

# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

(THE EPISTOLE)

a newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

published by:



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**THE NEOKOROI\*** are a group of Hellenic polytheists who feel called to a path of service and devotion to the gods. We support mysticism, hard polytheism, and tend to favor reconstructionism as an approach to developing Hellenismos, while also recognizing the importance of personal experience and local cultus. We are especially dedicated to fostering communities, festivals, and public shrines, and providing guidance and information on religious matters – all to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

**HE EPISTOLE** (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community. We welcome feedback, and submissions from guest writers. He Epistole is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. Please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues in electronic format for free. Back issues can also be downloaded in PDF form from the website for free.

To contact the editor, email: [heepistolesubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:heepistolesubmissions@gmail.com) - or visit the Neokoroi website: [neokoroi.org](http://neokoroi.org). (We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!)

\*The word *neokoros* is derived from the Greek words *naos* (temple) and *koreo* (to sweep) and originally meant “the one who sweeps the temple” or “the temple keeper.” It was a humble position, but an important one, for it was the neokoros’ responsibility to make sure that the temple was kept clean and free of any pollution, and also to tend to the daily service of the god in whose temple he or she served.

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# WINTER SOLSTICE 2010

*By Allyson Szabo*

To my knowledge, most ancient Greeks did not celebrate the winter solstice as a holiday. The Romans had Saturnalia, and certainly our Hellenic ancestors marked the longest night in some way, for they were great astronomers. However, no major festivals for this specific date have come down to us.

We don't live in ancient Greece, though. Wherever on the globe we reside, it is almost 2011 C.E. and our festivals and celebrations need to reflect that. Let us search the past and divine the spirit of it, but let us also bring it firmly forward to our own era. Our holy days must reflect the current time and place which we inhabit, just as Hellenes celebrated differently in Athens, Alexandria, Cumae, and all the other city-states.

I look out my window in New England to see snow (finally!), and the house is chill if I let the wood stove burn down or go out. The nights are obviously longer now, and the daylight is brief and often tinged with early winter grayness. I find comfort in fires and candles, lanterns and lights. Even understanding the physics of the shortening days doesn't alleviate the late-night concerns that perhaps the days shall shorten until they are gone and darkness reigns.

This feeling of closure, of endings, must have been shared by our ancestors. They, too, understood much of the procession of the solstices and equinoxes. This, then, is an excellent place to begin.

So many religions celebrate winter holy days, and I see no reason to deny myself the joy of the colored lights and decorated tree. For me, the solstice heralds the darkest moment of Persephone's time in Hades' realm. Demeter has frozen the world in her grief. Zeus must act, and soon, if all is not to enter eternal winter. Solstice eve is the tipping point; mythologically speaking, Demeter could go either way. She could starve the world because her daughter is required to spend time in the Underworld, or she could accept the compromise offered and allow the darkness to lift.

As within Christianity and Judaism, Buddhism, Wicca, and other religions, this moment is the eternal pregnant pause. Will the child be born safely? Will the oil last until new oil is consecrated? Will the Buddha find the silent enlightenment within? Does the Holly King defeat his Oaken brother? Will any of us see the light? All of us wait, breathless, silent, anticipating.

On the eve of solstice, I will light my candles and hold my personal vigil. I will pray to Hestia to keep my hearth warm and



safe. I will pray to Demeter to allow life to return to the world. I will pray to Zeus to reach a compromise. I will offer sweet wine and Ouzo, barley groats and fresh cheese. At the moment of cusp, all will pause, and I will hold my breath and extinguish all flames in my home. Even the wood stove will be allowed to go cold.

I will savor that silent, trepidatious moment. In the darkness, I will bid goodbye to the dark things in my life. Then I will turn resolutely to the light by kindling new flame. I will take the time and effort to light the wood stove with flint and steel, with thanks and lauds to Hestia. I will re-light the candles and give thanks to all my gods. I will consciously move to bring light into my life.

As you encounter the culturally familiar themes around solstice, see them for what they are. Smile, and know that we all long for the light in our own ways. And I wish you joyous Heliogenia, Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah, enlightening Bodhi Day, and as many other festivals as you can think of! Io Helios! The Sun is born today!



# HEKATE ENODIA

## A WINTER PRAYER

*By Khryseis Astra*

Hekate Enodia

Guide me on the roads I fear to tread  
When ice is black and hidden  
And snow falls overhead

Guide my steps and don't let me stumble  
Take me safely where I need to go  
And guide the wheels of my chariot  
Letting them find solid ground

Keep me always under your divine protection  
Let your torch guide me through the dark  
Lend me your strength and courage  
To get through the cold months ahead.



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## HELLENISMOS THROUGH A LENS OF MODERNITY

*By Lukos*

One needs only look around our nations' capitals and major monuments to realize that Greek Religion has had a lasting impression on the Western psyche. Almost every traditional capital or monument in the United States has, at it's core, Greek art and architecture. This includes depictions of the Hellenic deities. Why in Nashville, TN there is a full-size reproduction of the Parthenon complete with a towering statue of Pallas Athena. Granted other ancient cultures make their mark as well, however, none so pervasively as Hellenic culture. While this can be a very encouraging situation for most of us, it can also be somewhat saddening. It is wonderful to see the old religion being kept alive even through secular means, but by the same token it is disappointing that our Gods are being used in such often frivolous ways. So, the popularity of Greek religion in decor and design is a double-edged sword, so to speak.

Now, as mentioned above, many common depictions of Greek religious art exist in contemporary buildings. This is indeed true, but it is also true that Greek myths are very popular in movies, books, and other pop-culture publications. From Brad Pitt movies (Troy), to Percy Jackson, to collegiate sports teams, Greco-Roman iconography is virtually everywhere. The fictitious and often over-romanticized nature of such things, however, shows that few people take the Greek religion seriously. Very few people seem to entertain, even

briefly, thoughts of the Gods as possibly real. While many other ancient religions remain strong and widespread (Judaism, Hindu, Buddhism, etc) Greek religion is taken as symbolic at best, superstitious in other cases, and silly nonsense at worst. This is something we all have to deal with in today's culture.

Pop-culture depictions of Greek religion are often less-than-flattering. However, many other topics are seen by Hollywood in a bad or silly light. It isn't so much that Greek religion isn't taken seriously, just that a serious contemplation of it is usually not undertaken at all. I feel that if more people just took a moment to consider that perhaps the ancients were right there would be many more practitioners of Hellenismos and reconstructionist religions in general. It is, in any event, very promising to see groups like Neokoroi and Hellenion sprouting up in nations other than Greece. This is so exciting because Greek religion was always a very localized belief system. The fact that many groups are starting to develop their own local nymphs, deities, and even heroes shows that Hellenismos is still living. It is gratifying to see us working together in many instances to keep our beliefs and praxis alive.

While pop-culture doesn't always look so kindly on ancient practices and religions, what about other modern depictions? Our capitals are bedecked, adorned, and modeled after ancient

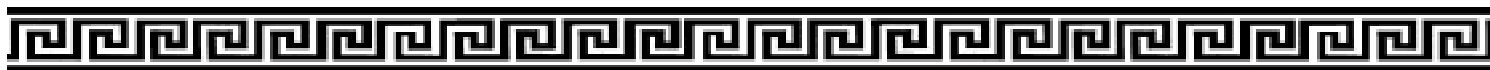
buildings in many cases. Washington, D.C., arguably the capital of the western world is a city after Athens' own heart as far as decoration goes. At least the capital buildings and monuments in the surrounding area form a sort of Acropolis. The white house is even Greek in style. Columns, domed roofs, and statuary permeates not only the U.S. capital but many state capitals as well. As I had noted earlier, there is a size-accurate Parthenon in Nashville. These sorts of depictions are placed in areas looked upon with seriousness and are therefore much more promising than movies and books. It is nice to see such things being looked upon in a more somber light. However, it also demonstrates the fact that they no longer hold religious importance as our government tries, as much as possible, to keep away from religion.

So, take this all as you will. Whether Hellenismos is still held in high regard or not in modernity is your own opinion. However, I still hold onto the hope that it can be revived even more than it has by ourselves. In the future, I imagine temples taking up their place alongside churches, mosques, and gurdwaras. My call to you, fellow believers, is to keep Faith, Hope, and Hestia close to heart, they are some of the most potent Goddesses there are in times of difficulty.



*Parthenon From South*

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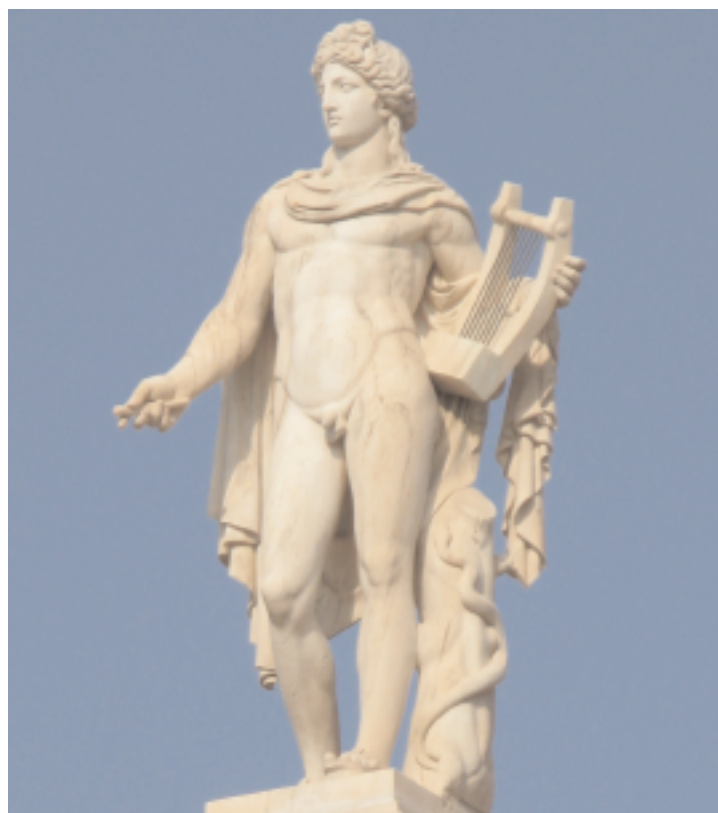


## HONORING APOLLON IN HYPERBOREA

*By Lykeia*

Apollon's annual retreat to Hyperborea is an important part of his mythos, and one that has been targeted by some outside of our religion as a feature indicative of his being a false god entirely based on the fact that it does not parallel the movement of the sun. This is of course due largely to misinformation that construes Apollon as inseparable from the sun, rather than the sun being a light-giving agent of Apollon. If we consider the sun for what it is, the gravitational center of our solar system, the apex around which planets and other cosmic debris rotate, it gives an idea of how Apollon's retreat to the north is collaborated by his role as a solar deity.

We know that the seasons, the daughters of Apollon, are created by the tilt of the planet toward or away from the sun. In the winter the southern gravitational pole faces the sun giving summer to the southern hemisphere, while in the summer in the northern hemisphere it is the northern gravitational pole that tilts toward the sun. The extremes of the poles is why the further north you go the more extreme the summers and winters are in terms of daylight hours, and why the closer you get



*Apollo Column at Academy of Athens*

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to the equator the more balanced, and seemingly unchanging, things are. In this respect we can consider the gravitational poles the “heavenly”, I use this term since it influences the earth’s relationship to its heavens, centers for our world, just as Delphi was considered the center for the earth, and the sun we know is the center for our solar system. Therefore, Apollon is demonstrated as a god at the center point, the god of the apex around which everything turns like dancers moving to the measure of a musician’s song. He comes by this as the maternal grandson of Koios/Polos, the titan of the heavenly axis, which is represented by the North Star.

Therefore his journey to the land beyond the north wind appears to be representative as his retreat to the point directly in relation to his rulership of the axis. Of course the historical root for Hyperborea and the Hyperboreans likely was a far northern people with whom the archaic Hellenes had some initial contact with, probably during one of the migration periods. There is speculation of the Celts as the original Hyperboreans. Their origins before migrating into Gaul and then later into Britain and Ireland places them in the northern Baltic region. Others place the original Hyperborea as a Scandinavian island. There is also argument for Hyperborea originating from some place near modern Russia due to the trade route which brought the offerings of the Hyperboreans to Hellas by the Scythians. Regardless of its origin as a historical place and the Hyperboreans as a living group of people, the realm of Hyperborea is also a very real spiritual space that takes yearly precedence in our worship.

It was to Hyperborea that those favored by Apollon were brought; likely in the form of swans like the first singing swan Kynos. The Lybian King Croesus was known to have been spirited away with his daughters by Apollon to Hyperborea according to poet Bacchylides, and others who were associated directly with Apollon such as Cassandra of Troy and the philosopher Plato were associated with swans. Therefore it paints a picture of Hyperborea as an undying place of singing swans, the swans of the Eridanos River, men who continued singing after the end of their lives, of continual spring, and a place of those who are held in esteem by Apollon. These ideas above present Hyperborea as a kind of Avalon, and as the so called garden of Apollon it is perhaps a kind of paradise that welcomes his own.

The question that then arises is how we can honor Apollon while he is away in Hyperborea? The first part of that answer is to understand that though Apollon is in a sense absent, he is still present just in a different capacity. For some, myself included, his retreat to Hyperborea is a period of greater intimacy with the god and where he may feel personally closer in his contact whereas he may be less “visible” in his other functions. His light in this case is more subtle, just as the aurora borealis is created from emanations from the sun but is more subtle and muted than actual sunlight as it flickers across the winter night sky. During his retreat to Hyperborea I have called him the fireside

god and storyteller by the hearth in affectionate regard for the god’s role in the domestic realm during the season of winter, as the god, ever the poet and teacher to mankind, tends to us to carry us through the long dark hours, singing quietly to us as he shows us the way. Apollon Agyieus, the god of the roadway, and he who presides in every home. Therefore I honor him during this season by muted lights, music and stories as part of my worship until his return at the Epiphania.

But the winter is a long term that we must wait, and it is good in consideration of the great festive spirit of Hyperborea, to bring in a sense of festivity in honor of the god, even as we celebrate a parade of rituals for Dionysos in his absence. In the midwinter this is especially appropriate when the hold of night is at its longest. As a person who grew up in the arctic where the winters are long and particularly dark, a Festival of Lights is in order to lift the spirit and to celebrate the fact that even in the darkest of days Apollon is still present. This is inspired by an actual event that used to take place in my hometown that was called the Festival of lights in which people would string aloft as many lights as they could in beautiful arrangements to lift the hearts during the long nights of winter when season depression could do the worst. Therefore, many of the things associated with the winter holiday season can be utilized to honor Apollon for this festival. Strings of colorful and white artificial lights can be hung up, especially around his shrine or whatever sacred space you utilize for his worship. White feathers to represent swan feathers can be hung with ribbon on his shrine and in other parts of the house as you like. A multitude of candles can be lit inside of or behind colored glass in imitation of the Northern Lights, and brightly colored candies can be splurged in to bring cheer to the children within your home, and the one which lives in your heart.

When it comes to music it is ok to get inventive and stray from the norm. Take up a drum to honor Apollon’s connection to Ge and for Hyperborean Leto. Those who say that the drum has no part in the worship of Apollon do not realize that the Delian Maidens in honor of his return would sing the song of Olen, who first returned the god to Delos after he retreated to Lycia following his birth, and with this song they would pound their feet drum-like against the ground. If appropriate for his return, a drum can also be utilized similarly during the winter as a loving call to him. We can see it is as the heartbeat of the earth and the intimate song of motherhood as the fetus is lulled by the rhythm of his own mother’s heart as he develops. Naturally, the best offering for this festival would be honey as bees are not only associated with Hyperborea itself, largely we understand this association through the legend of the second temple of Apollon made of wax and feathers that was sent to Hyperborea by the god, but also with his mother Leto whose temple at Delos shows indications of honeycomb décor on its walls. The amber gold drops of the honey can be your winter offering representing the precious drops of amber Apollon was



said to have wept when he was first banished to Hyperborean and the very offering scholars suggest may have been brought by the Hyperboreans to Delos for Thargelia in the distant past. As a natural sweetener, the use of honey will fit in quite well with any sugary holiday treats you may want to indulge in for the festival. I see this festival as a recapturing of youth and innocence and the joy which is associated with it in honor of the god in Hyperborea. So have sweets, play shadow games, have a family music session to rediscover the simple joys of life in honor of the Hyperborean Apollon.

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# MENTHE – A LOVE STORY

By Suzanne Thackston

Winter is here. I sleep with my roots tangled under the rich, sweet earth, waiting for Her to pull Herself from His reluctant arms, and burst into the world, the spring winds roaring with pain and loss, mingled with the screams of birth, and the soaring paean of welcome. It's noisy, spring. It's nice, at least for a while, this silence. Their bliss is not like other bliss. The royal coupling is as vast as the world, as deep as the ocean chasms, as earth-shaking as anything dark-maned Poseidon can summon. But not for Them the moans and sighs, the sticky slapping sounds that tend to accompany mortal lovemaking. Their passion is slow and immense and silent. The jewel-studded underworld is a pretty silent place anyway. But even if it weren't, we would all be hushed in our reverence at the union of Aidoneos and His Bride. Spring is hard. The pulling and wrenching as the Mother summons us forth, all of us who sleep and awaken with Her ordered cycles. The rapt silence of the long embrace is broken by the floods and downpours and howling winds that mark the Queen's separation from Her Dark Lover. Sometimes the elegies drown out the glory of Demeter's song of joy and welcome.

But the earth warms. We small ones in our numberless immensity shove and wriggle and finally burst out of the softening soil and turn our hands and faces to bright Helios. Fed by the secret waters of subterranean Cocytus, I spread and multiply. Deep below, my long limbs stretch into the dark river, and He I unfurl in tiny tender leaves, in white and purple petals. I receive his unassuageable grief into myself. It floods through me, transformed as all She touches transforms, and the lightest touch on my terrestrial body creates a breath of fragrance. Step on me, crush me into Him, inhale my ecstasy.

The Divine Mother's great wheel pulls us through summer's languorous heat, while I spread and stretch to contain my King's loneliness. In the time of harvest my little leaves, tender and innocent as the Kore Herself, are plucked and steeped with sacred barley to be given to the epoptai, to bring the great transformation that She enacts. And as they see, as my Queen appears in flames to their wondering eyes, I feel his limbs loosen from me. I droop and wither and blacken. Exhausted, I am freed to sleep, and die, and rest. Demeter's anguished cry is lost in the deafening silence of the royal welcome, the vast barren conflagration of death and rebirth. My pennyroyal in the kykeon allows the mystai to experience the cessation of Demeter's gift of procreation. The sweet pungency of my scent masks the unmistakable mark of my Lord's touch on the bodies of the dead. He and I working together, as She promised we would.

My Queen's hand brushes my disintegrating body as She passes, wafting my fragrance on the chill autumn air, through the dank odor of the grave that is Her portal. As I sink into soporific slumber, I hear Her whisper 'Rest now, my beloved handmaid.' And we of the underworld stop breathing; we fall into silent awe as Persephone is enfolded once again into Hades' mighty embrace. Sacred winter has returned.



*Persephone and Hades*

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# WINTER HOLIDAY WONDER FOODS

By Allyson Szabo

Are you a happy winter holiday person, or a Grinch to some degree? Even the happiest of us can be Grinch-like at times, when we're surrounded by the crass commercialism of the season. Winter holidays can be stressful as often as they're joyous. As we decorate and bake, we also anticipate spending time with family who may not understand or approve of our beliefs. If you're the one cooking, the pressure to impress the in-laws or your "Martha Stewart" mother can be overwhelming.

Let's make it easy, then! These recipes are simple and don't take up a lot of your precious time and attention. I guarantee that all who partake will be truly thankful for the meal, though! The old adage of "KISS" should be kept in mind while cooking this season.

## HOLY DAY DINNER MENU

*Marinated Venison Flank*

*Herbed Rice with a hint of Curry*

*Mashed Carrots and Turnips with Butter*

*Coffee Cake Extraordinaire*

While the meat in this meal calls for a flank of venison, it isn't hard and fast. If you don't like or can't get a good cut of venison, treat yourself to a flank cut of beef. Any beef will do (this marinade will make shoe leather tender and tasty!) but the flank portion is the most traditional. If you are using venison, try the backstrap because it is one of the most delicious pieces.

Because your meat is marinated you can prepare it up to a week in advance. I often put my frozen meat into the marinade and pop it into the fridge seven days ahead. Every time I open the door, I shake the bagged meat to distribute the marinade evenly. The cooking itself takes less than 30 minutes, but when you serve it, they'll assume you slaved for hours. Don't dissuade them!

I offer up venison as a suggested meal at this season because we're just finishing up hunting season throughout most of the United States. Our freezers are sometimes graced with a few beautiful steaks or roasts, just begging to be used. I've served this recipe to people who are avowed venison-haters (with their knowledge, by the way), and been asked to make it again... and again.

## MARINATED VENISON STEAK

Ingredients:

- venison or flank steak (thick steaks)
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup soy sauce or Braggs Amino Acids
- 3 heaping tablespoons of pickle relish
- 4 cloves diced or mashed garlic

Method:

Your meat will likely be in pieces that are thicker than a steak and thinner than a roast. Cover them in plastic wrap, a plastic bag, a Ziploc bag, or some other material, then pound the meat as flat as you can using a meat hammer, using the spiky side (if you don't have one, try the end of a rolling pin bashed down over it). Do this until the meat is thin and well beaten.

In a large Ziploc baggie or plastic lidded container, put all the marinade ingredients and your meat. Close the container tightly so it won't spill, and shake vigorously at least twice a day. This marinade works best if you let it sit for at least 3 days. You can let it marinate for up to 7 days in the fridge, or if you like you can freeze it in the marinade until the day before you're ready to use it.

To cook, pre-heat your barbecue grill, stove-top grill, or broiler until it is evenly hot. Take the meat out of the marinade and cook for 3 to 5 minutes on each side. Do not be tempted to cook for longer than that or you will find your meat is overdone. Using a very sharp carving knife, slice the meat on the bias, or diagonal. This makes thin slices that are wide. Place onto a platter and serve immediately.



Note: It is better to wait until everything else is ready and then cook this meat, than to have it sitting around waiting. It should go directly from cooking source to table, with a pause only long enough to slice.

## HERBED RICE WITH A HINT OF CURRY

Ingredients:

- 3 cups of Jasmine or Basmati rice
- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves of fresh garlic
- 1 medium carrot
- 3 tablespoons virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Madras Curry Powder
- fresh minced oregano, dill, rosemary, sage, parsley, etc. (to taste)

Method:

Measure your rice into a colander which will not allow the rice to fall through. This might require putting a piece of cheesecloth in. Rinse the rice thoroughly with cold (NOT warm or hot) water, making certain that the water run-off is clear before continuing. I have sometimes put the sprayer on the rice and left it to run while preparing the onions, as it can take up to five minutes to wash away all the starch!

Mince or grate your onions and garlic very fine. I use a small food processor for speed and ease, but it can be done by hand or with a manual chopper as well. Heat the oil in a large pot with a tight fitting lid (you will make the rice in this pot) until an onion dropped in sizzles strongly. Sauté your onion and garlic mix while you continue with the next step. Stir occasionally to make certain it doesn't stick; add oil or a bit of white wine as necessary.

The carrot needs to be peeled and the ends cut off. You then have a variety of ways you can prepare it for your rice. The easiest way (and in my opinion the prettiest) is to simply grate the carrot right into the pot with the onion and garlic. A large grater such as you'd use for cheese will work wonders. The grated pieces will be large enough to see, but not large enough to be bite sized, and they will fleck through your rice like confetti, providing a truly festive look to your dish. You can also mince the carrot into small pieces, or using a vegetable peeler you can peel long, paper-thin pieces. Once the carrot is in the pot with the onions and garlic, continue to sauté until the onions are completely clear and limp. They may begin to be crispy, but don't allow them to brown too deeply.

Add your curry powder and fresh herbs now. You may use any or all of the above herbs, but at least get in the parsley. Mixed in with the carrots, your rice will be both flavorful and beautiful when it hits the table. Stir the herbs and powder until they are just limp and the curry is well distributed. Add the well-drained rice, and stir to coat each grain of rice with a bit of

the oil. You may need to add another drizzle of olive oil in order to thoroughly coat it. This process keeps the grains separate and solid, rather than mushy or starchy.

When your rice is well stirred and coated, add the appropriate amount of water according to the package of rice you are using. For jasmine rice this will probably be 4.5 cups of water. Add COLD water, not warm or hot. Add two extra tablespoons of water (it "makes up for" the herbs and vegetables in your rice). Uncovered, bring the water to a full, rolling boil, stirring as necessary to keep it from sticking.

Turn the heat down to a very low simmer, and cover your rice tightly. Let it cook for the amount of time called for on your package, minus 3 minutes (it's easy to add more time to cooking rice, but you can't take it away if it's over-cooked!). Resist the temptation to peek before your timer goes off; the internal steam is important to the cooking process. When it is done, the onions will likely have floated to the top, and the carrots to the bottom. Stir and fluff it before putting it into a serving bowl.

If you really want it to look marvelous, stick a sprig or two of fresh herbs on top, or a couple of thinly sliced red and green pepper pieces. Serve the rice piping hot; if your meal is not ready all at the same time, leave the rice in its pot with the lid tightly on until you're just about ready to serve. It should stay hot and moist. Make sure the heat is off underneath it!



## MASHED CARROTS AND TURNIPS

Ingredients:

- 6 large carrots
- 1 medium turnip or two small rutabagas
- 1 large onion
- butter, salt and pepper to taste

Method:

Rough cut your carrots and turnips, and rinse them well. If you like, you may add (or substitute) parsnips. Dice your onions. Add all vegetables to a large pot and cover with water. Bring to a full, rolling boil and continue to boil until all the

vegetables are soft to a fork. This can take anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on the vegetables involved and the size of the pieces.

When they are ready, drain the vegetables thoroughly (you can reserve the water for use in rice, soup or gravy, if you wish). Return them to the pot and mash them with a potato masher. The idea is to make certain that everything is well mashed but that there are still chunks, providing a variety of colors and textures. Add butter, salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot, right next to your rice!



## COFFEE CAKE

### Ingredients:

For the cake,

- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 sticks butter
- 3 tablespoons instant coffee (or one cup very strong coffee)
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 whole eggs
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

For the icing,

- 1.5 sticks butter
- 1 pound powdered sugar (confectioner's sugar)
- 2 tablespoons instant coffee crystals
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons heavy cream

### Method:

Preheat your oven to 350°F. Grease and flour two round (8" or 9") baking pans (heavily – this cake tends to stick if you are not over-zealous about greasing and flouring). I use butter when I grease the pans for this, but you could use lard if you wanted, or even a good quality butter spray.

In a large bowl, mix together the sugar, flour, and 1/4 teaspoon of salt. Set this aside.

Melt two sticks of butter in a pot over a medium-low heat. While it's melting, make your coffee (either with the instant coffee and one cup of water, or with your percolator set to 'incinerate'). Set the coffee aside, too.

When your butter is completely melted, add the coffee to the butter. Let it come to a boil for about ten seconds, then turn off the heat.

In a separate bowl, add the buttermilk, eggs, baking soda, and vanilla. Mix them together until they're well combined. Pour the butter/coffee mixture into the flour mix. Stir it together gently. Do not beat the heck out of it. The purpose isn't to have it mixed perfectly, but to cool down the heat a bit before adding your eggs.

Pour in the egg mixture and stir gently until it's all well combined. Again, don't whisk it; try to fold rather than beat. Pour the resulting batter into your pans, putting an equal amount into both. This can be achieved by pouring it all into a measuring cup before pouring it into the pans, or you can eyeball it, but do your best to be as close to even as possible.

Bake the cakes for 20 minutes or until done. You can check how well done it is by sticking a piece of raw (hard) spaghetti into the middle of your cake and pulling it out. If it's clean, with no batter on it, then your cake is ready. If there's still batter showing, or very moist crumbs, give it another two minutes.

Allow your cakes to cool completely, even though the very scent of all that deliciousness is going to be calling to you. Best to bake this ahead of time, so that your spouse or children or pets don't attempt to eat it before it's ready!

Create your icing by combining all the ingredients and mixing them thoroughly. I use the MixMaster to do this, as it goes very quickly and I can get the cakes ready for icing while it's mixing.

When the cakes are cooled, remove them from the baking pans. The bottom piece of cake should be turned onto a cake plate or other plate (put the plate upside down over the pan, and flip the whole thing). It should come out smoothly. Ice the top of the bottom piece of cake (you should use a little less than half the icing), and then carefully place the second piece of cake on top of the bottom one. Make sure the layers are directly on top of one another. Use the remaining icing to cover the top layer, and the sides. Once it's fully iced, chill it for at least one hour before serving.

Note: If your guests do not like coffee, this will not be a good choice. This is not a cake to be served with coffee. It's a cake to be served as coffee. Serving it with eggnog or apple cider would probably be a better choice than coffee.



## BOOK OF APOLLON PART 2

*By Lykeia*

Apollon, Lord of Delos, starry-born, Lykeios, Lycian lord  
Born of light, nursed on the ambrosia Themis poured  
Upon the lips of the son of Leto in whom all gods glorified;  
For as transmuted gold rises from the base metal purified  
In the substance of the sun, so he had sprung from the bronze  
Honeycomb of his mother who delights in the bees songs,  
Leaping up before the host to take up the powers of the sun,  
As a whirling top in a child's palm, between forefinger and thumb  
Delighting in how from its apex the measure is ever turning.  
The moon too he grasped, she who wanes but is ever returning,  
And hung her in the company of all the stars and her brother  
Upon the flower-entwined olive bough, his royal scepter  
To which he chose to mark the unending spiral of time  
The centre point for the perfect symmetry of growth and decline  
As between the autumn fruit and the blush of spring wine  
Draws up the sweet elixir celebrated by the singing Euradine  
That delivers a happy life. By his hand he set the unequivocal axis  
By Zeus' law and his inheritance marked by heavenly Polaris  
To which the stars pay deference, as the planets to the sun,  
Over which was given providence to of the boundary Apollon  
All together passing time: winter and summer, day and night  
Nature's authority crowning his brow in white beams of light.

For Xanthus, the great river coiling between west and east,  
The natural centrifuge, to be the first of Apollon's seats  
Leto gathered the twin torches beneath her double veils  
And as the boat to fair heavenly winds raises forth its sails  
To travel upon the hidden road of the wide-armed seas  
So Leto bore from rocky Delos for the intemperate springs.  
It was Melike spring, that Lycian haunt, that unbeknownst to all,  
When dawn would be greeted by the dove's sweetest call,  
Would become the nursing bed to Apollon's immortal song  
By the nursemaids of the reeds, a child transformed to a frog.  
There at the spring's bejeweled bed, as the rays of silvery twilight  
Pierced the black bosom of the star-loving mother of night,  
Did the loud-calling Artemis and fair Apollon the unshorn  
Leap forth as nestling birds on their first flight into the morn  
And plunge their gleaming hands into the pure water rolling  
In gentle currents, leaping at times like white mares frolicking  
In iridescent crests from the cavernous gully of the spring,  
To delight the little gods. There they gathered violets to fling  
As kindly gifts to the laughing Melike from which Leto in her  
hands  
Cupped the silvery threads of water, nurse of life and lands  
And lifted it to quench the thirst of her heavenly children.  
But only a trembling drop of water fell upon their lips  
As they were deprived to drink from the chalice even a sip  
For it emptied vainly onto the ground at the shepherd's yell  
And the nurturing water was naught but a stain where it fell.



Over the hill came the cattle of a hundred hues, bulls and cows  
The curved land echoing the shaking resonance of their bellows,  
And the calls of villagers, pushing forward their vast herds  
Seven hectare of the finest cattle with gold gilded horns  
Leaping into the stream, wetting their flanks, pride of the  
Lycians.

At the sight, the bright twins laughed and clapped their hands  
With delight as each bull tossed the bulk of his regal head  
Spearing the sky with dual curve of his brow for which he is  
bred

And let a great gust of his breath burst over the water's edge.  
The great beasts formed a curve upon the shores, a living wedge  
Threaded with the path of men forcing their way to the fore  
Where at once they stopped, the mirror of their eyes in a stare,  
And with voices raised, as a gaggle of geese would spur off a  
swan

From their nesting banks, so the shepherds shouted and flung  
Small sticks and rocks at their unwelcome guests unknown  
Whatever they may, as to scare away a serpent from their home,  
They were not loath to try to frighten motherly Leto into flight.

Their eyes hardened against the heavenly aura of gold light  
Rising from the faces of innocence observing in silence them  
And the threats risen against themselves and their dam.

Kind-hearted Leto pled with soft voice, for the men to recognize  
The blessing they had if they cared to look beneath a disguise  
Created by the long shadows of night, and look with clear sight  
Upon the bright-born twins, the distinguished flames of light.  
So Leto spoke, "A great kindness you can do without gartering  
A vice repaid, if you but think of the ends before starting  
Down a road you cannot regain. For the gods love compassion  
To strangers and just treatment in equality; and this fashion  
Is best to put into action without delay. This I kindly advise.  
Surely water for a lone woman and two children of gracious face  
Is not too much to ask of fellow walkers among the human race;  
A small portion of water is all they beg with arms upraised.  
Look here and see truly with your hearts my daughter and my son

They are pure white unblemished, their hands unstained by wrong

What defilement can they bring, rather than gather to it prosperity?

Allow us in peace to partake our rest, fearing not your security.

We do not seek to linger for we are on the curving road

No man stops forever when he must ascend to a new abode.

Let us have but a drink from the spring and then we shall go"

There did Apollon and Artemis, raise their arms as supplicants  
Showing to human hearts their beautiful and divine countenance  
And their faces gleamed as if the sun and moon shared the sky  
Whispering into hearts and minds as if heaven had spoken.

But her sweet cajoling was received without notice or token  
And the holy children were spared not kindness, nor a glance  
They saw them not, and felt neither compassion nor tenderness.  
She noted this and gathered up her twin babes into her arms  
Artemis laying at her breast and Apollon against her heart,  
Their starry faces concealed, and thereby she made way to depart.  
As a cloud hides away the sun and night banishes the light of day  
Leto enfolded them in her veil where they clung in dismay;  
Yet when faint twilight falls, and the sun has western gone,  
As the singers of dusk begin their haunting song, longing for dawn,

In this fashion the villagers lamented for the shadow falling on air  
Their cries as a melody of day-loving wolves, to retract their error  
They who willing turned their faces away from the light  
Too late they feared the oncoming dark of winter's night.

Their bitter-sweet songs drifted on the wind not unheard  
For Leto received in pity their verbal and unspoken words  
And with her fingertips upon the ether they were transformed  
As death, like birth, that metamorphosis renders a new form  
So with the sun they had a small death, complete families all  
And each from their place came and into their wide river fell.  
"Retreat now, let the water welcome you which you so love

To be linked forever to its embrace, singing for the dawn  
Your voices a chorus, between the worlds, in twilight for Apollon."

The water swept up around, as a curtain is drawn down,  
Upon a stage between the Acts, or the caterpillar in the cocoon,  
There gives up one form and its known life ceases to exist  
To become reborn and emerge to live again above the depths.  
Even still their voice continued on, "Come, come the dawn,"  
As their hair split away and their eyes bulged in their heads  
Each voice blending into another, a bridge between living and dead,

Green frogs leaping up to sing, guardians upon the bending reeds  
Tending to Apollon's rustic garden at the water's edge.

Unwearyingly Leto paced through the planes of the night  
Led faultlessly by her twins, as she held up her double lights  
As if she held two white wolves, a heavenly gleam illuminating the way

To transform for her the hours of night into the glow of a sunless day

As Apollon, all-seeing, sang a minstrel's song of heavenly prose,  
A song of the sun's golden rays sinking orange and rising rose  
Of purple wine and gold, a sweet melody wafting into the sky  
That a note resounded and another came rising in a haunting cry  
In harmony. The golden-eyed children of the spaces in between  
Day and night, the pale limbed wolves joined their voices to their king

Walking with ghostly steps at his side with the pale silver streaks  
Of wolf-light rising independent, tingeing the side of the peaks  
And the leaves of the trees, the gate opening for the day reborn  
From the east. There Lykeios danced among the wolves, adorned  
In the gold rays of the dawn fashioning upon his shoulder and brow

Robes ghosting from his arms, and diamond encrusted crown  
As a tower rises from his head in nine columns of bright rays,  
He lifts his hand and strums the threads lifting the hours of day.  
In this fashion he arrived to Xanthus' rocky side, fed by many springs

Polarities harnessed in the great rush of water that ceaselessly sings

In which Leto tendered bathed her young, Artemis follow Apollon

And the great river paid tribute to them by his consecration.

There at banks Apollon was received kindly as a stranger by Olen  
One of Lycia who was at that day already hoary-bearded, an old man

Who with his withered hands offered all the sustenance which he had;

Apollon who so loves the generous soul, and deplores the bad,  
Was so endeared by the kindness embraced him with great love  
Blessing the man with sight to deliver to man the will from Zeus above,

And there near the pure eddies of Xanthus' sweet-watered shore  
Great Apollon remained for eight years and nine months more.

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# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

(HE EPISTOLE)

a newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

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*In This Issue:*

*Winter Solstice 2010 • Hekate Enodia • Book of Apollon Part 2 • Recipes, Poetry & More!*

## HE EPISTOLE – CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

HE EPISTOLE (a "message" or "letter") is published four times a year. We offer articles, artwork, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community.

We're currently seeking submissions from guest writers.

For more information, please visit our website at: [Neokoroi.org](http://Neokoroi.org)  
Submissions may be sent to: [HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com)

