

Intergalactic Cooking Challenge

A 24 Hour RPG
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INTRODUCTION

“Wouldn’t it be interesting if, let’s say, a cabbage was placed on an elevator-like platform and brought up on stage?” – Takashi Ishihara

Greetings, one and all. Tonight’s Intergalactic Cooking Challenge looks like it’s going to be a rough one. Dash o’ Cinnamon, the high-flying pirate chef from Neo-England is back and ready to get his revenge on Elgar the Outsider.

You may remember that last season, Elgar was unimpressed by Dash’s flashy knifemanship and dependence on pork-based dishes. Does Dash have something new up his sleeve, or is his exuberant appeal to the crowd nothing more than false bravado? Are Dash’s allegations that Elgar was responsible for the spice raids on Neo-Bristol true?

We will find out the answer to these, and other questions tonight. We move now to the Pavilion of Fate, where the mysterious Chairman Kato is preparing to speak. Perhaps tonight is when he will inform the colonies of his verdict on human cuisine. You won’t want to miss that, not on your life!

SETTING

At a time in the eventual future, the Earth was seen as an unfortunate dent in the galactic cookie sheet of the Sol system. The well off among its former inhabitants had all moved to much cleaner colonies located in outer space, leaving the planet to the poor and sentimental. Strangely enough, the planet got along much better without so many technology-hounds gumming it up.

This story isn’t necessarily about the earthbound, however. Not yet. The aliens who eventually came were more interested in the power that the colonies held. Of course there were aliens. Smart ones with technology outside of the range of humanity. This is the future.

Although these aliens came in several varieties, they were collectively known as the gourmands. The human definition of the word “gourmand” had long been covered up by the seductive influence of the more easily pronounced “gourmet”, leaving humanity one less clue to the nature of the visitors.

The people of the colonies were unwilling to comply with the demands of the gourmands, although few could later recall what the demands were. All that most people paid mind to was the eventual ultimatum: justify the existence of the Sol system, or prepare to lose it.

The greatest treasures of history were dredged up and presented to the gourmands as proof of the power of the human spirit. Paintings were drawn from Neo-France; pottery from Neo-Japan; funk from Neo-Jamaica. Churgan Kato, the high gourmand administrator turned his back on all of them.

One delegation then presented missiles, quite forcibly from Neo-Texas. The aliens held slightly higher regard for the competition inherent in the action, but were unimpressed by the Neo-Texans’ inability to counter the subsequent orbital bombardment.

All seemed lost until Kato noticed an ordinary brown paper sack in the hands

of a young intern who carried data files for Neo-Japan. He sensed an alluring force from within it that delightfully played with his stolid sensibility.

Upon Kato's insistence, the intern opened the sack. Inside was a ham and natto sandwich on rye, three pickled bell peppers, and a hardboiled egg. Kato inspected the objects gravely, and then took a loud bite from one of the peppers.

After chewing for what seemed like forever, Kato pronounced: "Such a delight has not met my palate for many a conquest. There is hope in this pepper. If it is through your culinary arts that the human passion can be revealed, then I invite you to convince me further.

I shall construct a stadium where your finest will compete for the chance to explain the mystery of your people. They will be held to certain standards that may seem strange, but in the end will test their courage, dedication, and skill. I await your efforts."

With that, the aliens left for their immense ships. Humanity breathed a collective sigh of relief for avoiding destruction temporarily, but quickly realized the trouble that they had gotten themselves in. The majority of the colony chefs dealt with food replicators that handled nutritional content much better than taste. The role of the chef was to hide the flavor rather than bring out aesthetic wonder. There were wealthy eccentrics who still worked with real food, but they were just as weird as those who were still on Earth.

In order to find those with the necessary skills, the colonies would need to deal with the inhabitants of Earth who they

had scorned for generations. Would they be willing to help? Could they? A lot had happened over the years.

WHAT IS THIS?

At its core, *Intergalactic Cooking Challenge* is a story. Within this story a variety of themes such as love, perfectionism, and tasty fish will be explored through a shared experience. The fancy name for this process is "role-playing."

In this role-playing set-up there will be several people (ideally three or four) who take the roles of Intergalactic Chefs (IC.) They will also fill in as other allies of humanity on occasion. One person will take up the mantle of the game master (GM.)

The GM's role is to build scenes for the other players to have fun with, and linking the scenes to create a memorable story. The GM also takes on the role of all in-game characters that are not controlled by the other players.

In order to give those playing something to do with their hands, dice will be used to assist in task resolution. If an Intergalactic Chef wants to attach a tiny, edible crown as the finishing touch to his king crab surprise, the GM may ask him to roll dice to determine how pleasing the action is.

In addition to a hearty handful of six-sided dice, it is recommended that pencils, character sheets, and cookbooks be used when playing this game. All you really need are some friends and your imagination, but the rules and character sheets can be necessary when you don't trust your friends. The cookbooks can

serve as a replacement for imagination in a pinch, but they may just end up making you angry that nobody brought snacks.

As for the mandatory note on pronouns: even though this text uses only male pronouns, this is not intended as a gender bias. The reading experience is more natural when one gender is selected and stuck with through storm and calm.

CHARACTERIZATION

In designing an Intergalactic Chef, keep in mind the variety of challenges that the future holds. Although it is through your mastery of taste that humanity's fate will ultimately be decided, reaching the point where you can demonstrate these skills may be several serialized adventures in themselves.

The basic outline for constructing an Intergalactic Chef is located below:

- 1. Decide what type of character you want to play. Hopes, dreams, quirks, and eccentricities are summed up in this step. What's his name? Where's he from? What sort of ethnic cuisine is he the master of? Why's he going where he is?
- 2. Title your chef. This reveals his specialties, and possibly offers deeper insight into his personality. Make it something cool like, "Lord of the Onion Rings" or "The Radical Surfing Chef."

- 3. Select a catch phrase. When used at an appropriate time, the phrase reminds the chef of his purpose, allowing access to latent strength.
- 4. Assign traits. The physical and mental stats of your IC come into question at this point. Use the 10 trait points to add meat to the framework that you have established. The three traits are Gusto, Depth, and Pizzazz.
- 5. Assign skill points. What aspects of cookery and life does your IC excel in? Skills measure not only training in specific disciplines, but access to certain resources. You have fifteen skill points, but only three may go into each skill when designing the character.

TITLES

A chef's title is his reputation boiled down to one pithy saying. This need not be what the chef is best at, just what face of his personality is most interesting to the public eye. Oftentimes it describes his favorite ingredient or specialty food. Going this route is a way to strengthen your ties to your ethnicity. The Eggman and the Prince of Pasta are two such chefs.

Other chefs gain their titles based on the parts of their lives that are not spent flavor-crafting. Hobbies, side jobs, and amusing personal habits are all open ground here. The Rock and Roll Chef, Captain of the Restaurantship-a-Gogo, and the Screamin' King are all possibilities.

Titles can be used to temporarily increase the effective ranks a chef has in a skill relating to the title. This is accomplished by dynamically acknowledging the title and expending a point of Passion. In the next skill roll where the GM deigns the title applicable, the skill is increased by 2.

Example: The Pied Pieman is working intently on a boysenberry pie topped with cream sauce. Since he has a title to uphold, he wants his pie to be cosmically delicious. He closes his eyes and absorbs all of the chaos outside of him into his heart. From the outside he is perfectly calm. Guided by the hopes of his fans, he acknowledges his title and boosts his Deserts skill from 3 to 5. With the speed of a viper he grabs a pastry knife and vents the crust with laser-guided precision. After the pie is made, his Deserts skill reverts to its original 3.

CATCH PHRASES

The catch phrase operates on the same principle as the title. It is an invocation or *bon mot* that the chef has become known for. It often holds philosophical undertones, but may just be a clever onomatopoeia or feral scream.

The phrase need not be static, allowing for some manipulation to fit the scene at hand. An ascot-wearing dandy chef may often find himself engaged in ungentlemanly situations that he finds demeaning to the noble profession that he has dedicated himself to. His catch-phrase could very well be a disdainful sniff and, “I say! [Distasteful action] wasn’t part of the curriculum back at Space Harvard.”

A catch phrase can be said as often as everyone else in the room can stand it. After all, repetition is the root of all comedy. After all, repetition is the root of all comedy. Since being an Intergalactic Chef is about more than cheap laughs, however, the catch phrase will only have morale-boosting effects once per gaming session. It is worth one automatic Passion, awardable to either the speaker or the recipient.

TRAITS

The three core attributes of your character are as follows:

Gusto: The measure of physical prowess. This determines a character’s skillful knifework, capacity to slave over a hot stove, and raw muscle. Gusto is important for beefy chefs who appreciate hard work and hands-on knowledge.

Depth: Space IQ tests aren’t worth much. Luckily, this trait is an abstract concept that goes beyond such silly practices. It’s a measure of how skilled one is at deconstructing acts and accurately analyzing them. Concentration, problem-solving skills, and analogies are all within the domain of depth.

Pizzazz: Pizzazz is based upon the assumption that there is One True Style. The more Pizzazz you have, the closer you are to it, baby! Pizzazz is important for people who want to look good, sound good, and understand the finer things in life.

To find an average statistic among so many varied cultures and standards of judging is a difficult task. In some

cultures, a boy does not become a man until he is able to successfully best a bear in personal combat. In others, it is the mastery of stand-up comedy that proves one's ability to survive. That said, a trait score of three is average. Starting characters have ten points to distribute among their traits. This may be modified upon consultation with the GM, who may have different ideas about how the game should be run.

Example: Baron von Waffenspaut is a burly German chef who sees creating food as his solemn duty. He has studied the books of his ancestors relentlessly in search of the long-lost formula for Heaven's Roast. As such, he has not had much time to hone his social graces. His Intergalactic Chef costume doesn't fit right, and is often tight around his bulging muscles. His Gusto is 4, Depth is 4, and Pizzazz is 2.

SKILLS

You have fifteen skill points to divide among the following list of qualities. None of them may be raised above three for now. The traits mentioned in parentheses next to each skill indicate what trait is usually used in conjunction with that skill. If you can think of a way to apply Gusto rather than Pizzazz to Persuasion, go for it. Be warned, however, that it may not always be socially appropriate to do so.

Alien Foodstuffs (Depth): When the Gourmands built the Kitchendrome they spared no expense in stocking its larders. The delicacies of a hundred worlds are open to the Intergalactic Chefs. The real trick is figuring out which ones are supportive of the judges' metabolisms. Every success on an Alien Foodstuffs

roll will reveal one useful fact about an item of alien cuisine.

Kitchen Control (Depth): In a chef's own kitchen, he is undeniably in control. When gaudy lights, foreign utensils, and nosy reporters are thrown into the mix, matters become more difficult. A chef who is skilled in Kitchen Control is as cool as a bowl of cucumber and homard sorbet when confronted with scenes of chaos. He is then able to act appropriately.

Flunkies (Pizzazz): This skill covers the acquisition, care, and control of assistant chefs. Every chef at the Kitchendrome is given minimal help, but this skill opens up greater possibilities in terms of forming a posse. In precision operations such as a cooking battle, rolls may be necessary to coordinate the team.

Appetizer (Pizzazz): The perfect appetizer piques the taster's interest in what is yet to come while still being able to stand alone on its own merits. It must be unique enough to be memorable, yet serve to enhance the overall harmony of the meal. Understand this, and you will be accomplished in the art of the soup, salad, and much more.

Entrée (Gusto): The entrée serves as the meat and potatoes of all but the most exotic meals. It is typical seen as the centerpiece or bragging point of an entire composition.

Dessert (Gusto): A great master once served a lone pear to an assemblage of nobles. His apprentice spent weeks crafting a chocolate wonderland. Why was the pear held in higher regard? Uninspired boors may remember that the nobles in question were lactose

intolerant. A master of the craft looks past the reality and understands the true potential of deserts.

Sommelier (Depth): Although originally used to describe wine-related knowledge, the term has evolved to encompass all varieties of beverage. A skilled sommelier can detect the weakness in any dish and subsequently turn it to an advantage with the proper use of alcoholic highlights.

Decorative Arts (Pizzazz): Those who studied playing with their food are skilled in the various decorative arts. This covers such diverse disciplines as ice sculpture, shaping garnishes, and selecting the proper tableware for a specific party.

Home Remedies (Depth): Although medical care in the future is highly effective in fixing ailments, it is also slow and immobilizing. If a chef becomes too depressed to work after a scathing volley of insults, he doesn't have time to go all of the way to the space hospital. He does have the time to whip up a batch of comfort potatoes, however. Every two successes with this skill heals one point of statistic damage.

Combat Style (Gusto): Sometimes the food that you're dealing with is a little livelier than its optimal serving condition. This skill can help with that. It can also be used against non-food objects. See the **Combat** section for further information. A specific combat style should be selected for this skill such as meat tenderizer, wrestling, or ray gun.

Insulting Wit (Pizzazz): Did you ever want to be the guy with all of the snappy

comebacks and wacky zingers? Friend, this is the skill for you! It acts like the Combat Style skill mentioned about, but deals Pizzazz damage. As an added bonus it is much more acceptable in the cloistered halls of high society. (See the **Combat** section for further details.)

Cultural Awareness (Depth): Of course culture exists. It is made up of the many everyday actions that sentient beings take while trying to coexist with each other. Every success made with this skill gives the user one clue about the character of somebody else. It may give hints at what foods a judge is fond of, but won't give the entire game away. If the GM thinks that he is being too generous with this skill, he should throw in a few lies to keep the players on their toes.

Athletics (Gusto): Chopping hams all night with a hefty cleaver is a good way to build arms as thick as hams. This skill allows for applied fitness such as sports, climbing, and dodging. In certain situations (such as rowdy games of chickenball) it can also be used as an attack skill.

Computers (Depth): It takes a bit of finagling, but a trained technician can make replicator food go up a few grades in quality. It's still no match for the real thing, but a lifesaver if you're unable to find any brontosaurus steaks in the Kitchendrome. Computer-users are also adept at gathering information over the space Internet and telling nerdy jokes.

Persuasion (Pizzazz): This is the blanket descriptor for any acts pertaining to diplomacy, wheedling, lying, fibbing, convincing, and filibustering. Talking the matter out, sweating through bad

jokes, and actually convincing people of your sincerity is also smiled upon, but the skill can be used as a tiebreaker of sorts.

History (Depth): Due to a rigorous training program, you know more about Earth and the colonies than ugly stereotypes and dramatic romances.

Underwater Basket Weaving (Gusto): Hey, it could come in handy.

Showmanship (Pizzazz): A working knowledge of how to entertain people never hurt anyone who wasn't a beat poet. Use your training well and you'll have them waving flags, diverting their attentions, and eating out of your hand.

Bankroll (Variable): A measure of how much money you have and how quickly you can get it. With zero ranks in this skill, you cannot have nice things (unless you find them later.) One rank gets you something equivalent to an udon stand or snack cart. Two ranks are worth a small-scale restaurant and a car. Three will get a larger restaurant and a flying car. Beyond that? Personal spacecraft, baby.

Underhanded Trickery (Variable): Sneaking, stealing, forging, and overly complex traps are all part of Underhanded Trickery. In most cases, the target of your grift will make an opposed roll against you to see if they realize that they have been hornswaggled.

This is not a complete list of skills. If you want to be trained in something that these categories don't cover, talk to your GM.

Example: In his studies, Baron von Waffenspaut learned that man is mortal. For this reason he has spread his resources far and wide to gain a large knowledge base. He selects Kitchen Control 3, Appetizer 2, Dessert 2, Entrée 3, Face-Punching (Combat Skill) 2, Bankroll 2, and Athletics 1.

MECHANICS

To determine whether the character that you are currently portraying is able to succeed at certain tasks, the GM will ask you to roll some dice.

In the instance that this game presents, "some dice" means "a number which is equal to the rank of the applicable trait plus or minus any situational bonus dice."

Any dice that turn up equal to your applicable skill or lower translate into one **success**. In a standard action, one success is all that's needed to indicate that the attempted action was performed adequately. Each further success rolled indicates a great degree of competence in the task at hand.

Example: Baron von Waffenspaut is climbing a steep mountain on Earth to reach the legendary grove of the red lotus roots. The GM informs him to make a Gusto-Athletics check. The good baron rolls four dice (his Gusto score) and gets 1, 3, 4, 6. He takes all of the numbers equal to or lower than 1 (his Athletics score) and counts them as successes. Since he rolled one number that meets the criteria, he has one success. The GM informs the Baron that the climb was challenging, but bracing.

If you do not have a relevant skill for the task at hand, you may reduce the number of dice rolled by one and act as if you had one rank in the necessary skill.

Example: After reaching the top of the mountain, Baron von Waffenspaut is attacked by flunkies from the Vincenzo Group. His hands are filled with climbing supplies, so he cannot use his Face-Punching skill to attack. Instead he tries to provoke a flunky by making fun of his dependence on mob tactics and inability to talk. Since the baron does not have the Insulting Wit skill, he rolls three dice (his Depth minus one) and rolls 2, 3, 4. None of those numbers are equal to or less than one, so the verbal assault is shrugged off.

Note that had von Waffenspaut's player said something hilarious when making his attack, it would have been proper for the GM to assign him extra temporary ranks in Insulting Wit.

Also note that if the flunkies were able to talk, they would have been able to resist the Insulting Wit. These types of die rolls are handled later in this section.

If there is no relevant skill, but the GM feels that a roll should be made, the roll **defaults** to the most applicable trait. This means that the trait is rolled, and all numbers that are equal or lower to the trait's rating are successes.

Example: Madame Verde is asked to remember the face of her childhood sweetheart. There is no skill related to such an action, so the GM tells her to default it to Depth. Madame Verde rolls three dice (her Depth) and gets 3, 3, 6. The two threes are successes because they are equal to or lower than her

Depth. She easily remembers the face of the boy next door and realizes that he could not have been Chumley Kung.

If an action is being actively opposed, or multiple characters wish to see who is best at a specific action, an **opposed roll** is called for. All parties involved make a case to the GM that one of his skills would be able to hinder the actions of the other parties. If the GM gives consent, everybody rolls as indicated in the previous paragraph. The person who has the most successes triumphs. If no one has any successes or there is an equal amount, the active parties either tangle each other up or reach a dramatic standstill.

Example: Baron von Waffenspaut is attempting to outbid Madame Verde at a cookbook auction. He rolls his Bankroll-Bankroll and she rolls hers. Von Waffenspaut scores a 2, 6. Madame Verde (who has Pizzazz 4, Bankroll 1) rolls 1, 5, 5, 5. Since both parties have an equal number of successes, the GM rules that they are both outbid by the man with the robotic hand in the third row.

COMBAT

Although the true spirit of the Intergalactic Chef is settled on the culinary battlefield, instances may pop up from time to time when more direct forms of conflict are used.

A **combat action** is one where the intent is to lower one of the traits of someone else. This is handled in the same way as an opposed roll. The loser of this roll temporarily loses a point of Gusto or Pizzazz dependant on the nature of the attack.

Example: Angered at his meddling, Madame Verde tries to whap Baron von Waffenspaut with her trusty titanium spork. He sees what she's up to, and tries to fling a chair at her. Madame Verde rolls her Gusto-Stabbing (Combat Skill) while Baron Waffenspaut rolls his Gusto-Athletics. Madame Verde scores two successes while the baron does not get any. His chair misses its mark, and Madame Verde stabs him. His Gusto is reduced by one.

The winner in a combat action can choose not to deal damage if he wins. Relatedly, if a character wins the roll by using a non-damaging skill, the target is not damaged.

Example: Baron von Waffenspaut tries to flee the auction hall while Madame Verde attempts further vengeance with her spork. He rolls Gusto-Athletics, and she rolls Gusto-Stabbing again. The lucky baron rolled 1, 1, 1 – three successes to Madame Verde's zero! The baron has won the roll using a non-damaging application of Athletics, so he escapes without dealing any damage.

If Gusto is reduced to zero, the sufferer has been knocked unconscious. Death is not encouraged in *Intergalactic Cooking Challenge*, so it takes a conscious act (or terribly bad luck) to go any further than that.

If Pizzazz is reduced to zero, the sufferer has just received the tongue-lashing of his life. He must retreat to a private comfort zone such as a lone pier or a warm shower as quickly as possible.

All reduced traits are restored after one night of sleep given access to adequate

facilities. These are readily available, even on Earth.

PASSION

Although proper tools and ingredients are important when creating sweet, sweet, fluffy deserts, many leading chefs agree that the most important contribution the chef makes to a dish is his passion.

This is powerful stuff, folks. It is the voice in the back of one's head that urges insubordination in the face of frightening odds. It is the hot-blooded glory of youth as well as the carefully tended flame of the devoted master. It may well be the power of the human spirit that the Gourmands are looking for, boiled down into an easily quantifiable number.

Passion can be used to increase the chances of totally rocking out when making a roll of any type. The process begins before making a roll when the character decides that he will need to draw upon a hidden wellspring of energy in order to overcome the odds that he faces. An inspiring speech may be appropriate depending on the circumstances.

The effects of Passion are not subtle. Fire may flare up in the eyes of the beleaguered chef, lightning may strike a nearby tree, or the distinct atmosphere of a tidal wave may descend on the surrounding area. No matter what form the trappings take, the mechanical effect is always the same: the IC increases a trait a by half of a die roll (rounding up) for the duration of the next action.

Example: Erich Perez is faced with three bottles. One of them contains the vintage that he knows the judge in his next cooking battle is fond of. The other two contain a poison that is deadly if ingested. Has he come this far only to die? No! Perez brushes his torrent of curly, black hair from his eyes and readjusts his goggles. He takes a deep breath and traces his life up until its present point: his childhood in the Peruvian mountains, the death of his brother at gourmand hands, his acceptance as an Intergalactic Chef. Erich spends a point of Passion, and everybody nearby feels as if they have become closer to the man by participating in the journey of his life. Erich's player rolls a die and scores a 5. Half of five, rounded up, is three. He increases his Depth by three for the Sommelier roll that he is about to make.

Passion refreshes at the start of every session to the baseline of half of the IC's Pizzazz (rounded up.) Extra passion may be earned at the GM's whim through extreme acts of heroism, wittiness, or narrative flair. Players can also earn passion for their Intergalactic Chef by attaining the goals of non-chef characters who they may temporarily speak for. This Passion carries over between sessions, and should be tracked separately from the constantly refreshing pool.

THE COOKING BATTLE

In a standard game, the player characters are humanity's best hope. Before the first cooking battle, the players have been organized into a special council made up of 3-5 IC. On the date of a cooking battle, this council meets outside of Chairman Kato's Pavilion of

Fate inside the Kitchendrome. A challenger is also at the pavilion. Watching them are hundreds of thousands of adoring fans, with millions more viewing from home.

The challenger's motivation for attending the cooking battle is not always clear. He may be hoping to teach the IC contingent a new technique, but is unsure of their dedication. He may be an old rival, hoping to shame an IC into exile. He may just want to win to increase the fame of his restaurant. Another possibility is that he is an alien, testing the tried techniques of the gourmand civilization against the radical human stylings.

No matter what the motivations are, the challenger will select an IC to confront. Since the GM controls the challenger, he may see it wise to make sure that every IC receives an equal amount of challenges over the course of a season.

After the challenger has selected an opponent, Chairman Kato reveals the theme ingredient. In the past he has explained, "If my memory serves me, many alien races have grown too sure of themselves when allowed free reign in cooking. I select my theme ingredients to see what a master can wrest from the apex of uncertainty. It is at this crisis point that talent and skill are transformed into art."

The theme ingredient must be included in every dish that is to be judged or else the Chairman and his judges will register their displeasure.

After the theme ingredient is revealed, Kato rings the enormous bronze Royal Bell, signaling that the two chefs have

two hours to prepare him a wonderful meal.

The players who do not have their IC involved in a challenge are regulated to secondary roles. Although the main reason that people watch the IC cooking battles is to cheer for their favorite chef, there are plenty of other people involved.

Chairman Kato has decreed that the taste that will sway him to the side of humanity cannot just appeal to him. It must hold the mysterious element that causes the flavor to become universal. To simulate this, every cooking battle dish is judged by Kato and a panel of three other judges. The judges are drawn from human and gourmand societies. They come from all walks of life that have encountered the bewitching taste of fame. Actors, generals, and even fortunetellers all have potential to serve as judges.

On account of being so close to the action, judges are often caught up in the excitement and driven to pursue their own goals more vigorously than they may have done otherwise. A player who is not the active IC can choose to take on the role of a judge for the current battle. If none of the judges are appealing, the player may instead opt to be a member of the Kitchendrome staff.

The primary announcer and his man-in-the-field also use their connection to the Kitchendrome to pursue their personal goals. If the announcer, narrator, or judges accomplish their goals in the course of a cooking battle, the player who is portraying them gains Passion for his IC equal to the difficulty of the goal.

The cooking battle itself consists of two hours of cooking with two commercial breaks. During the commercial breaks, the cooking continues but the judges and announcers are allowed to get up and preen.

COOKING BATTLE GO!

From the view of the game mechanics, the cooking battle is decided through successful skill checks. Over the course of the battle, the GM and all non-IC characters conspire to throw exciting situations into the arena to mix things up.

While they are acting thusly, the brave Intergalactic Chef is trying to gauge the tastes of the judges and cook appropriately while employing the theme ingredient and unraveling the mysteries of his alien cookware.

The IC and his challenger will receive ten chances to make influential skill checks in the course of a cooking battle. The GM keeps track of each success rolled and what it was applied to. When the judging comes, the GM checks these rolls against the likes and dislikes of each of the judges. The exact system should be kept hidden from the players for as long as possible so that they cook with their hearts rather than by following a formula.

- If a success matches a judge's preference, it is worth three points.
- If a success matches a judge's dislike, it has a 50% chance of being worth zero points and a 50% chance of deducting a point

from the overall score. (A 1-3 on a die is worth zero points, a 4-6 is worth negative one.)

- A success that matches neither a like or dislike is worth one point.
- If the theme ingredient is not used in a dish, it cannot be worth more than two points.

Chairman Kato also judges the dishes. His likes and dislikes change with every cooking battle. Can you ask a rainbow what its favorite melody is, or a political movement which food it enjoys most? Of course not!

THE JUDGES

The judges in the Intergalactic Cooking Challenge are just like regular people and gourmands only more famous. This fame is often undeserved, but it would be libelous to point fingers at certain space musicians with burly fan clubs.

Knowledge of food is not a necessary requirement to be chosen as a judge. Although Chairman Kato has remained incomprehensible on the subject, his evasion reveals that he does have his reasons. Three of the judges who tend to be regulars are the beautiful Sally Cervantes, the gourmand general Kweenga, and the Neo-Japanese diplomat Koji Nakamura.

Sally Cervantes, Celebrity Poet

Gusto: 3
Depth: 2

Pizzazz: 5

Stungun: 2

Cultural Awareness: 3

History: 4

Poetry: 2

Likes: Vegan food

Dislikes: Meat

Goals: Convince a prominent chef to go meatless (1).
Convince the gourmands to reconsider the role of human poetry (2).

Kweenga, Gourmand General

Gusto: 5

Depth: 4

Pizzazz: 2

Clobberin': 4

Flunkies: 3

Bankroll: 3

Alien Foodstuffs: 5

Athletics: 2

Likes: Fresh apples, lettuce, and steaks.
Dislikes: So-called “health food”,
squishy food, flowered table settings

Goals: Beat someone up for calling him a space hippo (1).
Get invited back to future Intergalactic Cooking Challenges despite beating up bystanders (3).

Koji Nakamura, Diplomat

Gusto: 3
Depth: 4
Pizzazz: 3

Persuasion: 4
Alien Foodstuffs: 2
Bankroll: 3
Appetizer: 3
Underhanded Trickery: 2

Likes: Alien dishes from the Mangwa system, fried fish.

Dislikes: Sour or spicy foods

Goals: Make the gourmands look publicly foolish while he appears blameless (2).

Secretly gather recruits for the Extranational Territorials (2).

THE KITCHENDROME

When Chairman Kato mentioned building a stadium to judge the cooking challenge in, no one guessed that he would do it so extravagantly. His armada of ships descended on Earth's moon and practically overnight turned it into an enormous city to support the culinary endeavors that were soon to come.

Miles of tunnels now run below the moon's surface, connecting dairies and orchards of the highest caliber available to alien science. Above the tunnels, spaceports, houses, and immense kitchen supply stores sprung up like genetically modified carrots. In the center of it all was built a stadium to put all of old Earth's sporting coliseums to shame.

The Kitchendrome holds seating for hundreds of thousands, but can easily conceal the seats to make the house look packed even on a slow night.

The main floor of the Kitchendrome holds the work area for two competing chefs, Chairman Kato's Pavilion of Fate, and a stately banquet table for the judges. Dizzying arrays of lifts are located in the floor to facilitate easy entry of large ingredients, Intergalactic Chefs, and any other surprises that the chairman desires. He has been known to release flocks of doves from all of the elevators simultaneously at the 30-minute mark or forget to inform tour groups that a cooking battle is in progress.

The kitchen segments of the Kitchendrome have well-stocked cupboards. Unless the chef needs an item that is vitally important to the plot, he will probably have access to it. Rare ingredients, experimental cooking gadgets, and other carry-ins are allowed.

IMPORTANT STAFF

The primary inhabitants of the Kitchendrome that most IC will encounter are Chumley Kung, Gart Oba, and Chairman Kato himself. As the primary announcer, Chumley is one possibility for a player to play as if he is not the active IC. Oba is another possibility, as she is the narrator (also called the floorman.) Chairman Kato is not available for casual players, but a few of his particulars should be noted.

The role of the announcer is to entertain the audience and keep them up to date on what the dueling chefs are doing with their flashing blades and whirling bowls. If nothing is going on, it is the announcer's job to point out the obscure or goad others into doing so. He may

have a celebrity guest announcer, but it is not always the case.

To point out an interesting culinary fact, the announcer uses some form of the following question: “I see that the chef from Neo-Argentina is doing something with yams. What is it, Oba?” In the process he names either a culinary technique or a food that the chef in question is using.

If the chef doesn’t want to follow the suggestion of the announcer, he will need to roll his Kitchen Control against the announcer’s Showmanship. Although the announcer isn’t actually dictating what the chef is making, this does simulate the facet of cheffery where odd practices lead to surprising delights or terrible explosions.

The narrator’s role is similar to that of the announcer’s. She has an anti-gravity belt and a microphone, however, so she can interview the chefs and judges.

A common phrase for the floorman to use after being directed to a target by the announcer is, “Well, I talked to the chef, and he said that the yams are being deep-fried in yak butter.” Again, it takes a Kitchen Control roll for the chef against the narrator’s Showmanship to stop the narrator from filling in the part of the culinary process that the announcer did not mention.

The narrator and announcer are both in positions granting complete coverage of the main floor. When they aren’t messing with the chefs, they’re able to scan this area for strange happenings. It is up to the GM to dictate the results beyond the suggestion stage. This ability

costs one Passion to activate, potentially more for more influential events.

Example: One of Chumley Kung’s goals is to invite beautiful people to drink foul tasting drinks with him. While the chefs are distracted with trying to subdue the theme ingredient, Chumley breaks from his blow-by-blow analysis to exclaim, “What’s this? A young lady has broken from the stands, and is running toward the cage containing our chefs and the vicious killoxen of Bertrand V!” From there the GM has control over the young lady, who Chumley is hoping to save from a near mauling as she gets too close to the highly dangerous killoxen. Then perhaps she will agree to drink foul-tasting alcohol with him.

Chumley Kung, Former Child Star

Gusto: 4

Depth: 2

Pizzazz: 5

Showmanship: 4

Cultural Awareness: 4

Athletics: 3

Alien Foodstuffs: 2

Underhanded Trickery: 3

Likes: Being found charming, foul-tasting alcohol

Dislikes: Loneliness

Goals: Drink foul-tasting alcohol with attractive people (1).

Learn Chairman Kato’s plans for the Intergalactic Cooking Challenge (4).

Gart Oba, Alien Narrator

Gusto: 3
Depth: 4
Pizzazz: 3

Showmanship: 3
Cultural Awareness: 5
Athletics: 4
Alien Foodstuffs: 5
Insulting Wit: 2
Computers: 3
Bankroll: 1

Likes: Human knowledge, gourmand culture, luxury
Dislikes: Underhanded trickery

Goals: Stop the Sol system from being destroyed (2).
Keep the Intergalactic Cooking Challenge fair (2).

Chairman Kato, Man of Mystery

Churgan Kato, or Chairman Kato as humans call him, is the nexus fashion and aesthetic drive. He is the sort of creature who would care nothing about starting a war if it would preserve a cherry orchard. To him, the brevity of a passing scent is what brings it value. If anything exists for too long it becomes commonplace. The Sol system has gotten far too common lately.

It's true that he is the force behind a war fleet that has billions of lives and thousands of years of culture in its hands. He seems himself as the force of

evolution: a harbinger of change with the power to lift civilizations beyond the stars.

If a human had these visions, he would be called mad. Even among the gourmands, Kato is known for his eccentricities. His methods have gotten results in other systems however, so his superiors continue to supply him with resources. If Kato thinks that humanity is worth saving, the gourmands will turn their sights from Sol forever.

The chairman is more of a plot device than a character, truth be told. His traits and skills are unlisted, and beating him is an event that has campaign-shaking repercussions. He has Pizzazz equal to the number of dice that you own as well as the training to back it up. If those fail, he also tends to keep a combat-ready ceremonial sword as part of his ornate costumes.

When in public, Kato is always expertly groomed. He has never been known to wear the same outfit twice, often changing several times in a day. He thinks highly of himself, but is not afraid to praise others, especially when it comes to producing art.

IMPORTANT FIGURES

The Vincenzo Group: This dastardly cabal of chefs opposes everything that the IC hold sacred. Their goal is to defeat the current IC frequently enough that Chairman Kato fires them in disgust.

Depending on the seriousness of your game, they may act this way for various reasons. An IC could have betrayed one of them in the past, spurned romantic advances, or been the neighborhood

bully. It's also possible that the Vincenzo Group just doesn't like the current batch of catch phrases or merchandising. Either way, these guys are militant and willing to set up complicated plots outside of the Kitchendrome to snare their chosen foes.

Foodstock Incorporated: This Neo-Egypt based consortium is the driving force behind the colonies' reliance on food replicators. They're worried that public relations will sour now that cooking is back in vogue, but more shaped by bitterness. The food replicator business solved system-wide hunger, and all the consumers ever do is complain about the tea tasting like chalk.

It is rumored that Foodstock is privately funding chefs in proximity to the Kitchendrome to experiment with making gourmand-pleasing replicated foods.

The Extranational Territorials (ETs): Depending on whom you ask, this dedicated group of people are either balance-threatening terrorists or heroic rebels caught in a fight against the Evil Overlord. The truth is less romantic; they're people just like anybody else. The one difference is that they have the weapons to back up their humanity.

The ETs come from more varied backgrounds than any of the other factions listed. They certainly hate the gourmands and have lots of weapons though.

Pavei's Army: When the colonies begged Earth to send it's chefs to face the gourmand's, many jumped at the chance. Ivan Pavei was not one of them. He added an extra layer of sandbags

around his bunker and turned on an extra radio.

Pavei was banished from the colonies years ago for crashing a space tanker full of wheat into the moon. After he was released from the hospital, the authorities confiscated his tanking license and tore up his chef's badge. Since then, Pavei has lived in an abandoned bunker somewhere in central Europe.

Over the years, others who were dissatisfied with the state of the colonies found themselves at Pavei's doorstep. They saw his anger as an inspirational totem, and quickly formed a community in a nearby town. Their numbers include a number of master chefs who just want to be left alone with their sad, sad pasts.

The Gustatory Expeditionary Force: In a move that startled everyone, Chairman Kato traded a gourmand scout ship to the colony of Neo-Sweden in exchange for a palace filled with savory bread. The ship contained autopilot coordinates to many planets that the gourmands had discovered over the years.

Recognizing the peril that humanity was in, Neo-Sweden made the ship available to anyone interested in joining the first manned journey outside of the solar system. The mission of the CSS Child, as the ship was renamed, was to observe the gourmands on their own turf and see what artistic innovations they could plunder for the use in the Intergalactic Cooking Challenge.

To sweeten the mystery, many conspiracy theorists have written long passages on why the ship is allowed into

supposedly hostile territory despite being an obvious tool of espionage. Some of them must be onto something, as these musings do not tend to stay available for very long.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Embedded within the character descriptions and examples in this document are a variety of scrapes that IC can get into. Just because the setting is skewed toward cookery, there's still a variety to do in order to mix things up.

Perhaps the ETs have found out how acute the gourmands' super-tasting powers really are. Think of what fun could occur if they approach an allied IC with a request to create a sauce so creamy that it would blow Kato's head off? What if they could put such a compound in a weapon? Would the IC go along with the song of the revolution or realize that there's a huge space armada even without Kato?

How about this one? Gart Oba spends a lot of time at the Kitchendrome. She knows things as well as people. She also wants to keep the competition as fair as possible. If the IC are against a group of dastardly villain-chefs, she may drop our heroes a line as to what sort of mood the chairman is in. What would happen if it became known that he wished to try Earth-chocolate, but there was none available for shipping in time for the next battle? What if Kato was in the mood for something more exotic, only obtainable from hidden valley on Earth or a lonely mine in gourmand space?

Go where you like with this, and change it around if you're not having fun.

BONUS INSPIRATION

Iron Chef (Food TV)
Iron Chef: The Official Book (Fuji TV)
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Trilogy (Douglas Adams)
G Gundam (Bandai)
Suikoden II (Konami)

AFTERWORD

Well that was interesting. I haven't been able to write more than two continuous pages all summer, but all in all this shaped into what I wanted it to be pretty quickly. Play test and comments will hopefully shatter some of those illusions so that I can make the next edition even better, so I'd love to hear any comments at <lebrante@hotmail.com>.

This product was fuelled by the *Essential Canadian Brass*, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's *Symphonic Rock*, the OMM *Omnium Omnibus*, and sundry .mp3 files relating to Iron Chef and cowboys. Raspberries, bread, and two naps kept my mind and fingers going while my parents were indispensable for lending me their computer.

Allez cuisine!

Zach Welhouse, July 17, 2005.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Homeland: _____ Catch Phrase: _____

Gusto:

Depth:

Pizzazz:

Passion:



Skills

Go nuts with making copies of this page.

