

# Dinner & Dice

**A Gaming Cookbook**



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## A Gaming Cookbook

Edited by Jodi and Clint Black for the Carolina Game Tables Kickstarter

[www.carolinagametables.com](http://www.carolinagametables.com)

Game Tables for Real Life

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Art from The Whole Hole - A Gadabout's Guide to Mutha Oith - Volume 01: Keister Island by Andy Hopp, published by Mutha Oith Creations. Used with permission.



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# Appetizers



## The Devil's Nachos

by Jason L. Blair

one (1) large bag round yellow corn tortilla chips

16 oz microwavable pack of BBQ pulled pork

4 oz can green chiles (diced)

7 oz can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce

1/2 cup hot jalapeno slices

8 oz Mexican cheese blend (shredded)

six (6) habanero cheese slices

1 tablespoon cholula hot sauce

1 tablespoon Frank's red hot sauce

Prepare BBQ Pulled Pork per package directions.

Get a frying pan up to medium heat on the stovetop. To the pan, add the pulled pork, green chiles, chipotle peppers (including adobo sauce), Cholula, and Frank's Red Hot.



Stir. Let it all cook down until the wetness dries up a bit. Nobody likes a soggy nacho. When thick, take the mixture off heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a deep cooking sheet with aluminum foil. Coat the foil in non-stick spray.

On the cookie sheet, smooth out a layer of tortilla chips. Spoon the pulled pork and peppers mixture on top, spreading evenly. Cover with half the shredded Mexican cheese. Sprinkle jalapenos around.

Repeat for the second layer: chips, meat, cheese, jalapenos. Lay over the habanero cheese slices. Put in middle rack of oven until cheese is melted and the edges of the nachos are brown.

Take out. Let cool a minute. Put in face.

## Game Anecdote

### 30 Minutes or Less: A Cautionary Tale

I wish my tale of food and gaming was a happy one. Now, be assured, I've enjoyed many a good meal while chucking dice and telling stories. I know that I've enjoyed them--intellectually, I know this to be true--but I'll be darned if I can recall specifics. You know that adage about 10% of happy customers tell a friend but 90% of unhappy customers tell everybody?

Hello, everybody.

No, the good gaming meals I've had don't readily come to mind. The one that truly sticks out is from when I was a teenager, still living and gaming at my parents' house. My buddies and I had gathered for a late evening session of my favorite game from the 1990s, CYBERPUNK 2020. Man, I still love that game.

So, me, my brother, and some of our mutual friends are sitting around the dining room table, dice and sheets at the ready, when someone pipes up that we should order pizza. Sounds good. We decide on which pies we want and ring up a nearby chain. Let's call them Checkers.

Here's what you need to know about our then-local Checkers. It was literally one mile from my parents' house. One mile. The only reason someone didn't go pick it up is because, y'know, we were gaming. Besides, it should only take a half-hour, right?

Oh, how young and naive we were.

I call and place the order. The guy on the other end takes it down.

"Pickup or delivery?" he asks.

It was then our fate was sealed.

"Delivery," I say.

"Okay. It'll be about thirty minutes."

Perfect. Just as we planned. We settle in for our session. I think I was playing my favorite Fixer. A guy who went by the name Alltel. Pale dude with spiky hair.

Wait. I'm talking about my character, aren't I? Sorry about that. This is about the food.

A half-hour passes. We don't even notice. Forty-five minutes pass. We start to wonder where the food is.

An hour passes. I call Checkers to, uh, check on the order.



“Oh yeah, sorry,” the guy says. “Our delivery driver tried to call you.”

He obviously didn't try hard enough.

The pizza dude continues, “He can't find your house.”

Our house is precisely two turns from this guy's place of business. It is less than one mile. The houses on the road are thirty feet apart with their numbers emblazoned on mailboxes and garages. This is a small town. It is not hard to navigate.

I give the guy directions.

“Okay, he's heading back right now. We have a couple orders going out soon. I'll send yours out with them.”

Sigh. Hardly great customer service--and couldn't he just call the delivery driver right now?

“Fine,” I say begrudgingly.

Time passes.

The phone rings.

“Hello?” A new voice says on the line.

“Yes?” I'm very impatient at this point.

“Hi, this is [NAME] from Checkers. I'm trying to deliver your pizza.”

“Okay.”

“I'm having some car trouble. I'm broken down and waiting on AAA to come by.”

Palm to forehead. The friends around the table look at me, wondering what's up.

“Okay,” I say. I hang up and recount the tale to the others.

We're all pretty hungry at this point. It's well-past 10 and none of us have eaten since lunch.

We wait. We game. We have fun.

Time continues to pass.

After eleven, I call Checkers again. Where's our food?

Turns out, the guy's car is dead. They're calling in a new driver to handle his shift. The orders are piling up. The guy is 30 minutes away. He was at his girlfriend's house.

I can't believe it at this point. We have officially entered the realm of the absurd.

Our order doesn't show up until after midnight. Three hours after I placed the call. It's cold and has now seen more of my hometown than I probably have.

And do they give us a discount?

Nope. I pay the guy. (Yes, I tip.) The game is over at this point. We sit in silence and eat. Happy to have anything at all.

Moral of the story? Skip the pizza. Make your own food.

## **Bio**

By day, Jason L. Blair is Lead Writer at Deep Silver Volition, developers of the Saints Row video game series. By night, he works on Middle Grade fiction, his own tabletop games, playing video games, reading books, watching TV and movies, spending time with family, and wrestling with his dogs.



# Grilled Prosciutto Mozzarella Skewers

by Kennon Bauman

- 8-12 thin slices of prosciutto
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella cheese
- 8 cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 small baguette (or a loaf of Italian bread)
- black pepper
- Italian seasoning (a store-bought pre-mix is fine)
- barbecue skewers

Divide fresh mozzarella into eight roughly equal balls or cubes (they should be about 1 oz).

On a flat surface, lay out one slice of prosciutto, placing a piece of mozzarella in the center. Carefully wrap the mozzarella with the prosciutto (it tears easily), and then use barbecue skewers to secure. Fair warning—it usually takes me ten or twelve slices of prosciutto to get 8 good skewers.

Cut part of the baguette into generous cubes, and then drizzle with olive oil. Shake or grind Italian seasoning mix onto the cubes, and then add to the skewers. Yes, you just made a crouton.

Alternate prosciutto/mozzarella, croutons, and cherry tomatoes on the skewers until you run out of skewers, supplies, or both.

Grill skewers over high heat, turning at least once, until bread is crispy and brown on the edges, and mozzarella is just starting to ooze out from inside the prosciutto. Should take approximately 7-10 minutes.

Remove from grill, and then grind (or sprinkle) cracked black pepper over the skewers, seasoning to taste.

Allow mozzarella to cool for about five minutes before eating. Four if you're really brave.

## House Rules

If you don't have a grill (or want to create more easily manageable individualized portions) use toothpicks to create smaller skewers, each consisting of a single prosciutto-wrapped piece of mozzarella, a bread cube, and a cherry tomato. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place mini-skewers on a cookie sheet and bake for 7 to 10 minutes.

I prefer prosciutto for this recipe, but I suspect any thin-sliced salty pork product would work. Feel free to substitute another ham if you can't find prosciutto at your local grocery store.

Serves 8, but easily scales up for bigger groups or bigger gamers.



## Game Anecdote

The tricky part about running a regular game during the work week is that it's pretty hard to find time to eat. If you're hosting, you either need to be able to cook enough food to feed a group of hungry gamers while you are also at work or be ready to order a truly ridiculous amount of takeout, all while catering (ha!) to a variety of palates and dietary needs. We played host to an event just like that for almost two and a half years, and in that time I am pretty sure we spent enough money at the local pizza delivery joint to send the owner's children to at least an in-state public university.

One of our players is a single parent. Back when we were regularly running a weeknight game, he'd bring his adorable daughter (at the time, about three years old) to game night, and she'd watch cartoons, color, and generally entertain herself while the rest of us played games a few feet away. Like most three-year-olds, she was also a notoriously picky eater. Her dad would sit her down on the couch across the room from our basement gaming table with a piece of pizza or a few chicken nuggets while we dove into the adventure du jour, and more often than not by the time we quit a couple of hours later, the plate would still be full. If he was lucky, she'd have eaten a single pepperoni.

This went on for almost 6 months. For a three-year-old hanging out with a bunch of (then mostly childless) adults playing a game without her, she was incredibly well behaved. So well behaved, in fact, that she sort of receded into the background noise while we slayed dragons, conquered the hollow earth, and established empires in a post-apocalyptic future. And then, one day, a miracle happened: when we took a quick break about halfway through the game, her dad looked over, and the plate was empty.

We all congratulated her (secretly pleased that our hobby was no longer depriving a growing child of needed sustenance), and played for another hour before breaking for the evening and going home. The new trend continued for a few months, only stopping when we put the game on hiatus because my wife and I had purchased a new home in a town a few miles away. When the time finally came to move, one of the last items to go was the couch that sat across the room from our basement gaming table.

When the movers lifted it up to take it upstairs, I finally discovered the truth. There, hidden in the shadows, were a dozen petrified pieces of pizza, hidden by a picky three-year-old.

## Bio

Kennon Bauman is a professional analyst and lapsed historian who has worked on a variety of your favorite games, including *The Day After Ragnarok* for *Savage Worlds*, *Night's Black Agents*, and *Timewatch*. He is also the creative director for [TheIlluminerdy.com](http://TheIlluminerdy.com). He lives with his wife (fellow gamer Elizabeth Bauman), their two adorable children, and an aged Boston Terrier.





# Grizzled Thingies

by Andy Hopp

A can of chunky yellow tidbits. Pineapple, probably.

A can of what passes for corn kernels.

A whole mess of self-rising what passes for cornmeal (a cup and half should do it).

Some self-rising flour (half a cup). If it refuses to rise on its own smack it in the butt or sing a really annoying song until it gets out of bed.

Baking soda to taste (half a teaspoon)

EXACTLY half a teaspoon of crusty white crud. I think your people call it salt.

A cup of buttery cow drippings. Buttermilk will do.

An egg from a chicken (or a salamagux, if you can find it)

One of those onion things the kids are always talking about.

Some sort of spicy fresh peppers (jalapenos are good). If you're a wuss use sweet peppers instead.

Also some green onions.

Oh, and fresh chopped garlic. Garlic is all that and a bag of chips.

A lot of oil (I don't care what kind you use).

## Here's what you do:

1. Put a bunch of oil in a deep pot and heat it to 350 of your Earth degrees.
2. Get a frying pan or something similar and sauté the finely chopped peppers and white onions. Add a small amount of salt if you're into that sort of thing. Once the onions are translucent add the chopped green onions and the garlic. Continue sizzling for a few more minutes but I warn you: **DON'T YOU DARE BURN THAT GARLIC!!!!!!**
3. In a mixing bowl or some other largish vessel (the skull of your fallen enemy, perhaps) mix up the flour, cornmeal, salt, and baking powder. Then pour in the buttermilk. Beat the heck out of the egg and put it in there too. Then drain the pineapple (you can even drink the juice!) and the corn (probably don't want to drink that juice) and plop those in the mix as well. Add the sautéed jazz from the previous step. Mix that stuff up until it's good and blended.
4. That oil better be boiling by now. If it's not say something rude about its mother. Use a teaspoon (dipping it in water between each thingee so the stuff doesn't stick) to plop some globs of the mix into the bubbling cauldron. Turn them a bit with the spoon and cook them until they achieve a delicious golden brown hue.
5. Skim those puppies out and nestle them gently in a bed of paper towels to soak up all their sweat.
6. **EAT THEM LOUDLY!!!!!!** Also, why not put some sriracha sauce on them? Why not, indeed...
7. If you don't want to fry them because you're watching your girlish figure you can bake them like cookies instead. Go ahead, I dare you.



## Game Anecdote

Here, for the edification of the inquisitive, is an amusing anecdote from a time when I ate food and played a game AT THE SAME TIME!!!!

It's actually kind of a lame and boring story, but I shall regale you with it nonetheless, as is the custom of my people. See, it all transpired way back in the harsh and dusty autumn of 1999. *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* was playing the theaters and the world was rejoicing in harmony as they celebrated the hilarious and intelligent antics of Mr. Jar Jar Binks and his trusty sidekick Darth Maul.

Friends were gathered in my basement, adorned in the garb of the day and festooned with an assortment of junk food purchased from the bulk candy section of Tops (the local grocemongering establishment). Gunnar had bread. A lot of bread. Gunnar always had a lot of bread. Jon had some chocolate covered pretzels, some chocolate covered Zagnuts, some chocolate covered nuts, some chocolate covered chocolate bars, and some chocolate. Gerry had something weird. Elizabeth had a bag of Fritos and more Sweet Tarts than you can shake a bag of Fritos at. Heather probably had Bottle Caps or Sprees or something made from eleven herbs and sugars. I had half a coconut full of whiskey and a raw squirrel. Pizza from Pizza Hut was there as well. That becomes important later. Foreshadowing is cool.

Anyway, as the game master of the group, it fell upon me to carry the narrative and invent names for all the various NPCs and establishments and whatnot. Gori the Drip (formerly Gorance the Eloquent until a tragic accident removed him of his bottom lip and his dashing sobriquet) was in attendance. Opo the Sog was on call too. Others with equally snazzy names existed as well. I don't remember all their names. It was, after all, sixteen years ago.

So the time came that all game masters fear. The peeps were heroically beating up NPCs and stealing their stuff, as they do, when those dreaded words manifested. You know the ones...

See, there was this new girl that showed up as the leader of an impromptu assemblage of ruffians. The peeps beat up her friends and then nabbed her as a hostage. They tied her up and poked her with sharp things. "What is your name?!!!" they shouted, jabbing a petrified chipmunk into her armpit (the details are foggy, that might not have happened).

...

Her name? I don't know. She didn't even exist in my mind until a few minutes ago. I frantically searched my noggin for clues. The little naked guys in my head that look just like me but one of them has one of those green accountant visors on just sort of bumbled into each other and looked blankly through their filing cabinets, shrugging and muttering excuses. But the peeps needed her to have a name. They probably needed her to have interesting things in her pockets as well, but a name first. My gaze circled the room, taking in the expectant glares of my friends. These people expected this mysterious girl to have a name and I WAS LETTING THEM DOWN! Then, inspiration...





Pizza Hut and Star Wars came to rescue. The pizza box on the table was adorned with a portrait of Darth Maul himself. When desperate times arise, I reminded myself, spell things backwards! Darth Maul... "Luamthrad!" I announced. "Her name is Luamthrad Azzip. Of the Azimuth Azzips."

"Sweet name," my friends agreed, none the wiser. The day was saved. The imaginary girl had a name and I had fodder for a bad story. A story you just endured. Congratulations, friend, you made it through. My pants are off to you.

## Bio

Own-horn-tooting's not really my thing, but here goes: I'm an award winning illustrator, writer, and game designer. Although my hands are in many cookie jars, my main bag is *Low Life* and related snazz, such as the *G'Zoink* and *Dementalism* card games, and *Low Life Miniatures*. I also host Con on the Cob ([www.cononthecob.com](http://www.cononthecob.com)) and Oddmall: Emporium of the Weird ([www.oddmall.info](http://www.oddmall.info)), two of the most fun things in the history of fun. Dig more jazz at [www.muthaoithcreations.com](http://www.muthaoithcreations.com) and [www.thewholehole.info](http://www.thewholehole.info).

# Miss Jackie's Best Cheesy Onion Dip

## by Jodi Black

I might be the only contributor here who *doesn't* like to cook, but trust me, this is **easy**. And it's a popular favorite with my game group. I can usually count on a free Bennie, Style Chip, or Fate Point just for showing up with it.

Large bag of Fritos Scoops (maybe two)

3 cups diced onions (Vidalia if you can, or sweet yellow if they're not in season. But trust me, it's really best with Vidalia onions)

2 cups shredded parmesan cheese (not that shake from a can stuff)

1 cup mayonnaise (Miss Jackie swore by Duke's but I'm a heathen and think it tastes just fine using low fat olive oil blend or whatever you can find)

Shallow baking dish: A glass casserole pan is fine but you can dress this up with a fancier baking dish. You will be mixing, cooking, and serving from this dish because I hate to do dishes.

Dump the onions in the baking dish as you chop them. Dump in the parmesan cheese. Dump in the mayo. Stir. The pan does not need to be greased—that mayo and cheese will grease it up just fine.

Bake at 350 degrees in the oven for 30-45 minutes or until the top is brown, at least in places. We usually can't wait long enough for it to finish browning.

Serve with chips for scooping up the greasy oniony cheesy goodness. It's also great on burgers and pasta. My eldest daughter usually demands half the pan in tribute and just eats it with a spoon.





## Game Anecdote

Clint and I have gamed on plastic folding tables, picnic tables, and dining room tables. The “table” we used when in an apartment was actually a piece of plywood over a monster ottoman. It and the matching couch was labeled “bordello furniture” by our game group because it was bright red tufted velvet with bulbous tassels. Clint’s family owns a furniture company designing high end furniture, so often we’re the cobbler’s children with weird shoes—we use whatever gets returned to the factory.

The table we game on currently (until we can stock one of our own Carolina Game Tables) was a great find at a factory sale: \$150 for a solid table 6 feet long—and has leaves extending it to 10 feet long! “You’ll have to put the legs on yourself,” they said apologetically. I wondered how we’d get it in the house if it came with the legs on!

If there’s one thing we’ve figured out about tables and gaming is there’s never enough space, not even at 10 feet long. Sharon and I like a place setting’s worth of space for our ringbinder notebooks. Everyone has two coasters for soda and coffee. The GM (whoever that may be that evening) takes up one end with the GM screen (with cool art to help set the mood!), notes, dice, and stab-your-buddy-notes.

Another reason we need such a big table is because there’s a giant combat map. Minis aren’t as necessary, but spatial awareness is for me. And there are SO many cool designs out there today...and blank ones to draw what you don’t have. I love maps.

And finally, covering about half of the table, is the nightly offering to the “dice gods.” Erik may bring in a bag of honey mustard pretzels, chocolate-covered raisins, and box of Hostess cakes. Raulston may bring in two cases of soda, place them in the ‘fridge, and then put a box of Hostess cakes on the table (you may sense a theme here). Sharon—who thinks the healthiest of us all—brings some string cheese and some gummy worms. Maybe I made



the onion dip, maybe I just brought a weird flavor of potato chips I noticed at the grocery store. Clint believes in feeding everyone when he has time: chili in the crock pot, his Quick Beef Stew (see p. 41), or Beef Barley soup. And Mark? Mark is the Dessert King. Whatever he brought is sweet, usually chocolatey, and the kids demand their toll, even if they're not gaming.

Perhaps if we left more of the offering to the "dice gods" our dice would roll better, but we don't! We obviously need a bigger table. Or maybe just a better designed one.

## **Bio**

Jodi Black, a multiple ENnie award-winning editor with 60+ published credits, is currently COO and Managing Editor for Pinnacle Entertainment Group and owns with her husband Clint Black online- and convention-only retail store, Beautiful Brains Books and Games, and a game table furniture company, [Carolina Game Tables](#) (the reason you're reading this now). She's also a mom and übervolunteer in the community.

## **Pizza Dip**

**by Steve Kenson**

8 oz. cream cheese, softened

8 oz. sour cream

1/2 cup pizza sauce

1/2 cup chopped pepperoni

1/2 cup chopped pepper

1/2 cup chopped onion

1/8 tsp. garlic powder

1 tsp. oregano

Shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly sauté peppers and onions until onions are just translucent. You can add other "topping" ingredients like sliced mushrooms or olives to taste, or omit the vegetables, as desired.

Mix together cream cheese, sour cream, and herbs. Spread into bottom of pie plate or oven-safe casserole dish. Spread pizza sauce evenly over the top. Sprinkle with chopped pepperoni, and sautéed vegetables. Bake 10 minutes. Top with mozzarella cheese. Return to oven until cheese melts and bubbles.

Serve hot with flatbreads, pita chips, or tortilla chips for dipping, and plenty of napkins!

Like pizza itself, this recipe is highly adaptable: change up the vegetables, add some different meat (like crumbled sweet or hot sausage, bacon, turkey pepperoni, or vegetarian options), herbs (including basil, red pepper, and Italian herb blends), and cheeses, like Parmesan, Romano, or smooth-melting cheese blends. Experiment!





It's also easy to prepare in advance and keep refrigerated (with the cheese topping stored separately) to bring to game-day events and pop into the oven, either while the game is getting warmed up or during a break in the action for a mid-game snack.

### Game Anecdote

When I was in middle- and high-school, my house was the favorite place for game days, because my mom tried to make all of my friends feel welcome and would sometimes make us snacks while we played. I'm fairly sure even now my parents are not entirely clear on what it was we were all doing with all of the dice and cardboard screens and maps and papers all afternoon, but were nonetheless grateful that it made me some friends (some of whom I still game with to this day).

Since pizza is one of the natural "gaming food groups" (along with chips, soda, and sweets), my mom's recipe for pizza dip was—and still is—a huge hit amongst my group, even if it magnified all of the hazards pizza poses at a game table by removing the "safety" of a crust. We ended up with more than a little cheese and sauce on character sheets, handouts, and maps as a result but didn't much care. Still, you'll want to have plenty of napkins on-hand for this game-table treat, as it can get a bit messy!

### Bio

Steve Kenson has worked as a freelance author and designer in the tabletop RPG industry since 1995, and as a staff developer and designer for Green Ronin Publishing since 2003. He designed the *Mutants & Masterminds* and *Icons Superpowered* Roleplaying superhero games, and maintains a website at [www.stevекenson.com](http://www.stevекenson.com).



# The Snack Tower

by Ivan Van Norman

chunk carrots

celery

dip

a desire to watch the world burn



**For carrots:** square them either using a peeler or sharp knife. (PROTIP: Cut one side, then lay on the cut side to continue. Then cut in half depending on thickness).

**For celery:** Cut Evenly.

Lay a 4x4 Grid of either carrots, celery or both, criss-crossing after each 'layer'. It will resemble a certain game of nerves and dexterity you may have played in the past.

Stack until feeling lucky. Then serve with dip and Enjoy!

**NOTE:** Despite your desire to 'play' with the SNACK TOWER, it is best if this snack is consumed from the top down. Basically: Don't play with your food!

You can check also check out this great video by scanning the QR Code, or [clicking this link](#) to see the easiest method to "Chunk" carrots.



## Game Anecdote

Driving in LA sucks. If you live here you're probably already aware of that, and if you don't I'm sure you've heard the horrible stories from others at some point. Which is why hosting Game Nights and get-overs can be a tricky ordeal. Often we end up playing everyone's favorite game 'the calendar game' because everyone wants the get together to be at their place (often so they don't have to drive). I love to host just as much as my friends, and sometimes we make it into a competition of who can 'be a better host', but at the end we all benefit. Because if there is one thing I've learned over the years it's that being a good host allows you to see friends more often, and play more games. This is a lot easier to do if you promise them good food, drinks, and good times ahead.

But it's not just about driving, food and activities have been a part of us for centuries and I personally believe that Game Nights are the last refuge of what it means to be a casual host. To invite people for no other reason than to see them, show them a good time, play games and talk about events and happenings in their lives is rare in the day of easy connectivity over the internet. Sure, there are BBQ's and Tailgate Parties, and even Birthday Parties. But those often come with some other purpose and are infrequent (Summer, In-Season, or Once a year).

**Game nights are eternal, impulsive, and forever.**



So get out there and host, if you're good at it (or just a better one than all your other friends). You'll keep bringing them back and maybe you won't have to drive as much!

## **Bio**

Ivan Van Norman is a member of Hunters Books, creators of the award winning *Outbreak: Undead - A Zombie Survival RPG*. Ivan LOVES gaming and will host or play as often as he is able. He is also a Twitch host on Geek and Sundry where he plays both Board Games and RPGs on his shows. Plus wasn't he on TV at some point?

# Vegan Snack Options

by **Emily Care Boss**

A healthy repast suited to many different palates and diets. Non-dairy, free of animal products, vegan, vegetarian, kosher and halal. Use gluten free crackers or bread to make even more inclusive.

Most ingredients can be found at any market. A few specialty items (marked with an asterisk) may be included if you want to go above and beyond.

Choose two categories (savory, sweet or fresh) to present.

For Sweet and Savory: provide plenty of a base (crackers, bagel slices, lettuce or cucumber)

For Fresh, provide a small reservoir of a sweet dip (maple syrup or agave; note that many vegans do not eat honey)

Provide a selection of four to seven of the other ingredients from each selected category for your guests to sample and build hors d'oeuvres or vegan smørrebrød to their taste.

Place on a side table, with small plates and drinks.

## **Savory**

Bagel strips (dairy & egg free): cut thin strips from top to bottom from 2 each of the following bagels – pumpernickel, everything, onion, plain, sesame

Lettuce

Cucumber slices

Hummus (look for smooth and creamy brands such as Tribe, Cedars or Sabra)

Ripe avocado slices

Red onions finely sliced

Tomato or Kumato slices (garden fresh tomatoes if you get them)

Olive oil with salt, pepper and crushed garlic

Roasted red peppers

Roasted garlic

Salt & pepper

\*Capers



\*Dairy-free cheese (Daiya jalapeno havarti or Coconut Herb Chao are highly recommended)

\*Tapenade (black or green olive, check to make sure it is fish free)

\*Red Pepper spread

## **Sweet**

Bagel strips – sweet or plain bagels

Dairy and honey free crackers

Jams (2-3 types, your favorite flavors)

Peanut butter

Apple or pumpkin butter

Chocolate (dark chocolate is often dairy free): small blocks, slices or grated

Slivered almonds

Pecans or walnuts

\*Almond, cashew or other nut butter

\*Candied ginger, diced fine or in thin slivers

\*Figs, sliced

\*Maple syrup or maple cream

\*Soy cream cheese

## **Fresh**

Maple syrup or agave (2-3 tablespoons for dip, refill as needed)

Apple slices

Berries of your choice

Orange wedges

Grapes

Cherries

Melon cubes

Cherry tomatoes

Sliced red, green, yellow peppers

Baby carrots

## **Game Anecdote**

### **Matrimonicon**

Games, food and love bring people together. These may be truisms, but they're true truisms. When my partner and I got married, we wanted to bring all these great things into one place at one time, and so Matrimonicon was born.

In my family, gatherings went hand in hand with games and tasty food. Playing Uno or Hand-and-Foot at a Brennan Christmas with my many aunts, uncles and cousins. Sipping luscious whole-milk hot chocolate and every kind of cookie from coconut, caramel and



cocoa-laden seven-layer-bars to nut cups and those dainty pastry cookies with just the right dab of apricot, raspberry or blueberry jam in the middle. Love tastes like that jam.

It's only natural that games would lead me to more love. My now-spouse and I met at our local indie gaming convention, JiffyCon. Made many fast friendships, and more, through JiffyCon. For several years we unofficially celebrated our anniversary at the fall event. When we got around to talking about getting married, the first question was "what games will we play?"

A local grange hall decked with evergreens and twinkle lights for our December wedding perfectly fit the bill—an early wedding on Saturday followed by a long leisurely rest of the weekend playing games and eating good food with family and friends. The challenge of making a day that can entertain dear friends and near family is surely a Gordian knot. Who will sit where? Who will it be close to? What will you feed your guests? Choosing games as a theme was a blessing. A natural ice-breaker. Inviting guests to celebrate in the New England fall countryside a reasonable request. And the food...we had some special concerns there.

When we got married my husband Epidiah had been a vegan for 13 years. Now, as other vegans, some vegetarians and others who observe a specific diet by choice, devotion or necessity—weddings can be a special hell. At the mercy of your host's choices of food, it's a hard thing to watch others party and enjoy a feast which is not made for you. We wanted the food to be welcoming, but for this one day, we wanted to enjoy a vegan feast. How to tell this to my meat and potato loving Irish Catholic family, or to Eppy's un-ironically cheese curd beguiled Midwestern family?

Tapas and brunch were our sword of Alexander. Tasty bites of many tender tofu wedges dredged in garlic, wine and soy gave us energy to dance. Sweet squash, savory white bean aioli dip powered us for passionate, heated role play and board games till the wee hours. And the next day, brunch with fresh peppers, rich avocados, and true New York bagels with tall glasses of orange juice mimosas, powered another rollicking day of fast-paced card games and sweet exploratory game poems.

Our families were pleasantly surprised and enjoyed the variety. One friend, a barbeque devotee and aficionado, gave us the highest compliment, saying that he'd always thought he didn't like vegan food but now realized, he'd never had truly well-prepared vegan food.

Now, to others, vegan delights, too, taste like love. We hope this wedding brunch spread will help you share the love with your gaming group.

## Bio

Emily Care Boss of Black & Green Games is an independent role playing game designer, publisher and game theorist from western Massachusetts. She wrote the *Romance Trilogy: Breaking the Ice, Shooting the Moon* and *Under my Skin*, and has contributed to games and anthologies by Pelgrane Press, Evil Hat Productions, and Ginger Goat. You can find her games and other work at [blackgreengames.com](http://blackgreengames.com).





# Entrées

## Chihuahua Sandwich

by Professor Christopher McGlothlin

2 corn tortilla or tostada shells (because flour shells mark you as a scoundrel and mountebank)

1/2 cup of chili, no beans (because beans yield destruction on a pants-wide scale)

1/2 cup of pimento cheese spread (for it is The Cheese of the Gods--found in a Southern State near you)

2 tablespoons of onion, chopped (because whole ones don't work--Ask me how I know that!)

1 cup of shredded cabbage (because cabbage is for closers; lettuce, for the base and wicked)

Chopped jalapeño peppers, amount determined by your palate and desire to meet your Creator

Warm the chili, either in the Science Oven like me, or in a saucepan like an adorable caveperson. Place tortilla or tostada shells on a large piece of wax paper, for which you will thank me later.

Spread warm chili on one tortilla or tostada shell, then top with onions and jalapeño peppers. Trust this all ends well.

Spread pimento cheese on the other tortilla or tostada shell, then top with cabbage. Like a boss.

Place your hands beneath the wax paper and in an intricate, *2001: A Space Odyssey*-like docking maneuver, put the shells together and prepare to taste the divine. Like a culinary Captain America, use the wax paper as a shield against the delicious, messy chaos that follows.

Yields one. Multiply ingredients in accordance with the number of players expected or length of the *Twilight Zone* marathon you're viewing.

## Game Anecdote

Growing up in the rural Southwest Virginia of the 1970s, my wellspring of imagination was naturally the drive-in movie theater. To a dream-filled child like me, outdoor movies were a true adventure: alone in the back seat of my dad's Plymouth Duster, surrounded by the falling twilight, strangers' cars, dark woods, and shrouded mountains--all inhabited by creatures unknown. There, triple-features of unheralded outré exploitation films unveiled before my enraptured eyes. During the intermission, the mysteries continued as I ventured



through the black night to the concession stand for foods never seen anywhere else: pizza, the ill-defined “orange drink” from the ever-flowing fountain, and vaguely named sugary candies that today would be considered child-welfare menaces.

The whole drive-in experience—the films, the atmosphere—fuels most things I write, and nearly everything I create for roleplaying games. In the Ennie Award winning Emerald City setting book for Mutants & Masterminds, I included a section on the Van Sant Drive-In (named for the favorite ozoner of my youth), and attributed to it the greatest of all concession stand treats, the Chihuahua Sandwich (perfected by Lamesa, Texas’ own Sky-Vue Drive In Theatre). I am very proud of the recognition the book and my co-writers received, and having it bestowed upon the perfect union of my formative years and the hobby and career they led me to was most gratifying indeed.

Sadly, while Emerald City’s Van Sant Drive-In remains forever open and vibrant, the real Vansant Drive-In and too many of its ilk vanished as the land they occupied became too valuable not to sell for other uses. However, imagination never disappears, and while (despite the room in my Hyundai’s trunk) I can’t have you all along to watch the entire Blood Island Trilogy outdoors just as I did at age four, all is not lost.

Yesterday’s outré film is today’s outré DVD or streaming video, and modern televisions are not much smaller than the screen at the Vansant Drive-In. All else that’s needed to fire a gamemaster’s imagination as mine was back in the day is some outré food, and to that end I share the recipe for the one of a kind Chihuahua Sandwich. It spicily sets the proper mood of adventure and the unknown needed for good tabletop gaming, not to mention testing player reflexes as they Save Versus Chili.

I pray the legacy of cheap movies and rich imaginings blesses you as it always has me. In the words of movie critic Joe Bob Briggs, “The drive-in will never die!”

## **Bio**

A freelance writer for Green Ronin Publishing, Professor Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed. is a lifelong Virginian holding degrees in political science, journalism, and education from Radford University. For 21 years, he has taught political science at the collegiate and secondary level. All things in his life are made possible by God and his Awesome Wife Tanith.







## Crockpot Red Beans and Rice

by **Tony Law**

- 16 oz. dry red beans
- 1 large onion, chopped
- garlic, minced (use as much as you want)
- 2 teaspoons creole seasoning
- 2 cups water
- 16 oz. smoked sausage, cut into cubes
- cooked rice

Combine beans, onion, garlic, creole seasoning, and water in a separate bowl or in the crockpot liner. Cover and leave it to soak overnight. (Feel free to put it in a covered bowl overnight to soak; the crockpot liner option just makes it one less dish you have to wash.)

In the morning, add the smoked sausage and enough water to cover all the ingredients. Put the crockpot on Low for 8-10 hours or on High for 4-6 hours.

When ready to eat, cook your choice of rice according to the package directions (I prefer Jasmine rice). Serve the red beans and sausage over the rice.

Enjoy with your favorite hot sauce!



## Game Anecdote

I'm not really "from" anywhere. I'm an Air Force brat born in North Carolina to parents from Alabama and raised all over the world. Life was full of changes, for good and for bad (mostly good). But one thing was always there; good food. I was lucky enough to sample food from all walks of life and with all kinds of people. And I could always rely on my mom to make a delicious meal we happily shared. No matter where we were, no matter how far away my cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. were, we always had each other and good home cooking. It was a constant in my world of very few constants. Because of this, cooking and sharing food with the ones I care about became very important.

Over the years, my home gaming group and the friends I've made in the RPG community have become part of my extended family. We game together; we laugh together; we participate in each other's lives. When we meet each other at conventions, we eat. When we say goodbye to each other, it's usually over dinner. Wherever my friends and I gather, you can usually find food and that's the way it should be.

Recipes like the one I've offered are ones that I grew up with and something I now make for my gaming group. It allows me to share a bit of myself with my friends while we happily slay orcs or rob a bank or whatever crazy make-believe scheme our characters come up with.

So if you've got a group of gaming friends that you love and can't wait to play games with, serve them each a bowl of red beans and rice, be happy that you have them in your life, and try not to roll a one!

## Bio

Tony Law has been involved with RPGs for almost 30 years. He is the former Business Manager for the ENnie Awards and, prior to that, was nominated for an ENnie for the best supplement ever that he co-created; *Fire and Brimstone!* (*The Comprehensive Guide to Lava, Magma and Superheated Rock*).

## Goblin Verde

by Jason Buhlman

*A green chili verde stewed with shredded pork*

Although goblins prefer to make this with stewed horse or dog, pork will do in a pinch.

1 1/2 lbs. pork loin, cut into cubes

1 medium sweet onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, diced

3 tsp. cumin

1/2 tbsp. oregano

2 lbs. of peppers\* (mostly Anaheim or Poblano, but substitute in Jalepeno and Serano for desired heat level)



1/2 cup Tomatillo Verde salsa or 6 roasted tomatillos

2 14.5 oz cans of chicken broth

1 tsp. salt to taste

Red pepper to taste

Tortillas

Cotija cheese

*\*You can substitute 2 28 oz cans of diced green chilies if you do not want to roast them yourself, just make sure to drain the chilies before adding them to the pot.*

In a large stew pot, brown the pork. Once the pork is browned, shred it using forks and return it to the pot. Add the onions and garlic, cooking until tender.

Meanwhile, set the broiler to high and roast half of the peppers until the skin is browned, approximately 5 minutes, turning a few times throughout. Once the peppers are roasted, place them in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap, allowing them to steam for 5 minutes. Once steamed, the skins should peel off with ease. Slice open the peppers and scrape out the seeds. Dice the peppers.

Add the diced peppers and tomatillo salsa to the pork and cover with chicken broth. Add 2 tsp. of cumin and oregano. Bring to a boil before reducing to a simmer. Simmer covered for 2 hours, stirring occasionally. After two hours, the chilies and onion will have turned into a delicious green sauce.

After two hours, roast and dice the remaining peppers as noted above. Add the peppers to the mix along with 1 additional tsp. of cumin. Salt to taste. Add red pepper to adjust the heat level as needed. Simmer for 1 more hour.





Spoon verde pork and peppers into tortillas, cover with sauce and grated cotija cheese.

Pillage nearby village for more pork and peppers, return to step 1.

## Game Anecdote

Whenever my group is out adventuring, the first things I describe are the sights and sounds, but smell and taste can be just as thought provoking. Although I don't always want to work with my player's sense of taste, I always make it a point to mention the food that my monsters are eating or cooking whenever the players enter their lair or village. It's little touches of realism like this that adds to the immersion of the game.

On special occasions, such as the holidays, I like to take this a step further and bring food to the game, themed to the session. A few years back, on Halloween, I ran a game in which my players ended up at a ghastly buffet, forced to feast upon the unwholesome dishes of their undead captors. Naturally, I brought "finger" cookies, chocolate eyeballs, and other assorted "dishes" for them to feast upon as I described each one of the terrible courses being served to their characters.

So, the next time the local village is raided by goblins and all the dogs go missing, stew up this goblin verde\* and make sure everyone gets a taste before the horror of the situation becomes clear.

*\*Only goblins would stew a dog. They are monsters. They hate dogs. Use pork instead.*

## Bio

Jason Bulmahn is the lead designer at Paizo Inc, and the creator of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. His work has won an Origins Award and over twenty-five ENnie Awards. He is also the owner and publisher of Minotaur Games, which is about to release its first card game, *Pirate Loot*.

# Game (Un)Friendly "Grilled" Gruyere & Marinated Onion Sandwiches

by Scott Woodard

Who doesn't love a grilled cheese sandwich? Well this upgraded variant of the old favorite adds marinated onions and stone-ground mustard to make for a delicious, gooey, and decidedly game UN-friendly delight. Keep these well away from your rare Eurogames or your leather-bound, limited edition RPG books!

8 slices sourdough bread

8 ounces Gruyere cheese (or Swiss, if you have trouble finding Gruyere), coarsely grated

1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced

1/4 cup stone-ground mustard

3 tablespoons good quality olive oil



1 tablespoon white wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
4 tablespoons salted butter

In a medium bowl, combine the olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Add the sliced onions and toss to coat them well. Set aside and allow to marinate for an hour at room temperature. Cover only if there is a threat of invasive kitty paws.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Alternatively, you can cook these in a pan or on a griddle, but I prefer the oven method as the sandwiches can be a bit unwieldy.

Lightly butter one side of each slice of bread (or brush with olive oil). Place four slices butter-side down on a baking sheet. Spread an even layer of mustard over the bread and cover with a layer of cheese. Drain the excess liquid from the marinated onions and scatter them evenly over the cheese-topped slices of bread. Distribute the remaining cheese evenly over the onions. Spread mustard over the unbuttered sides of the remaining slices of bread and place these, mustard-side down, on top of your assembled sandwiches.

Bake in preheated oven for 4 to 6 minutes. Keep an eye on things to avoid burning. Flip the sandwiches, and bake an additional 4 to 6 minutes, or until golden brown.

Remove the sandwiches to a cutting board and cut in half. Serve immediately to your hungry horde!

This recipe goes extremely well with a hearty tomato soup or bisque.





## Game Anecdote

### Some Call Them... Foodstuffs

I originally hail from Rochester, New York, the upstate home of Bausch + Lomb, Eastman Kodak, and Jolt Cola (aka “the elixir of the gods”). Back in the ‘80s, gaming sessions at my house (well, my parent’s house) were frequently awash with several two liter bottles of Jolt along with bags of Doritos (Cool Ranch or Jumpin’ Jack), Fire Crackers (“The Original Giant Red Hot Pickled Sausages” featuring “beef lips” as one of the primary ingredients), and somewhat later, countless boxes of the now almost legendary Big Stuf Oreo cookies (13g of fat in each ginormous, individually wrapped, sandwich cookie)!

Fortunately, all of these foodstuffs were available for purchase from the corner shop cum gas station called Time Wise that was (before my friends and I were graced with driver licenses) within walking distance (past (or through) Pleasant Hill Cemetery and down Gillett Road). It didn’t matter if it was light or dark, rain or snow, we would make that journey before rolling a single d20!

While my parents always kept a shockingly well-stocked larder in our home (they still do, even though my brother and I have long-since moved away), healthy options (including the occasional home-cooked meal) always took a back seat to the myriad pre-packaged snack foods that we could purchase with our own hard-earned dollars.

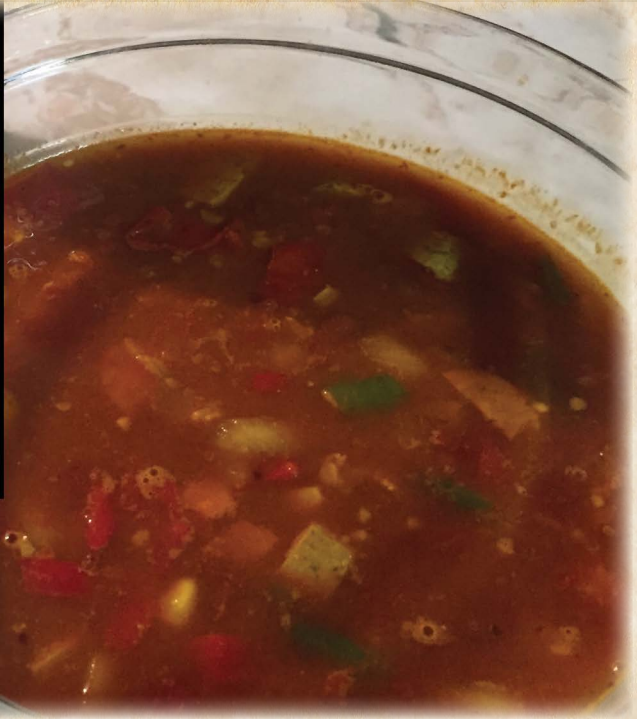
And let’s face it, as game sessions often crept into the wee hours (or even overnight), junk food reigned! Back then, we were playing everything from (in no particular order) *Dungeons & Dragons* (1st and the 2nd editions), *Chill*, *Time Master*, *Star Ace* (we were enormous fans of the output from Pacesetter Games), *Top Secret*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Star Frontiers*, *Ghostbusters*, and numerous other RPGs and board games. Sure we had school during the week, but weekends meant gaming (or filmmaking, but that’s another story altogether). To keep those games rolling along required sustenance in whatever sugary, artificially flavored and colored, nutritionally bankrupt form we could find it in.

Today, decades later, my game sessions are still opportunities to enjoy a variety of snacks, though now, among the bags of chips (and yes, I still have a thing for Cool Ranch Doritos), one will find homemade selections, or (gasp) fresh fruits and vegetables. And while sodas are always available, fine microbrews now fizz in pint glasses replacing the Jolt we once so coveted.

### Bio

Scott Woodard has constructed monsters for movies, won awards for his work as a promo producer for network television, written audio dramas including *Doctor Who* and *Dark Shadows*, and most recently he penned *The Sixth Gun Roleplaying Game*. In his spare time he produces pop culture podcasts for G2V Productions ([www.g2vpodcast.com](http://www.g2vpodcast.com)).





## Hell Soup

by Rob Schwalb

*Serves 2*

1 tablespoon olive oil

3 cloves of garlic

1/2 white onion

1 jalapeño chopped

1 serving of cooked “fake meat substance” chopped up (I prefer Quorn “chicken” cutlets but whatever the hell you want)

2/3 cup frozen soup vegetables

1/3 cup cooked brown rice

1/2 cup cooked beans (red, black, pinto, whatever)

2 cups of water

1 vegetable bouillon cube (seriously, if you can find Better Than Bouillon’s No Chicken Base, use it instead)

2 teaspoons garlic powder

2 teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon white pepper

1 tablespoon of cayenne



2 teaspoons of ghost pepper powder (check out volcano dusts from [www.volcanicpeppers.com](http://www.volcanicpeppers.com))

1 teaspoon Carolina reaper flakes or Trinidad scorpion flakes (use with caution, but if you are a delicate flower, skip this or use a lesser pepper such as a jalapeño or those “red chili flakes” you put on your pizza [but don’t tell me ’cause I’ll mock you])

2 teaspoons hot madras curry powder

2 teaspoons turmeric

2 teaspoons cumin

1+ tablespoon hot chili powder

A healthy squirt of sriracha

Habanero sauce (any brand) to taste

### **Optional Ingredients**

1/2 cup hominy

Trade out the fake meat substance for real meat substance, but cook the damn thing first.

Whatever else you want to throw in.

Step 0: Place a roll of toilet paper in the freezer. You’ll need it 1d6 + 2 hours later when the soup decides to violently leave you.

Step 1: Over medium-high heat, sauté onions and garlic in oil until the onions become translucent.

Step 2: Stir in frozen soup vegetables. Cook for a couple minutes.

Step 3: Toss in the brown rice and beans and cook for another minute.

Step 4: Pour 1/2 cup of water into the mess, add the jalapeño, and drop in the bouillon.

Step 5: Gradually add in the seasonings, stirring each time. In between each, drop in more water until you have used it all.

Step 6: Let simmer for about 10 minutes and then serve with a slice of bread and light beer.

### **Game Anecdote**

The above recipe is probably not appropriate for the gaming table, but it is perfect for meals in between games. Why? Because game night usually means eating a bunch of garbage and you’ll need to make up for your self-hatred by doing a bit of penance if you don’t want to punch your card before your life shift is up. I know, because I’ve been appending “Gamer” to my name for some thirty years and, let me tell you, I’ve seen people put some nasty @#\$\$ in their mouths to feed the hunger. Ever see someone gnaw on a fully cooked, but frozen, chicken nugget? I have.

When I was younger and no more wiser than I am today, it was nothing to suck down a couple bottles of full-strength Coca Cola and chase it with two or three candy bars fetched from the gas station just up the road from my friend Bob’s apartment. He’d run Dark Sun for



about four hours and we'd all take a dinner break. What did we have? Well, it often involved buying Taco Bell. No, no, not a few menu items; we bought every damned thing we could. On the way back, we'd grab a case or two of beer, and return to settle in for four hours of gaming, Schwalb style. By the end, we'd all be full of fast food beans, cheese, beer, candy, soda, more beer, and whatever else we could stuff in our mouths.

Back in the early '90s, I could tolerate that kind of living. After all, I was busting my ass at McDonalds, shoveling meat into buns as fast as I could. I burned as many calories as I took in. But as I grew older, I discovered the excesses of the past had begun to pad my middle until I upgraded my pants and shirt sizes to options suitable to a big boy.

A little over a year ago, after my west coast friends started shedding weight, I realized I didn't want to be a big boy anymore. I wanted to enjoy the last 1d4 + 1 decades left to me, so I started cutting calories, and the big part of the new program was to eat this soup every night for 18 months. I dropped 70 pounds.

As great as this soup is, eating it takes a special kind of constitution, a certain amount of self-destructiveness not everyone possesses. There's not much to the recipe, but it worked for me. So if you want to punish yourself after eating a whole large pizza covered in flesh, cheese, and a light dusting of vegetables during game night, you can make up for your decadence by whipping up a batch of the devil's broth and drinking it down to the last drop.

## Bio

Robert J. Schwalb is a writer, game designer, and game developer best known for his contributions to *Dungeons & Dragons*, *A Song of Ice and Fire Roleplaying*, and *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. Schwalb launched his own imprint in 2014, Schwalb Entertainment, to produce the highly anticipated tabletop RPG, *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, available everywhere Fall 2015.

# Margaret Ann Fowler's Game Night Bowls

## by Jason Morningstar

Enough rice for four bowls (4 cups of steamed rice, uncooked quantities vary)

6 cups uncooked vegetables (Bok choy, green peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, bean sprouts, water chestnuts, mushrooms, jalapenos, green onions, clean out your fridge)

Two 15 oz blocks of extra-firm tofu

A little nutritional yeast (Any health food store will have this. You can also order it from Amazon. It is different from baking yeast and really delicious.)

Soy sauce

Cut tofu into D6 sized cubes (do not try for any other Platonic solids of polyhedral shapes).

Cut up your vegetables into bite-sized chunks.

Work a non-stick skillet up to high heat. Don't add oil, you don't need it.



Throw your tofu dice into the pan. Fry until the sides start to brown, stirring constantly (You may need to do this in two batches).

Sprinkle with soy sauce and toss in a liberal coating of nutritional yeast, sauteing until they are an even toasty brown. Keep 'em moving.

When the tofu dice are done, set them aside.

Throw in the vegetables. Depending on your cooking style, you might add a little water or oil.

Saute the vegetables, starting with the stuff that takes the longest and ending with the most fragile stuff.

When the vegetables come out, you can give the tofu another quick re-heat if you want.

After checking for allergies, serve the vegetables and tofu over rice with sriracha, soy sauce, fish sauce and furikake on the side for your crew to season to taste. Garnish with fresh jalapeno peppers, lime, cilantro, crushed peanuts or whatever you happen to have laying around. A fried egg or avocado on top compliments this meal well.

## Game Anecdote

To be completely honest, my game group usually falls into the pizza-and-takeout hole, given our schedules and the fact that it's awkward for my friends to make a big production out of cooking in my kitchen. We're busy people and our gaming time is precious. But so is the meal we share every week - a time to catch up on our personal lives and share a somewhat intimate bond of fellowship. Joel's a foster parent and always has a new kid and a new story. Kate just started a new job that is weird and full of adventure. John is prepping for a book tour. When it's my turn to cook, I often fall back on fast food as well, but if I have the time I love to make food for my crew. I'm not sure they love it as much as a couple of pies from Pulcinella's, but the care I take is a way to show my love for them. Sharing a meal is a deeply personal experience, and sharing food you've made is even more so.

I think the meal, as a transition from frantic "real life" time to game time, takes place in a wonderful liminal space. Some of my happiest memories come from those moments as we pass a side of slaw or dole out home-made pickles (or, to be fair, greasy fries from Cook Out). We're eating, we're shooting the breeze and catching up, and we're slowly finding our way into a satisfied, happy state of mind that presages a deep dive into a shared world we've built together. Sometimes when everything lines up just right, the meal and the game mesh perfectly - I have really fond memories of a horror game that began with "breakfast for dinner" at the 100th Bomb Group mess at Thorpe Abbots, England, before a high-risk B-17 mission over occupied Europe. We had "square eggs" and all kinds of period-appropriate slop, with a muted big band soundtrack in the background, and it was amazing. The game began well before the game began.





This recipe has been adapted over time, through sheer laziness, from the wonderful Golden Bowl that is served at a place called The Grit in Athens, Georgia. I can't recommend The Grit enough - the food there is deeply, aggressively delicious. A vegetarian restaurant, The Grit's food is decadent and delicious enough to meet the jaded palate of any carnivore. These bowls are a quick-and-dirty reflection of their Golden Bowl masterpiece, but they get the job done. The nutritional yeast adds a wonderful buttery texture to the tofu, almost like breading, and the dice are delicious popped straight out of the skillet into your mouth. When combined with a steaming pile of vegetables over rice, it's a complete, simple meal that satisfies everyone - it's vegetarian (or can be), it's fast, you can throw in anything you have laying around, your fussy friends can season it to taste, and it all-around kicks ass in terms of health and ease of preparation. I hope you enjoy it, too!

## Bio

Jason Morningstar is a game designer who lives in Durham, North Carolina, USA. Best known for his game *Fiasco*, which earned him his second Diana Jones Award for Gaming Excellence, Jason's game design credits include *The Shab Al-Hiri Roach*, *Grey Ranks*, *Durance*, and many other games. His most recent roleplaying game is *Night Witches*. In addition to design, Jason has written extensively on game-related topics. You can find him at [www.bullypulpitgames.com](http://www.bullypulpitgames.com).

# Slow Cooker Ratatouille

by Marsha White

2 pounds eggplant, cut into 1/2 inch pieces\*

3 zucchini (about 8 oz apiece), quartered lengthwise and cut into 1 inch pieces

3 red bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/2 inch pieces\*\*

3 medium-sized onions, roughly chopped

6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons herbes de Provence\*\*\*

3 fresh tomatoes, peeled, diced, and drained (or 1 28-oz. can of diced tomatoes, drained)

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

salt and pepper

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1/4 cup freshly-grated Parmesano-Reggiano cheese

1/4 cup chopped fresh basil

OPTIONAL: Feta cheese crumbles, polenta

*\*A note about eggplant: be sure to remove any parts of the eggplant that are particularly seedy and brown. Alternatively, you can just use Japanese eggplants, which are smaller and don't have to be peeled.*



*\*I've substituted 1 red, 1 yellow, and 1 green bell pepper with success. Yellow and red bell peppers are sweeter than green, plus many folks don't like the taste of green peppers, so if you decide to go this route you might consider avoiding green bell peppers and just using red and yellow.*

*\*\*\*If you don't have herbes de Provence, you can substitute 1 teaspoon each of dried rosemary and dried thyme.*

Grease your slow cooker with cooking spray.

Position your oven rack about four inches from the broiler element, and heat your broiler. If you have different heat settings available on your broiler, set it to medium.

Take two jelly roll pans (or rimmed baking sheets), and line them with aluminum. Put your chopped vegetables (the eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers, and onions), olive oil, garlic, and herbes de Provence into a sizable bowl and toss until combined.

Divide your vegetables evenly onto each pan and spread them into a single layer. Broil until the vegetables begin to brown, approximately ten minutes—and note that if your oven has only one broil setting, it's usually pretty hot and so may take only six or seven minutes! Watch your vegetables closely! I find it's best to broil one pan at a time, just to make it easier to keep an eye on things.

As your vegetables broil, turn them once or twice with a spatula so that they cook evenly. Once they're done, drop them in your slow cooker and add your tomatoes.

Stir the flour, 2 1/2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper into the vegetables in your slow cooker. Cover and cook on the Low setting until they're tender—roughly 4 hours.

Stir in balsamic vinegar, Parmesan-Reggiano, and basil. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper, and serve with a crusty bread.

To step up your game with this dish, serve the ratatouille over polenta (which can be store-bought or easily made at home). You can also sprinkle feta cheese crumbles on top of the veggies.

**RECOMMENDED WINE:** A great “rules-cheat” for matching wine to dishes is to find a wine that comes from the same region as the dish. Since ratatouille is a Provençale (think Mediterranean) dish, look for wines that come from Provence or the Rhône region. A Côtes du Rhône using Grenache and/or Syrah grapes is lovely if you like red wines. If not, go for a white Côtes du Rhône instead, and look for Grenache Blanc.

## Game Anecdote

The RPG Buffet was founded in 2004 to allow our group of gamers to play a variety of roleplaying games. Seven members, rotating game master duties, run a one-shot adventure of the role-playing game of their choice. We meet once a month to play and to eat a home-cooked meal.

During our first year, meals were simple—fend for yourself. Then one evening, as our Special Guest GM Mark Kinney (founder of the *All Games Considered* podcast) was running *Feng Shui*, John exclaimed “We should have had Chinese for supper!”

Eyebrows shot up around the table. The next month we asked each other: could we make our meals fit the games? What sort of meal “goes” with *Dungeons and Dragons*? With



*Spycraft 2.0: With All Flesh Must Be Eaten?* It became a matter of pride to figure out what the heck we were going to serve for a given RPG.

The end result is that our format has not only allowed members to learn how to game master, but to cook, too. Kae joined not knowing how to GM and literally not knowing how to boil water. Since then, she's given the Buffet our proudest moment.

The game: *Dark Ages: Vampire*. The gamemaster: Kae. The adventure Kae wrote was set in France, so she decreed that we'd have French food for supper. Then she decided to make ratatouille.

For those of you unfamiliar with French cuisine, ratatouille is a classic summer vegetable stew. It's delicious, and usually very easy to make. Usually.

Kae jumped on the Internet to search for a recipe. She immediately found the recipe that Pixar posted on the web site for their movie *Ratatouille*. She printed it, bought the veggies, and set to work.

What she didn't know is that Pixar's recipe was commissioned from Thomas Keller, who is one of the world's greatest haute cuisine chefs. His restaurant, French Laundry, has a three-star Michelin rating and is ranked among the best restaurants in the world. And that ratatouille recipe? Is what he serves at French Laundry. It is not a simple recipe.

Kae slaved over that dish. She peeled the skin off the tomatoes. She made not one but two sauces (a piperade and a vinaigrette). She sliced veggies paper-thin and fanned them out accordion-style in the dish. She told her husband "No wonder French people are thin, if this is what they do just to cook vegetables!"

Kae arrived at the game hating French food, the French, and—by that point—life in general. The vampires that night were particularly vicious. But that ratatouille? Was indescribably fantastic. To this day, we talk about how good it was. But we can't convince her to make it again.

Incidentally, *Spycraft 2.0* got cocktail party food (because James Bond always seems to wind up at a cocktail party). *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* was pork ribs, because the people who research these things say that the taste of human flesh most resembles...pork. And *D&D?* Homemade gourmet pizza, of course.

## Bio

MARSHA WHITE is the co-host and News Producer for the *All Games Considered* podcast, a two-time ENnie™ Award-winning show about tabletop games. She is also the co-founder of the RPG Buffet, an informal RPG group that plays RPGs with a different "themed" home-cooked meals to match the game.



RPGBuffet





## Smoked BBQ Rib Sandwich

by Kevin Kulp

Time to completely forget the McRib. This barbecue baby back rib sandwich on toasted French bread is delicious, and is one of the best (and easiest) introductions to making slow-smoked barbecue yourself. We smoke the meat during the weekend, pull it out on game night, and stuff ourselves silly before settling in to get thrashed by monsters. If you're going to go up against foes way above your experience level, you might as well do so while well-fed.

Why learn to smoke meat? In a lot of ways, slow-smoked BBQ takes less work than traditional cooking. Total time to table is 6 hours (and worth it!), but actual time that you're doing anything? 15 min to prep the ribs, 10 min to set up and light your kettle grill, 5 min to foil-wrap the meat after two hours, and 30 min to get them onto the table. As long as you make sure you're keeping a consistent temperature of 225-250 inside the grill, you can oversee the process from the gaming table. There's no micro-managing, like you'd need on a hotter grill to stop things from burning.

Smoking meat even has something in common with gaming: any hobby where you can produce awesomeness while sitting around laughing with a beer in one hand is a good hobby.

### Gear

Kettle grill (preferably charcoal)

Charcoal briquettes or chunks



Several chunks of hardwood (such as hickory or apple)

Tinfoil

Electronic thermometer (to double-check the air temperature inside the kettle grill)

## Ingredients

Baby back pork ribs (1 or more racks)

French bread

Yellow mustard

Brown sugar

BBQ Rub (Penzeys is a good source [Their BBQ 3000], or Google recipes)

Your favorite BBQ sauce (either purchased, or Google recipes)

1. Get yourself some baby-back ribs; I get mine at the local warehouse store. Rinse them and, with your fingers, strip off the silver-skin membrane from their back. (Google “ribs removing membrane” for detailed instructions of how to do so.)

2. Coat the ribs with simple yellow mustard; it helps the rub stick.

3. Once you have, rub the ribs on both sides with dry rub. You can buy rub pre-mixed in your local grocery, probably near the spices or barbecue sauces, but it may be more fun to make your own. The website [amazingribs.com](http://amazingribs.com) has a fine recipe named “Memphis Dust” that you can make yourself.

4. Let the ribs sit while you start up your kettle grill (or smoker); you’ll need 5-6 hours of fuel, so perhaps 10 lbs of charcoal. In a kettle grill, build the fire on only one side and put an aluminum pan with water in it on the other side; you’ll smoke the ribs indirectly, over the pan. If you have room, you’ll save annoyance and time by using the Minion Method: build a bed of unlit coals and then put half a chimney of lit coals on top. The lit coals slowly burn down and light the unlit coals, giving you sustained heat for hours.

5. Put the meat on your grill so that it isn’t directly above the hot coals. Slow smoke at about 225° to 250° for 2 hours.

6. At the 2 hour mark wrap the ribs securely in tinfoil, adding in a little more rub and some brown sugar. Slather the ribs with some sauce before you close them up.

Smoke them for another 3 hours, but check them after 2 hours in case your grill is running hotter than 225°. You’ll know they’re done when the bones easily slide out of the meat. Unlike normal ribs, you want the meat literally falling off the bones -- that’s why it’s handy to have them already in foil.

7. Once they’re off the grill, vent the tinfoil and let the meat rest for half an hour. All that awesome juice in the tinfoil? Save it. Dump it into a 2-cup measure, stick it in the freezer until the fat hardens, then scrape off and toss the fat. The rest is pure porky goodness that you can mix back into the meat before you’re done; the gel will liquefy when heated and then get reabsorbed by the meat.

8. Strip out the bones, along with any gristle you run across. There won’t be much. Build your own porcine Stonehenge out of the bones. Put LEGO<sup>TM</sup> figurines underneath it. You know you want to.



9. You'll be salivating at this point. Chop the rib meat roughly, then add more sauce and the previously reserved meat juice. It will look amazing and taste better.

I'll recommend making your own sauce, but hey, always go with what you love.

10. Finally, you'll need a bun. You can literally slice French bread in half, toast it over your coals, and add butter and garlic; or you can use high-quality rolls; or even make sliders with small buns. Any of these will be great. Add pickles or coleslaw on top of the meat in the sandwich; the vinegar is a perfect counterpoint to the richness of the pork. Then devour, and enjoy.

11. Wallow in joy.

## Game Anecdote

This story isn't barbecue-related – although I did once play a psionic halfling cook who fought with a frying pan and who picked his abilities based on what would allow him to stalk and cook (mostly) non-sentient monsters – and instead involves cocoa. Very, very dangerous cocoa.

Our heroes had slowly uncovered a conspiracy of a few powerful leaders who were acting quite strangely, doing the mysterious bidding of someone else. They refused to admit it when confronted. This wasn't a matter of a kidnapped child or nervous greed; they were flat-out terrified of something more painful than their life, and not a one wanted to talk about it.

Concerted intimidation and wheedling finally broke the secret out of one of them. He was addicted to a particular type of cocoa. It was delicious, magical, addictive with a single sip, and withdrawal from the substance hidden in the cocoa was more painful than could be imagined. Unfortunately, that was the same cocoa powder my own half-orc rogue had accidentally tasted the day before. Whoops? Hooked ourselves and determined to free other people being blackmailed, we attempted to find a cure by working our way up the chain of command to the sly, sniveling noble behind the blackmail scheme. He invited us in, secure that we could prove nothing, and even had the gall of offering us (untainted) cocoa during the meeting.

I rolled a d20, wrote down a number, and wrote a note to the DM. I folded it over and said "please don't open this yet."

"What is it?" he asked.

"I'll tell you in a minute. My rogue just successfully did something, but I don't want you to know yet." He shrugged, took the note, and kept roleplaying the noble. "I'm *sure* I don't know what you're talking about," the noble said, smiling condescendingly. "There's no cure because there's no drug. Now, if you'll see yourselves out?"

"You better hope there's a cure," my rogue said. The noble raised an eyebrow. "Because you're addicted yourself."

"I'm... what?" asked the noble.

"Open the note," I told the DM, and there I'd written down, *Pick Pockets roll of 22. I slip some of the addictive cocoa into the noble's own cocoa.* The DM spluttered briefly, laughed long and hard, and slipped back into character to tell us that there wasn't actually a cure he knew of after all – while around the table we cheered and clinked glasses. If we were hooked, at least we had a completely despicable ally helping us find the cure.



Two years into the campaign and it was only the second or third time my high Pick Pockets skill was useful, but man, did it pay off here. The only problem was when the DM actually made cocoa for us players later in evening. I'm not sure any of us drank it. Some times, it just plain pays to be suspicious.

## **Bio**

Kevin Kulp is a Boston-based shiftwork consultant, writer, game designer, storyteller & BBQ guy. Luckily, most of those tie together. His latest game is *TimeWatch*, an investigative time travel game about time cops fixing sabotaged history, published in 2015 by Pelgrane Press.

# Southern BBQ Salmon

by Christopher Helton

This dish is a popular one at holidays and family gatherings in the summer time. When I first describe it to people as being like “fish candy,” they have their reservations, but those go away when they taste it. The salmon disappears fast from the food table, after it comes out!

The prep time is a little longer than some recipes: it takes two days to prepare this dish. The evening before you put the dry rub onto the salmon and put it (covered with foil) into your refrigerator overnight. The next morning you cover the fish with the BBQ and let it marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours (3-4 hours is best). If you don't want to make your own BBQ sauce from scratch, a bottle of your favorite store bought works the best. I suggest a sweeter sauce (although you can punch it up with some spiciness) because it works better with the salmon than a tangy or smoky BBQ sauce.

The important thing to remember is that this dish is grilled, so you need a low flame and you will want to cook it for a few hours, letting the sauces and the fish mingle as it cooks. Salmon should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Always measure temperature at the thickest part of the fish. I suggest about three hours of cooking.

8-12 pound salmon fillet

### **Dry Rub Ingredients:**

2 tablespoons garlic powder

2 tablespoons onion powder

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon allspice

1 teaspoon cinnamon (I like a Vietnamese cinnamon when I can get it)

salt and pepper to taste



### **BBQ Sauce Ingredients:**

2 cups tomato ketchup

1/3 cup Dijon or stone ground mustard

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1/2 cup brown sugar

1-2 teaspoons red chili flakes or 1 teaspoon Sriracha

1 teaspoon chopped/crushed garlic

1 teaspoon anchovy paste

salt and pepper to taste

Mix all the dry rub ingredients together in a bowl, and rub into the salmon's meat, being sure to cover the entire fillet with the dry rub mixture. Do this the night before you are going to make the dish, wrap it in foil and place it in the refrigerator on a plate. You won't need to do anything else with it.

The next morning mix the wet ingredients in a bowl. Always taste your sauces before using them, and make sure that you don't need anything else. If it seems too salty from the anchovy paste, try adding a little more ketchup to the mix. I usually add a little more mustard to mine because I like the tang of it. At least 2 hours before cooking, cover the salmon fillet with the BBQ sauce and put it back into the refrigerator.

Put the salmon on a single sheet of non-stick foil, covering it with either olive oil or a cooking spray. Put the salmon on the grill on the foil. You probably will want to pull up the sides of the foil to help catch drippings.

In preparing your grill, you'll want the temperature somewhere around 250-275 degrees Fahrenheit. It will probably take about 18-20 minutes per pound of salmon, but keep an eye on it because even with all the sauce, you don't want to overcook. When the salmon starts pulling away from the skin, it is about ready.

I serve the salmon by placing the foil on a serving tray of some sort (the trays that you get for football tailgating parties are usually an ideal size for a fillet of salmon of this size, and you can find them for cheap).

### **Game Anecdote**

For me, gaming is a highly social activity. The game itself almost takes a secondary place to the shared space of spending time with my friends. We come together and share the experience of forming a story and building a world for our shared adventures. You'll notice that I used "share" a lot in those previous sentences, but that is because I think it is important to emphasize that this is a shared experience. We bring our individual perspectives and skills to creating something that shows our individual interests, but at the same time creates something that wouldn't





have happened without those individual pieces. Much like a recipe. A-ha! The rules to a roleplaying game is much like a cookbook, showing us where to start, but without the individual ingredients that each member of the gaming group brings there would be no depth, or taste, to that recipe. One player brings the spicy peppers. Another player brings the salt. Yet another player brings the protein. All of these are combined in the GM's pot, and the group applies the heat. Only then do you have a successful game, and a gaming group that is having a good time together.

## Bio

Christopher Helton started gaming at the age of 11, in 1979. With the fateful words, "Hey, have you heard of this game called *Dungeons & Dragons*?" his life was never the same. Fast forward to 2003 (because college life made everything a blur in between those two years) and he started the long-running Dorkland! blog (<http://dorkland.blogspot.com>). Writing about gaming, comics, music and other forms of popular culture at the blog lead to his writing partnership with Jonathan Thompson, and eventually becoming Co-Publisher at Battlefield Press, Inc. Fast forwarding again, to 2014, and he started writing about comics, conventions, and tabletop gaming for the popular Bleeding Cool website, and in 2015 moved to ENWorld. A life-long love for cooking led to his contribution of a recipe to this present volume. He also dislikes writing in the third person.

# Spiced Stuffed Cabbage

by Tracy Barnett

(Adapted from *The America's Test Kitchen Family Cookbook, Revised Edition*)

- 1 head (2 pounds) of green cabbage, cored
- 1/4 cup long-grain white rice
- 2 medium onions
- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef (80% lean)
- 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 28-ounce can tomato puree
- 2 cups water
- 6 tablespoons brown sugar (light)
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 8 whole cloves (or more, up to 16 if you like things spicier)
- 12 small gingersnaps (3 ounces)
- 1/2 cup raisins (optional, but encouraged)
- salt & pepper to taste

Bring 4 quarts of water and 1 tablespoon of salt to a boil in a large pot. Add the cored cabbage and boil until the outside leaves are just starting to wilt (about 3 minutes). Remove the outer leaves with tongs and transfer to a colander to cool. Repeat until you have 20 leaves cooling. Remove the rest of the cabbage and set it aside. Keep the water.





Bring the cabbage water back to a boil and cook the rice for about 13 minutes. It should be tender. Drain the rice, rinse it to cool it, and move it to a medium bowl. Grate one of the onions on the large holes of a grater. Add it to the rice along with the beef,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of pepper.

Take the cabbage leaves and trim any tough ribs from them. Tightly roll 2 tablespoons of the rice-beef mixture into each leaf. You'll have about 18 rolls. Shred the rest of the cabbage, both the leftover leaves, and the cored head you set aside.

Scatter about half of the shredded cabbage in a large Dutch oven or high-sided 13-inch skillet. Place the cabbage rolls, seam-side down, on top of the shredded cabbage. Place them tightly to make sure they don't unroll. (Some will unroll anyway, despite your best efforts.) Sprinkle the rest of the shredded cabbage on top.

Combine the diced tomatoes (with their juice), the tomato puree, 2 cups of water, 3 tablespoons of brown sugar, the lemon juice, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt. Pour the mixture over the cabbage.

Peel the other onion and stick the cloves in it (pointy end goes in the onion). Use your judgement with the cloves. 8 cloves will give you a little clove flavor. If you like that spiciness, add more cloves. Put the studded onion in the middle of the tomato mixture, and bring the whole thing to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Take the lid off and take out the clove-onion. Crush up the gingersnaps and sprinkle them on top, along with the raisins (if you're using them). Shake the pot gently to mix everything without disturbing the cabbage rolls. Simmer for another hour or so until the sauce starts to thicken.



To serve them, gently remove the rolls to the serving plates using a slotted spoon or tongs. Add the rest of the brown sugar to the sauce in the pan, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon the sauce over the served roll and keep some extra for people who like their rolls extra saucy.

## Game Anecdote

Food and gaming go together really well. I mean, you're sitting at a table or in a living room for four or more hours. You're bound to cross over a mealtime. We all know the stories of Cheetos-fingers on someone else's dice, or pizza grease on a character sheet.

When I was younger, just out of college and doing my first real gaming, we would cook meals to go along with the game. It wasn't always anything fancy, but there was something welcoming about the food. It reminded me that I wasn't just playing a game, but that I was hanging out with friends.

When holidays would come around, the meals would get themed to match, just like our adventures would. We'd have spooky punch and snacks to go along with our spooky adventures, and when we fought Peppermint Gnomes near Santa's Workshop, it'd be eggnog and cookies.

One of my favorite gaming moments was an all-day-Saturday session of *Pathfinder* with my gaming group in my hometown, mostly family members. We got to the house at 8:30am, made eggs, bacon, and pancakes for breakfast (I was in charge of the pancakes, even while I was running combat; I still think that my bugbears went down too easily), then we moved on to the sandwiches. We'd all brought lunchmeat and cheese, so that part was easy. At around 4pm, we put a lasagna in the oven and kept rolling.

As I've gotten older and the schedules of the people I'd game with would change, or our lives would change, we began having food with the gaming sessions less and less. We'd each grab food individually before the session, or maybe a few of us would go in together for pizza, but it wasn't like it was before.



When I got asked to contribute to this book, I was at a bit of a loss, for that very reason. It's been more than five years since the all-day gaming session I mentioned above, and the group I game with now had never really done a full meal-type thing with game. But I remembered the sessions I'd had before, and I wanted to bring back some of that feeling.

So many of our memories are connected to tastes, and especially, smells. I brought over a pan of cabbage rolls, and a container of cream potatoes with dill. The host made Scandinavian shortbread-style cookies, and we paired all of that with an Oktoberfest-style beer, because that's as close as we could figure to the kind of beer that Vikings would have drunk.

The session of *Iron Edda* that I ran that night was a good one. We ate food, had drinks, and went through a series of challenges to elect a new Jarl for the characters' holdfast. Aside from everyone enjoying



the food and the game together, I'd like to think that there was a little something else to remember because we had tastes in our mouths and smells in our noses that we can link back to that night.

It had been a while since we'd had food together with game like that. It definitely won't be long before it happens again.

## **Bio**

Found one day on the side of a lonely road, clutching a broken laptop and a battered copy of the *2nd Edition DMG*, Tracy writes and develops as the second half of Exploding Rogue Studios. Tracy's first game, *School Daze*, won a Judge's Spotlight ENnie in 2013. In 2014, Tracy pioneered the Swedish Duck school of martial arts training, quickly adopted by the Secret Global Police. You can find Tracy at @TheOtherTracy. There is no such thing as the Secret Global Police.

# **“You All Meet at the Tavern” Quick Beef Stew**

**by Clint Black**

“You all meet in a tavern” has sadly become a scorned cliché in roleplaying games. Personally, I see it more as a universal tool for game masters akin to a sonic screwdriver which is all too often left to gather dust in the toolbox. What more logical place for a disparate group of heroes, rogues, or scoundrels to gather than a tavern, nightclub, or cantina. Sure, it's an easy shortcut, but if it gets us to the action and the story faster, there's no reason not to take it.

Similarly, this recipe is a “shortcut.” It's a simple way to create a hearty stew in less than an hour. Often, that's all the time we have before our friends show up with an empty stomach and full dice pouch. And much like, “You all meet in a tavern,” it allows everyone to get into the game and start having fun that much faster.

4 15 oz. packages of ready to eat microwavable Roast Beef with Au Jus

1 28 oz. package of frozen Potatoes O'Brien

2 12 oz. packages of frozen peas and carrots

1 packet of Beef Stew seasoning (preferably Salt Free or Low Sodium)

3 cups of water

Note: Frozen vegetables are used because they have no added salt or sodium and the premade Roast Beef has enough for the entire recipe. Canned vegetables can be substituted if they have no salt added. Drain well before adding.

In a large pot, add 3 cups of water, the Potatoes O'Brien, and the peas and carrots. Put on high heat. When it begins to boil, reduce the heat to medium-low.

Meanwhile, heat the roast beef in the microwave according to the instructions but reducing the time to 3 minutes (the goal is to make it easier to pour, not fully cook it).



Add the contents of each roast beef package as they come out of the microwave.

Stir in the package of beef stew seasoning.

Cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook for another 20 minutes (use this time to prep bowls, spoons, or anything else you need for game night).

Serve (preferably with a thick slice of brown Irish bread)

## Bonus Recipe! “Do Your Prep” Irish Bread

Using shortcuts like “You all meet in a tavern” are just one way to make the game master’s job easier, but nothing beats putting a little time into preparing for the game the day before. This bread is a perfect complement to the stew above and also a great example of prepping. Since it requires time to rest, make it the day before the game and slice it while your stew is simmering.

3 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup whole-wheat flour

1 cup plus 1 tbs. quick oats

1 1/2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. fine salt

2 cups buttermilk

4 tbs. (1/2 stick) melted unsalted butter (preferably Irish or European butter)

1/2 cup sorghum syrup

Note: If you don’t have sorghum syrup, you can substitute with 1/4 cup honey and 1/4 cup molasses.

Place a rack in the middle of your oven and preheat to 400 degrees F.

On a baking sheet, place a silicon mat, non-stick aluminum foil, or dust lightly with AP flour.

In a large mixing bowl, add the flours, one cup of the oats, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Whisk to combine and break up any lumps.

Add the buttermilk, melted butter, and sorghum syrup. Using a spatula or your hands (they’re about to get sticky anyway) mix until almost completely combined.

Using your hands, knead the dough in the bowl for 1-2 minutes. It will be sticky, but the goal is to insure everything is incorporated.

Turn the dough out onto your baking pan and form into a flattened dome around 2” thick in the middle.

Using a sharp knife, slice an “X” into the top of the dough about 1/2” deep (run the knife under hot water before each cut to make it easier).

Sprinkle the remaining tablespoon of quick oats across the top of the dough.





Bake for 35-40 minutes or until the internal temperature reads 190-200 degrees F. The bread should make a hollow sound when tapped.

Remove from the oven and cool for at least 2 hours on a wire rack. If making the day before, cover with a clean towel (or paper towels) to avoid any condensation.

Slice and enjoy with stew. You can also mix 1/4 cup of sorghum syrup with 1/2 stick of softened butter to make sorghum butter to spread on the bread.

## Game Anecdote

Food and gaming have been so intrinsically intertwined among my friends we don't consider any character sheet "real" until something has been spilled on it. Even in game food and drinks take on significance. In *Shadowrun*, we created names and descriptions of drinks available at the bars—nothing proved how tough you were like drinking an Orange Orc Surprise. In a modern game of amnesia-induced assassins, our only clue was a phone number to a pizza restaurant (don't order "the Special"). But since I think flaws make characters more interesting, I'm going to talk about a time when one of my own character's imperfections made the game more memorable.

His name was Nicodemus Bloodrune. He was the privileged spoiled son of a rich noble family, and in his backstory, he lost everything. His parents were killed, his family's title stripped, and their wealth and business taken away. While Nicodemus was forced to take up an adventurer's life in the quest to regain his wealth and status, he didn't lose his innate sense of superiority and snobbishness.

The group's first adventures took place in and around the city, but eventually, they required a more long-term trip into the wilderness, a first for Nicodemus. With his typical



arrogance, he refused the assistance of the character in the group with experience in such travel and instead headed off on his own to purchase supplies.

At the store, he insisted on the best of everything. A tent? Only the largest would do though he never planned on sharing. A bedroll? He asked if they came in silk. And then they came to the matter of food.

Trail rations are fairly ubiquitous among game settings and systems, consisting of some form of dried and preserved food providing a day's worth of nutrition with a distinct lack of taste and flair and certainly no options for a superior version...or so my game master thought.

The store owner asked how long we would be gone and proceeded to put two packs of trail rations on the counter. Nicodemus looked down at them suspiciously.

“What’s this?” he asked.

“Trail rations, sir. Food for your trip.”

“Yes, I know what trail rations are,” Nicodemus replied condescendingly to cover his own ignorance. “I just wondered why you brought me these trail rations when I obviously want *fresh* trail rations.”

It’s a testament to my GM that with barely a pause he said, “Of course, sir, but the fresh ones do cost ten times as much.”

Looking down his nose, Nicodemus paused momentarily then countered with, “I’ll pay five times and not a penny more.”

From that point forward, “*fresh* trail rations” became a staple of the campaign and the iconic exemplification of the arrogance, ignorance, and substance (or lack thereof) of Nicodemus Bloodrune.

## **Bio**

Clint Black is Savage Worlds Core Rules Brand Manager for Pinnacle Entertainment Group with more than 50 published titles and multiple ENnie awards to his credit. He and wife Jodi Black own online- and convention-only retail store, Beautiful Brains Books and Games, and a game table furniture company, [Carolina Game Tables](#). He’s also a dad and “foodie,” and *Dinner and Dice, a Gaming Cookbook*, was his idea.



# Desserts



## Anzac Biscuits

by Alex Flagg

*Makes 15–20 cookies*

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 2/3 cup unsweetened dried coconut
- 3/4 cup rolled oats
- 4 tbsp. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp. dark Karo or corn syrup
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tbsp. boiling water

Grease a metal cookie sheet or tray with butter and put it in the refrigerator to cool. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, mix flour, sugar, coconut, and rolled oats. Set aside.



Add the Karo syrup and butter to a small bowl and heat in the microwave until melted together, about 30 to 60 seconds. Add the boiling water to a glass then stir in the baking soda until dissolved. Pour the baking soda water into the butter and syrup mixture and stir.

Stir wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until well mixed and there are no dry patches left.

Using a greased tablespoon or other rounded spoon, make a packed ball of dough and place it on the cold greased pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until golden. Remove the biscuits from the cookie sheet and place on a rack to cool, and enjoy!

## Game Anecdote

I discovered the Anzac biscuit on my first trip to New Zealand in 2006. Originally created during World War I as a treat to send to Australian and Kiwi soldiers fighting in Europe, the Anzac (acronym for “Australian and New Zealand Army Corps”) was a hard cookie loaded with oats and coconut that could survive the month-long sea voyage to the front from down under. Today, their tough exterior and hearty ingredients makes them popular as trail food for hikers in addition to a classic treat. My wife and I enjoyed many an Anzac on both our trips circumnavigating the Land of the Long White Cloud, and I knew I’d have to bring the recipe home to share with friends and family.

This recipe is based on the *Edmonds’* cookbook recipe (basically, the Kiwi *Betty Crocker*), with modifications for ingredients and cooking in the Northern Hemisphere. Unlike the hard biscuits you’ll find in stores, these bad boys turn out something like the love child of an oatmeal cookie and a macaroon, with a crisp exterior, caramel sweetness, chewy middle, and finished off with the tang of coconut.

These won’t last long with a hungry game group, so I **highly** recommend a double batch!

## Bio

Alex Flagg is a 15-year veteran of the RPG industry and co-owner and lead designer at Crafty Games, publisher of *Spycraft*, *Fantasy Craft*, *Little Wizards*, and Brandon Sanderson’s *Mistborn Adventure Game*. He resides in Portland, Oregon, with his wife, son, dog, and thousands of pewter miniatures.

# Aunt Beth’s Peanut Butter Swirl Bars

by Katie Tower

12oz. package of chocolate chips

1/2 cup of peanut butter (Also works GREAT with cashew butter!)

1/3 cup of softened butter

3/4 cup of brown sugar

3/4 cup of sugar

1/4 tsp salt

2 eggs



2 tsp vanilla  
1 cup flour  
1 tsp baking powder

Cream together peanut butter, butter, brown sugar, and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla. Blend in flour, baking powder and salt.

Spread in greased 9x13 pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips over top.

Place in 350 degree oven for 3 minutes. Remove and run a knife through to marbleize the chocolate chips. Return to oven and bake for 25-30 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

## Game Anecdote

I began gaming back in 1997.

It started out as a surprise to my then-boyfriend, Sechin. My group of friends was playing *Vampire: The Masquerade* at the time. My first character was a Ventrue...but I digress. Over the years, we've played many different types of games: *Hollow Earth Expedition*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Werewolf*, *Mage*, and many others. When we gather, we always plan a meal. Usually, it's very simple and quick to prepare—we want to be able to keep the game going.

With food allergies among my group, we have to be mindful of what we make. In the summer, we love to barbecue salmon and fresh veggies. The winter brings comfort food of spaghetti and chicken with rice. Wine is also a main part of our evening—with our game, with our food, with our laughter!

We also love to have dessert. My friend is a great chef and baker and loves to make fruit crumble. Usually, it's with apples, but sometimes she makes it with fresh plums from the plum tree in her backyard. When it's my turn for dessert, I turn to Peanut Butter Swirl Bars, chocolate cake, or angel food cake. This recipe is great to make ahead and take along with you if you're playing at someone else's house—or to make at your own house, so it's nice and warm from the oven right after dinner!

## Bio

Katie and Sechin Tower live in Washington State. They mainly play “DnD”—but he writes and she helps sell the game *Hollow Earth Expedition*, developed by Jeff Combos. They are owned by a black cat named Ninja.







## Bourbon Bread Pudding

by Hans Cummings

This bread pudding tastes like a fresh sticky bun drenched in butter and bourbon. Of course, you should use your favorite drinking bourbon when making this. If you don't have bourbon, you can omit it, but it really is better with booze.

3 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened

A mix of 1¼ pounds dry Challah and Cinnamon-Raisin bread, preferably unsliced before you buy it\*. Cut both types of bread into one-inch cubes.

1/2 cup raisins

3 large eggs

4 cups whole milk

2 cups sugar

2 tbsp. vanilla extract

2 oz. bourbon

1 tsp ground cinnamon

Approximately 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg

Spread the butter over a 13" x 9" casserole dish, preferably glass or stoneware. Arrange the cubes of bread evenly in the dish, interspersing the raisins.



Using a large mixing bowl, whisk the eggs until frothy, and then add in the milk, sugar, bourbon, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Mix well.

Pour the liquid egg mixture over the bread and raisins, and let stand for 1 hour. Press down with a spatula now and then to wet the tops of the bread.

While the bread is soaking, preheat the oven to 375°F. If you like, you can grate some fresh nutmeg over the top of the dish before baking.

Bake the pudding until the top is puffed and lightly browned, about 1 hour. Top with more fresh grated nutmeg to taste. Cool on a rack for 30 to 60 minutes, and then cut into squares and serve. I recommend topping with the caramel sauce.

Leftover pudding will keep for several days in the refrigerator and can be reheated in a 300°F oven for 15 minutes or in a microwave for 20-30 seconds.

*\* Any firm, yeast-risen, dry bread, such as Italian or French bread will work. Avoid plain or high-fiber sandwich breads; they tend not to hold the liquid as well and will often disintegrate. The important thing is to make sure your bread is dry; stale bread is perfect for this. If you only have fresh bread, you can dry it in a low oven for a few hours. Dry bread absorbs the liquid better.*

## Caramel Sauce

*Makes approximately 1½ cups—8-10 servings*

One of the most luxurious versions of caramel sauce, definitely not low-calorie. Keep an eye on it while you're making it; don't walk away.

1 cup white, granulated sugar

1/4 cup water

1 stick (8 tbsp.) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

1/2 cup heavy (whipping) cream

Place the sugar in a small, heavy saucepan and cover with the water. Swirl the saucepot gently by the handle over medium-high heat until the sugar is dissolved and the syrup is clear. Do not use a whisk, spatula, or other implement to stir as this will affect crystal formation! Do not allow the syrup to boil until the sugar is completely dissolved.

Stop swirling and increase the heat to high, cover the saucepan, and boil the syrup for 2 minutes. After the 2 minutes have elapsed, remove the saucepan's cover and continue to boil the syrup until it begins to darken around the edges. Gently swirl the pan by the handle until the syrup turns deep amber and begins to smoke.

Remove from the heat and add the butter. Using a whisk or silicone spatula, gently beat until the butter is incorporated, then stir in the heavy cream. If the sauce becomes lumpy, set the pan over low heat and stir until smooth. Turn off the heat and serve warm or at room temperature.

The sauce can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 month; it will become solid. Reheat in a double boiler or in a heavy saucepan over very low heat, or in the microwave in 30 second increments, adding a bit of water if it is too thick.



## Game Anecdote

It is a warm, summer evening. Tension around the gaming table is thick. Players imagine what their characters see: bodies petrified in terror, encased within walls of ice. Their contorted rictus screams tell of something terrible ahead. Heroes creep forward, nervous breaths casting clouds in the frozen corridor.

The corridor opens into a cavern of ice. A pall of death and doom hangs in the air. Light from the heroes' lanterns glitters through the cavern. Glistening white spikes thrust toward the ceiling, reaching up like icy fingers.

No, not reaching. Pointing.

Pointing at the draconic form clinging to stalactites above.

Swords drawn, spells ready, they loose a battle cry as the great, evil beast awakens and spreads its wings. It swoops down, opening its maw and devouring one of the heroes taking cover behind his shield.

The player rolls his die with a shaky hand. A sheen of grease on his fingers from ill-considered snacks causes the die to slip away. It tumbles across the table prematurely but is still a legal roll. Breathing stops as the die bounces...ONE.

The table erupts in groans and gasps as the mighty warrior falls to the dragon. All is not lost; however, as the sorceress prepares her fireball, an all-purpose cure when faced with icy dragons of death.

Brushing crumbs from her shirt, she picks up her favorite spell-slinging die with cheese-encrusted fingers. The polyhedral flies, and though orange cheese dust rubs into the numbers of the tangerine die, the result is still legible once it tumbles to a rest. Alas, another low roll, propelled by a fatigued hand.

The GM cackles. While she knows taking pleasure in her players' failures is bad form, she cannot help but feel glee as the tension of the night's climatic encounter builds. It's the dragon's turn, and she knows its icy breath will... she loses her train of thought. She rubs her head as if doing so will stave off a building headache born of too much salt, grease, and chemically-processed Gamer Food.

Salty, fatty, sweet... no one ever lost weight or improved their health with Gamer Food. Normally, I'm all for new traditions, and sometimes offering up a vegetable platter instead of pizza rolls as a game night snack is admirable. However, when it comes to desserts, you can't beat buttery, sugary decadence.

Serving this bread pudding will allow your players to ride a sugar high long enough to defeat Tiamat's draconic minions, and the carbs in the bread help will stop the inevitable crash. Present this at your next game, and your players will attack it like a pack of otyughs at a garbage buffet.

## Bio

Hans is a volunteer for the tabletop gaming industry's ENnie Awards and maintains a gaming blog (<http://doctorstrangeroll.wordpress.com>) in addition to his writing blog (<http://vffpublishing.com>). He is the award-winning author of the *Zack Jackson* sci-fi series for all ages, in addition to the *World of Calliome* fantasy novels.



# Fruits of the Forest

by **Monica Valentinelli**

*Serves 6-8*

This recipe is perfect for a cold, frosty night, and best accompanies savory dishes made with pork or chicken. There's often enough left over to have for breakfast the next morning, too. I imagine this dish would be well-liked in a fantasy land—to celebrate after a big battle, or for a sly GM to satisfy her players right before the orcs invade...

## **Fruit Filling**

5 Apples, medium diced  
1/2 cup raspberries, frozen  
1/2 cup blueberries, frozen  
1/4 cup cranberries, frozen  
2 tsp. lemon juice  
1/4 tsp. vanilla extract

## **Crisp Topping**

1 tbsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. nutmeg  
Pinch of ginger, cardamom, or cloves to taste  
1 1/3 cup quick oats (uncooked)  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup light brown sugar (packed)  
1/4 cup salted butter (melted)

## **Dessert Toppings**

ice cream, especially vanilla  
fresh whipped cream

## **Breakfast Toppings**

bananas  
sliced almonds  
crushed walnuts  
pecans  
flax seeds



In a slow cooker, combine the fruits and stir in the lemon juice and vanilla extract. Gently pat down with the back of a spoon to remove any pockets of air. In another bowl, combine the quick oats, flour, and brown sugar. Once mixed, drizzle the butter over the top and stir until the concoction is evenly mixed. Add on top of your fruit filling, and cover. Cook on HIGH for 3 to 4 hours, or LOW for 5 to 6 hours.

The oatmeal on the top will seal the fruit below; you'll want to check the mixture underneath to make sure it's cooked to the consistency that you desire. Cooking times will vary based on the type of slow cooker you have. A good rule of thumb for this recipe is to check the crisp on the top. If the oatmeal looks like it's starting to brown on the sides and form a crusty edge, then it's most likely done. This recipe can be reheated in the slow cooker, but watch it closely. It doesn't take long to reheat once it's cooked; about a half hour or so on HIGH and 45 minutes to an hour on LOW.

This recipe works better in a tall slow cooker as opposed to a wider, roast-sized pot. If you prefer your apples firmer and less mushy, slice the apples into bigger chunks instead of diced pieces. The lemon juice will prevent your fruit from browning as it cooks. Should you decide lemon and cranberry is too tart for your palate, substitute unsweetened fruit juice, preferably apple, and frozen blackberries instead.

## Game Anecdote

### The Seven Levels of a Roleplaying Group

Every Tuesday night is a roleplaying game,  
And all of us are but players and GMs.  
Our characters will reach seven Levels;  
We'll travel to earn XP, and stuff our  
Bellies full before each three-hour session.

At Level One, a barmaid could smite us;  
And we might buckle at her piercing gaze,  
Were we not high on Mountain Dew, bags of  
M&Ms, and 99 Cent Cheese Puffs,  
We would not dare to try this meal again.

Level Two holds more surprises for us;  
Goblins, grave robbers, and an old, tired king.  
Yet, we remain calm as our GM narrates,  
For heaven-scented chocolate brownies,  
Works their magic on our adventuring troupe.

We may yet be robbed blind at Level Three,  
As we suspect the GM's schemes and plots,



For ranger, cleric, fighter, noble all.  
We will roll, succeed, fail, and roll again;  
Munching on pizza, baked fresh that evening.

Into forests we traipse at Level Four.  
Fearing orcs or thieves'll ambush our party.  
They'd take advantage of our full bellies;  
Stuffed with chicken tacos, homemade salsa,  
Sour cream, and garden-sown jalapenos.

At Level Five we'll invite more new friends;  
To try out our campaign and join the fun.  
This is their first time roleplaying with us;  
We throw the finest feast, with apples and  
Pork tenderloin with a peach-pepper glaze.

One dreaded call, and our next game's postponed.  
Should Level Six, be less fraught with perils,  
We might spend more time cooking healthy foods,  
Instead of ordering deep-fried chicken,  
Which we regret, and feel for three more days.

When we next meet, a red dragon howls and—  
Vegetable beef stew simmers on the stove.  
'Tis true that Level Seven's now routine.  
Thus ends this poem, this familiar tale.  
Of dice, food, and friends, and what we've eaten.

### **Bio**

Monica Valentinelli writes stories, games, and comics for media/tie-in properties and her original works from her Midwestern studio. She is best known for her work in the gaming industry as a developer and writer for games like the *Firefly RPG* and *Vampire: the Masquerade*. For more about Monica, visit [www.mlvwrites.com](http://www.mlvwrites.com).







## Microwave Caramel Popcorn Brain... Mmmmm, Brains!

by Kerry Breitenstein

1 cup brown sugar – packed

1/4 cup light corn syrup (*Editor's note: sorghum syrup did well, too*)

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 stick of margarine

1/2 teaspoon salt

3-4 quarts popped corn

red food coloring

red gel frosting

So, you are about to play your favorite zombie game, *Zombies!!!* (as if there are any other ones). And everyone is in the mood for some brains. It makes you start doubting your choice in friends, but to keep them from licking their lips and eyes glazing over as they look at your head, try this recipe. It is sure to satisfy the most hungry of zombies...I mean friends! It is quick, easy and tasty—maybe like brains. I don't know, I've never tried them!

Put popped corn in a large brown paper grocery bag. It is recommended to cook the popcorn on the stove top with a minimal amount of oil for best results.



Put margarine, sugar, corn syrup and salt in a 1-2 quart microwavable bowl. Bring to a boil in the microwave. Stir. Boil an additional 2 minutes on high.

Remove from the microwave and add soda. Add 9-12 drops of red food coloring, depending on your desired level of red color (the more the bloodier looking). Stir well. Add mixture to brown paper grocery bag over popcorn. Close bag and shake well. Microwave whole bag on high for another 1½ minutes. Remove bag and shake. Pour onto cookie sheet lined with wax paper (sprayed with nonstick spray for ease).

As mixture begins to cool, cover it with another piece of wax paper (sprayed with nonstick spray) and start molding mixture into as many brain shapes as desired. For added bloodiness, add red gel frosting lightly for an extra layer of slime. After all have admired your lovely brains, break apart and enjoy.

## Game Anecdote

Thinking of *Zombies!!!* (not thinking *as* zombies because zombies don't think), while attending the Origins Game Convention, my family and I were walking through the hall towards the Hyatt in Columbus, OH, many moons ago. We were carrying a game of *Zombies!!!* in addition to a bunch of drinks and snacks.

Our intention was to establish residence at a nice cozy table and chairs, commence to zombie killing, and stuff our faces full of "gamer nutrition." The kids were carrying the *Zombies!!!* game and snacks, poking at each other as kids often do. The one carrying *Zombies!!!* dropped the game, spewing the contents across the floor. Since this was a provoked fumble of the game, an equal and opposite poke was applied. This caused the kid carrying the bag of "gamer nutrition" (prepackaged, thank goodness) to hit the ground, gloriously exploding and mixing with the board game contents.

Todd and I looked at each other, and he said "Well, this is as good a place as any to play."

We sat down and played right there in the hall by the Big Bar on 2. Fun was had by all!

## Bio

Gamer for many years (we shall not mention exactly how many) and game designer for 14+ years (once again, preciseness is not necessary), Kerry Breitenstein is currently the owner of Twilight Creations, Inc. who publishes the award-winning game, *Zombies!!!* She is a proud mother of three very mischievous minions (kids) from who knows where.

## Puppy Chow

by Elizabeth Bauman

This particular treat is a Midwestern favorite and one my kids request often. It's a lowbrow delicacy that is sometimes called White Trash, Muddy Buddies, or Reindeer Poop. No matter what you call it, it's a delicious, crunchy creation that will have your fellow players fighting over the last morsels when the bowl is empty!

6 cups Rice Chex

1/2 cup smooth peanut butter



1 stick salted butter  
1 bag semisweet chocolate chips  
2-3 cups powdered sugar  
paper bag

Melt peanut butter, butter, and chocolate chips together, allowing to cool briefly before folding the Chex in gently.

Pour 2 cups powdered sugar into paper bag, heap chocolate-y Chex into the bag, close tightly, and shake to coat. If not well coated, add more and shake, once again.

It's delicious warm and gooey or frozen and crunchy! Enjoy it with your kids (or without—I won't judge!)

## Game Anecdote

Teaching your children to cook is a lot like teaching your children to game. I know this because I've been teaching my five (and a half!) year old, Archer, to do both since he was old enough to tippy-toe up to our kitchen counters.

Gaming and cooking are both, at their core, all about arranging, combining, and preparing elements and ingredients to create something enticing and exciting.

Following a recipe teaches you to read the rules. Measuring and mixing teaches you to do your prep. Tasting testing teaches you to analyze and adjust—even on the fly. Completing each step teaches you to appreciate the long game. Creating an entire meal teaches you to balance, organize, and complement.

In both gaming and kitchen adventures, messes are made, cause and effect are explored, and experiments are conducted.



Sure, a lot of these concepts are maybe a little beyond most kids who are just learning the essentials of dice-rolling, but an afternoon spent cooking with Dad and an evening spent gaming with Mom give them a sense of accomplishment and pride.

And, in our home, the more time we spend gaming with our kids, the more time we spend cooking with our kids. For every adventure we have, there's snacks to be made. From simple sandwiches to microwave popcorn to sweet treats, we spend our family game time hanging out around the dining room table, alternating between rolling for initiative and reading a recipe or slaying a dragon and slicing an apple.

Just last week, as we played what my five (and a half!) year old affectionately calls "Dragons and Dungeons!" he asked, "Can I have my friend Sam over to play soon? And then can we make some snacks? I think he would REALLY LIKE to help my knight fight some goblins!"



I smiled big and broad because, more than anything, I want my children to know that gaming is about so much more than rolling dice. I want them to know it's a ritual. You're not just sitting down to play with your friends. You're preparing food, opening your home, and sharing a part of your lives as you gather to tell stories. At just five (and a half!), he appreciates this fact and wants to bring others into the fold.

So, next weekend, when Sam comes over, we'll spend some time making something yummy before we take our seats at the game table. And, hopefully, years from now, when those two boys are entertaining their own gaming groups, they'll think back on the lessons they learned in my kitchen as they prepare to roll for initiative.

## **Bio**

Liz Bauman makes her home in the suburban sprawl between DC and Baltimore. She's an extroverted mom, wife, copywriter, and gamer with a strong feminist streak and a love of dark beer and even darker coffee. Find her on Twitter @d20blonde.

# Summer Fruit Trifle

by **Nicole Lindroos**

2/3 cup granulated sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1/8 teaspoon salt

3 large egg yolks

1 2/3 cups 2% milk

1 cup evaporated fat-free milk

1 tablespoon Triple Sec

1 pound cake, (store-bought or made separately) sliced

1/2 cup raspberry jam

1 pint raspberries

1 pint blueberries

3 cups sliced strawberries

1 pint whipping cream

2 tablespoons sugar

Combine granulated sugar, cornstarch, salt, and egg yolks in a medium bowl, stirring with a whisk until smooth.

Heat milks in a medium, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat to 180 degrees F or until tiny bubbles form around edge (do not boil). Gradually add hot milk mixture to sugar mixture, stirring constantly with a whisk.

Return the milk mixture to saucepan. Cook mixture over medium heat 2 minutes or until thick and bubbly, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, and stir in Triple Sec.



Spoon the custard into a small bowl. Place the bowl in a large ice-filled bowl for 15 minutes or until the custard is cool, stirring occasionally. Remove bowl from ice.

Spread slices of pound cake with raspberry jam and form a single layer in the bottom of a trifle dish or other large bowl. (It's ok to leave gaps.) Spoon cooled custard over cake layer and top with one-third of the berries. Repeat layers twice more. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight.

Before serving, combine cream and sugar and whip cream until stiff. Top trifle with whipped cream.

## Game Anecdote

I love to cook. At two separate times in my past, I considered going to culinary school because I get so much enjoyment from working with food and seeing people fed. Both times I decided to stick with the game industry as my day job and cooking as my hobby but that hasn't stopped me from practicing my culinary arts, especially on my gaming friends. I've started informal cooking clubs, participated in acts of mass canning and pickling, hosted parties and receptions, baked birthday cakes for friends—I even catered my brother's wedding rehearsal dinner. One of the perks of being part of the Green Ronin staff is coming to Seattle for our yearly summit, during which I've been known to shout out "No one goes hungry on my watch!" as the table groans under what I'll later be forced to admit was too much food.

Knowing this about me should help set the stage for understanding the ambience around Chez Ronin on game night. I have been hosting game night at our house for the last 15 years and while day jobs, summer convention season, and winter holidays have all been known to disrupt the works from time to time, I have no doubt that providing dinner every time





we meet is a draw. Sometimes we might not actually get around to gaming at all and “game night” turns into more of a dinner party or a night to vent those work frustrations even if the whole gang can’t get together for any ork-smashing action. Sometimes we substitute a board or a card game to scratch that gaming itch if too many party members are out for a particular night. Under usual circumstances we don’t tend to go crazy with desserts; healthy eating has become of higher concern as we’ve gotten older. On occasion, though, it’s nice to surprise the gang with a little something sweet and, especially when summer fruit is plentiful, a trifle is a breeze.

My trifle uses a homemade custard that is the only part of the process that takes time and attention. Within just a few minutes, though, that custard comes together into a beautiful thing and the rest of the assembly is nothing but layers of cake, jam, custard and fruit. It’s very forgiving and you can substitute whatever kinds of fruit you like the best. My recipe uses berries but you can just as easily use peaches, plums, and other stonefruit. You can flavor the custard with almond or vanilla if Triple Sec isn’t your style. Best of all it can be made well in advance and just popped out of the fridge at the right time for serving, a sweet surprise that only needs a bit of whipped cream on top to make it look a bit fancy.

Keeping my gamers fed brings them back to the table and getting everyone together is the first step to getting games to happen. Serving dessert is just another sweet reward.

## **Bio**

Nicole Lindroos has been a gaming professional since 1987 and is the co-owner and General Manager of Green Ronin Publishing. Her recent projects include contributions to the *Dragon Age Tabletop Roleplaying Game* and *Titansgrave: Ashes of Valakana*. She’s also the sweetest person you never want to piss off.



# GAME TABLES FOR REAL LIFE

## Coffee

### Game Table \$899

Table Height: 20"

Under Table Clearance: 17"

Inset Game Play Area: 40"x24"

Edges: 4" on all sides

Table Top: 48"x32"



## Kitchen

### Game Table \$1199

Seats 4 (Chairs and Side Tables available)

Table Height: 30"

Under Table Clearance: 25"

Inset Game Play Area: 38"x38"

Edges: 5" on all sides

Table Top: 48" x 48"



## Dining Room

### Game Table \$1599

Seats 6 (Chairs and Side Tables available)

Table Height: 30"

Under Table Clearance: 25"

Inset Game Play Area: 32"x50"

Edges: 8" on long sides, 11" on short sides

Table Top: 4'x6' (48"x72")



## Tablezilla

### Game Table \$2199

Huge! Seats 8

(Chairs and Side Tables available)

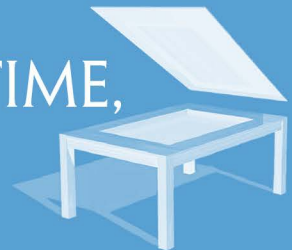
Table Height: 30"

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