

*How did kissing under the mistletoe originate?*

Although kissing under the mistletoe is associated completely with the Christmas season, there is no reason why it should be, except for the power that custom can bestow. In a Scandinavian myth, Baldur the beautiful, god of light and spring, was troubled by dreams that his life was in danger. His mother Frigga, goddess of love, traveled over the world asking everything from earth, air, fire, and water to promise not to hurt her son. However, she did not ask the mistletoe, a parasitic plant which attaches itself to trees and therefore does not grow from any of the four elements. Loki, god of fire, was jealous of Baldur, and finally had him slain with a dart of mistletoe. The tears of Baldur's mother became the white berries of the plant, and she decreed that mistletoe would never again be used as a weapon, and that she would place a kiss on anyone who passed under it.

Possibly the timing of Christmas-kissing comes from an old legend that at the end of a year, if a girl receives no kisses under the mistletoe, she will not marry in the new year. A berry should be removed with each kiss, and when all are gone the bough has lost its power.

