

LEGEND AND FOLKLORE SYMBOLS: OLD BABA

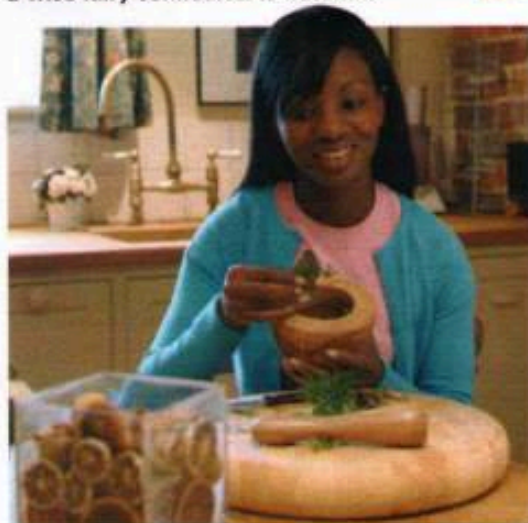
Guardian of the life-giving waters and connected to the fruits of the earth, the magical Baba was a popular folk character in Russia, Hungary and Poland.

Baba, meaning 'old woman', is a Slavic character who takes on a variety of forms. She was originally a crone goddess of death, regeneration and winter and is often depicted as the scary Baba Yaga, but this is only one aspect of her folklore. In Hungary, Baba was portrayed as a good fairy and later as a witch, and in Poland she is Babci, the wise woman.

Dark wisdom

Baba helps those seeking truth and knowledge, but, like the untamed forces of nature, she can be terrifying and wild. She guards the fountain of the waters of life and death, which will bring a corpse back to life, and has three servants known as the White, Red and Black Horsemen, whom she calls her Bright Dawn, Red Sun and Dark Midnight. Baba is also called 'the old woman of autumn', suggesting a link to harvest myths.

Baba was sometimes thought of as a wise fairy connected to autumn.



THE SYMBOLISM OF OLD BABA

In some tales, Baba is said to fly through the air aboard a giant mortar and pestle. This strange mythical contraption brings to mind her links to herbalism, preparing herbs and spices to use. When you next

Grind together your own magical mix of herbs and spices with a mortar and pestle.

grind ingredients for a herbal remedy think of Baba and ask for her to bless your actions.



Baba lived in a hut that stood on giant chicken legs, the windows were its 'eyes' and the door its 'mouth'. Her home was a classic psychological symbol of a house representing the person dwelling within. Inside,

her ancient brick oven was symbolic of the womb and of the first fires with which early humans learned to cook food.



The birch forest around Baba's hut has come to be another of her symbols; birch is a tree of beginnings, as it's thought to be the first tree to recolonise after an ice age.