

Get Out!

In the Dark with Donna

Never mind New Years Eve, 1999. The more auspicious date, according to Donna Henes, proprietor of Mama Donna's Tea Garden and Healing Haven, is December 21, the winter solstice.

Not only is it the darkest day of the year, with only nine hours of sunlight— this year's solstice coincides with a new moon (said to be the time of earth's fullest potential), and the annual Lunar Perigee, the day when the moon comes closest to earth, heightening the effects of the full moon.

"If someone wants to celebrate going into the new era, this is more significant than the millennium," says Henes, who is organizing a 25th Annual Winter Solstice Celebration. "The millennium is just an abstract concept, the anniversary of a calendar, not all that profound an event."

But wait, there's more. The solstice celebration gained some notoriety last year when the city arrested participants on Staten Island's South Beach for gathering without a permit. (A judge later dismissed the charges.) "We're in the process now of getting official permission to go back to the beach. The New York Civil Liberties Union has vowed to help us get any official permits we need," she said.

Beach or no beach, Henes promises an outdoor celebration



complete with a bonfire (lit at 2:44 a.m., the solstice moment) drums, chanting, and blessings "for the water, the earth and ourselves." If past years are any indication, the gathering will draw participants from many cultures and religions including Christians, Jews and Muslims hoping to get in sync with the season.

Advance reservations are required. Transportation will be provided depending on the event location. Call 857-2247 for more information.