



The Moon Esbats

A seasonal guide to the twelve Full Moon observances - with the occasional thirteenth moon

Many modern Wiccans and other Pagans celebrate the Full Moon as an Esbat. There is no single universal system of Esbat names, but the names below are widely used in modern practice. They draw upon a mixture of seasonal, European and North American traditions. Their value lies less in claiming one ancient calendar than in helping us notice the changing character of the year through the recurring light of the Full Moon.

January	<i>Wolf Moon</i>
The full moon of the deepest part of winter. Its name evokes wolves calling during the long winter nights. In modern Pagan interpretation it lends itself to themes of endurance, protection, instinct, family and survival through darkness.	

February	<i>Snow Moon</i>
Named for the severe winter weather traditionally associated with February in the Northern Hemisphere. It can represent patience and endurance: life remains largely hidden, but the first approach of spring is drawing nearer. Hunger Moon is another traditional name.	

March	<i>Worm Moon</i>
Associated with the returning signs of life as winter loosens its hold. Traditionally the name has been connected with worms or other signs of thawing ground. Other names include Crow Moon and Sap Moon. For a Pagan interpretation it makes a natural moon of awakening, renewal and beginnings.	



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Spring flowers, growth and the approach of midsummer

April

Pink Moon

This does not mean that the Moon itself becomes pink. The name is traditionally associated with spring flowers, particularly pink phlox in North America. Symbolically it readily represents growth, fertility, renewal and the increasing vitality of the natural world.

May

Flower Moon

One of the easiest names for a British reader to understand: the countryside is filling with flowers and new growth. In modern Pagan usage it can be associated with fertility, creativity, abundance and the flourishing of life.

June

Strawberry Moon

The name is associated with the strawberry harvest in North America. European alternatives have included Rose Moon and Honey or Mead Moon. For a modern Esbat it naturally suggests sweetness, abundance and enjoyment of the year's increasing richness.



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High summer, abundance and the first signs of harvest

July

Buck Moon

Named for the period when the new antlers of male deer are conspicuously growing. The moon can symbolise growth, strength, maturity and the changing lives of wild animals. Thunder Moon and Hay Moon are alternative names.

August

Sturgeon Moon

Derived from the seasonal importance of sturgeon fishing in parts of North America. Other names include Grain Moon and Green Corn Moon. In a British Wiccan context, those agricultural alternatives may feel more immediately relevant, suggesting ripening crops, plenty and approaching harvest.

September

Harvest Moon

Strictly, the Harvest Moon is the full moon nearest the autumn equinox, so occasionally it occurs in October rather than September. Its association is with harvesting, fulfilment and gathering the results of the year's labour.



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Harvest, the darkening year, and the turning back towards Yule

October

Hunter's Moon

Traditionally associated with hunting and preparations for winter following the harvest. It is also sometimes called the Blood Moon, although that should not be confused with the astronomical use of 'blood moon' for the reddish appearance of the Moon during a total lunar eclipse. As an Esbat it can represent preparation, foresight and the approaching dark half of the year.

November

Beaver Moon

The name is associated with beavers preparing for winter, although historical explanations of these popular moon names vary. Other names include Frost Moon and Snow Moon. Symbolically it lends itself to preparation, shelter, security and conserving resources as winter approaches.

December

Cold Moon

The full moon of the long winter nights, close in season to Yule. Other traditions call it the Long Night Moon or Oak Moon. It can represent endurance, reflection, darkness and the promise that the solar year is about to turn again.

And the Thirteenth Moon?

A lunar cycle from one Full Moon to the next averages about 29.53 days. Twelve such cycles take only about 354 days - roughly eleven days shorter than the solar year. Consequently, every two or three years there will be thirteen Full Moons within a calendar year rather than twelve.

In popular modern usage, when two Full Moons fall within the same calendar month, the second is commonly called a Blue Moon. Some Pagan and Wiccan traditions therefore treat it as an additional or particularly significant Esbat.

The thirteenth Full Moon of a year is not automatically a Blue Moon under the familiar calendar-month definition. There is also a seasonal definition: the third Full Moon in a season containing four Full Moons.

Example - 2026: there are thirteen Full Moons, with Full Moons on 1 May and 31 May; 31 May is therefore a calendar Blue Moon.

A useful distinction: the eight Sabbats of the Wheel of the Year follow the solar and seasonal cycle; Esbats are lunar observances. Different Wiccan and Pagan traditions may use different names, emphases or ritual practices.