

## **Finding Your Folklore**

### **An Introduction to Folkloric Witchcraft**

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#### **What exactly is folklore?**

Folklore can be broadly defined as the informal culture of a group of people. The (arguably) most famous definition comes from folklorist Dr. Dan Ben-Amos, which is “artistic communication in small groups.” Basically, it’s all the stuff that makes up the everyday social fabric of a society. It includes folktales and faerie tales, sayings, proverbs, jokes, songs, urban legends, building styles, traditional recipes, medicinal remedies, crafts, toys, folk dances, holidays, initiation rites, magical practices - basically, all the things that people experience as part of their daily life!

Folklore is separate from what is sometimes called “high culture” or the “fine arts,” which are typically more universal in scope and are shared across culture lines. (Think oil painting, ballet, classical music, etc.) Although folklore is intrinsic to all human societies, the way it presents itself looks very different from culture to culture.

#### **What is folkloric witchcraft?**

Folkloric witches base their personal practices on the folklore traditions that inform their personal, familial, regional, and ancestral identities.

Folkloric witchcraft is not a reconstructionist path - that it is, a magical practice that seeks to emulate exactly, or as close as possible, what was done in history. The folklore traditions of the past can greatly enrich our magical and mundane lives, but it’s important to remember that folklore is *always* evolving within a culture. Folkloric witches work within both traditional and contemporary forms of folklore to make their magic.

#### **What are some examples of folkloric witchcraft?**

It could be argued that *all* witchcraft is technically “folkloric,” in the sense that modern witchcraft draws from traditional folk magic practices and beliefs (the meanings and myths assigned to plants, crystals, colors, the elements, planets and stars, Tarot cards and other forms of divination, etc.). The Pagan community has its own contemporary folklore as well (some good

examples include the traditions associated with the eight Sabbats). However, folkloric witches specifically make both traditional and modern folklore a conscious part of their practice.

### **Some examples of modern folkloric witchcraft include:**

- Incorporating symbols, phrases, and archetypes from famous faerie tales into spell work (ex; Cinderella’s pumpkin for enchantment, Little Red Riding Hood’s red cape for courage, Snow White’s apple for seeing through deception, chanting “I’ll huff and puff and blow this house in” to push through obstacles, etc.)
- Learning about the local folklore associated with certain places where you live (cemeteries, buildings, landmarks, etc.) and incorporating it into your magical practice, like leaving offerings for local spirits and guardians.
- Setting out food for the local fae and tending to your house spirits
- Looking to your ancestral lineage(s) to connect with ancestors and incorporate their stories, music, medicine, foods, and crafts into your spiritual and everyday practices (ex; learning traditional weaving crafts to use as manifestation spells, adding your own twist to a cherished family recipe for luck, prosperity, love or success, etc.)
- Exalting traditional and modern folk heroes and drawing inspiration from their lives, legends, and works. (a good modern example of this is the *Secular Saints* series of prayer candles that honor activists, artists, scientists, musicians, etc.)

### **Who can be a folkloric witch?**

Anyone who is interested in folklore and witchcraft can be a folkloric witch!

### **How do I become a folkloric witch?**

A great place to start is by thinking about the “folklore” that informs your own life: your favorite stories, family recipes and heirlooms, special objects with personal meaning to you (like a favorite stuffed animal, a friendship bracelet, a letter from a friend or relative, etc), favorite poems, songs, etc. Then, you can “zoom-out” and explore your regional folklore (Texas has a WEALTH of stories, songs, legends, traditional foods, and other types of “informal culture” to get you started) as well as your familial and ancestral folklore. Folkloric witchcraft can enrich your life in so many ways, and because it is ever-evolving, it leaves a lot of room for creativity and adding your own personal touch - which makes your magic even stronger!

## **A few things to consider**

Learning about folklore and folk magic is exciting, and can be a great way to develop a stronger relationship to the land where you live and to your ancestral lineage(s).

As you begin to explore the wonderful world of folkloric witchcraft, remember that in Texas and the US at large, we are living on land that was stolen from indigenous peoples and that their traditional folklore and spiritual practices are often “closed” to folks outside of those cultures. Remember to be respectful of these traditions and the people they come from.

If you’re interested in learning about the folklore or magical practices of a different culture, get to know people who are *part* of that culture, and learn to take the lead from them. Be mindful to avoid crossing the line into cultural appropriation. Remember to give more than you take.

In a similar vein, folkloric witchcraft should not be confused with “folkism,” which is a belief that certain spiritual and magical traditions should only be accessible to those with “pure” racial bloodlines. (ex; thinking that only people of pure Scandanavian ancestry should be able to practice Norse paganism, only people of Irish or Scottish ancestry should be able to practice Druidism, etc.) Be cautious of individuals or groups espousing this type of rhetoric, as many of them have ties to white supremacist groups. Don’t allow what could be a wonderful opportunity for self-discovery and spiritual growth to morph into an excuse for racism and other harmful ideologies.

## **Recommended Resources**

### Websites

The Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic  
Myth & Moor  
Cunning Folk Magazine  
Folklore Thursday  
Fairytalez

### Podcasts

Lore  
Myths & Legends  
Femlore  
That Witch Life  
American Hysteria