter solstice signifies the end of fall and beginning of winter. The occasion is marked with long standing winter solstice rituals—such as brewing mulled cider, eating winter solstice foods, lighting lanterns, striking special yoga moves, and setting intentions for the season ahead.

Incorporate three of the following activities to add a fun twist to your holiday celebrations:

## **Spend Time Outdoors**

Decorate an outdoor edible tree for animals. Kids can help decorate with nuts, seeds, apples, baked orange slices or other animal-friendly treats. While outside, consider collecting holly, ivy, evergreen boughs, pinecones etc. These are meant to symbolize everlasting life, protection, and prosperity. You can use them to decorate a table or mantle or make a wreath. Your treasures could even become gifts for loved ones.

## **Develop a Themed Dinner Tradition**

Winter Solstice is typically celebrated with rich, hearty, nurturing food. Invite guests or family members to bring dishes that warm the body and comfort the soul. Ask everyone to bring a nostalgic dish and share an associated memory. Go a step further and assign everyone a color or theme to follow. Discuss New Year Intentions or plans to enjoy the colder weather, but most importantly, laugh and enjoy each other's company.

## **Make A Winter Solstice Craft**

Involve children of all ages in creating orange pomanders. Start with firm oranges and a jar of whole cloves. Use a citrus zester to create patterns in the fruit peel and a small toothpick or skinny nail to make holes where you want the cloves to go (the pre-poked holes make it easier for kids to stick in the cloves). Stick the cloves in the fruit and you're all set. Place a few in a bowl as a fragrant solstice centerpiece or hang smaller fruit as ornaments on the tree. They also make sweet winter solstice gifts!

## **Celebrate Light**

One of the most popular winter solstice rituals is adding light to the darkest day of the year. If you're ambitious and outdoorsy, take the opportunity to walk around and see the holiday lights decorating your community. Or pile in the car and go on a drive to see the best light displays in the city. Consider dining by candlelight or making solstice lanterns as another way to celebrate!

### Burn a Yule Log

Lighting a “Yule log” fire is a Nordic tradition that goes back before medieval times. During the longest nights of the year, they would decorate and hoist a large log (sometimes a whole tree) into the room and feed a fire through the 12 days of Christmas. Those who helped were said to receive good luck for the new year. Your “Yuletide” tradition doesn’t have to involve dragging in an entire tree. Your tradition could be having a bonfire in the backyard, placing a log in your fireplace, or eating dinner by candlelight.

### Reflect, Release, Let Go, and Set Intentions for the New Year

Some take the opportunity to reflect and ponder on the “light and dark” moments of the past year. Consider writing down things that are no longer serving you such as traits, habits, or memories. Throw them in the yule log fire, transforming darkness into light. After “letting go”, set intentions for the new season ahead—speak aloud an idea, habit, or practice that you would like to bring into your life. Consider taking a few moments to brainstorm by writing ideas here:

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No matter how you celebrate the solstice, use it as a way to replace winter doldrums with a sense of renewal. The winter solstice may be the day the sun rises lowest in the sky, but it’s also signifies the day before we start growing closer to days of more light. Review [Beating the Blues](#) for information and ways to manage the emotional reaction we may experience in the winter months when daylight hours are shorter.