

Tapas: the Sampling

ta·pas (tä'päs, -päs)

Any of various small, savory Spanish dishes, often served as a snack or with other tapas as a meal. [Spanish, lid, appetizer, of Germanic origin.]

Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

Introduction

Tapas are small snacks or dishes served as appetizers or small dishes in between full courses. The word is Spanish, but the concept is similar to eating family style Chinese, or going through a Middle Eastern meal consisting exclusively of appetizers. In gaming, "tapas" means any small one-shot game using different characters, plots, storylines, and even game systems as compared to a regular long-running game or campaign, often played catch-as-catch-can with whoever can make it that evening.

In order to play Tapas: the Sampling, you will need:

- a group of friends or other people that you're already roleplaying with
- a weekly free newspaper showcasing entertainment for your city or you can use a tabloid paper or even the real newspaper in a pinch
- some dice and tokens and paper and writing implements of choice plus scissors and tape
- at least one hat
- a stopwatch or portable electronic timer but nothing that uses sand
- a tall glass capable of holding at least a pint of beverage or a similar container
- access to the Internet and a printer would help but strictly speaking is not a requirement

Game Chef 2006 Notes for Judges

This Game Chef 2006 entry, in keeping with the popular culinary theme of the competition, consists of several such tapas; in this context, however, they serve as a sort of intermezzo for other, fuller and more complete entries. (Or should that be entrées?) The Time theme this year did not sit as well with my muse as it has with others, so Judges, please consider Tapas: the Sampling as a complete game utilizing all available time ranges and selections from both packages of ingredients. If you feel the need to judge more harshly due to my not strictly following the instructions, feel free; but regardless, know that I present Tapas: the Sampling as a complete game consisting of minigames, as opposed to judging each individual dish on the full criteria.

Tapas: the Sampling was written at the last minute, in just under thirty-six hours, after nearly a full week of percolating.

Game Chef 2006 Quick Reference

Here are the Theme and Ingredients for the 2006 Game Chef Challenge:

The Theme is Time, meaning the game must be completely playable in:

1. 4 Sessions of 2 Hours each. (4@2)
2. 1 Session of 2 Hours. (1@2)
3. 3 Sessions of 3 Hours each. (3@3)
4. 10 Sessions of 1 Hour each. (10@1)
5. Any number of sessions, but lasts exactly 8 Hours total. (n@8)
6. 2 Sessions of 6 Hours, with exactly two weeks passing between the first and second session. (6-2w-6)

Ingredient package one: Glass, Committee, Ancient, Emotion

Ingredient package two: Law, Actor, Steel, Team

Colophon

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Made with TextEdit on Mac OS X. No Microsoft products were used in the creation of these games.

Special thanks to Hieronymous of Malcontent Games for giving me a gaming connotation to the word "tapas."

About the Author

Mischa Damon Krilov is a New Orleans native who has since relocated to Austin, Texas after Hurricane Katrina. A life-long gamer and geek, he also plays the didgeridoo. His first published roleplaying game, 1984 Prime, won the 2005 Game Chef Competition. You can read his blog: <http://rossum.blogspot.com>

Tapas Numero Uno: Self-Referential (Time range 2, Committee)

Self-Referential is about game designers, on a committee panel at a con, designing Game Chef games. Players have two hours to roleplay a known game designer as rolled on the alphabetized chart below. Use 2d6- any sixes mean you must choose an unlisted designer. No two players may play the same designer. (Variant: More than one player may play the same designer.)

1. 1: Dave Arneson 2: D. Vincent Baker 3: R. Sean Borgstrom 4: Greg Costikyan
5: Jeff Dee
2. 1: Ron Edwards 2: E. Gary Gygax 3: Shane Lacy Hensley 4: Steve Jackson
5: Robin Laws
3. 1: Steven S. Long 2: Marc C. Miller 3: Clinton R. Nixon 4: Steffan O'Sullivan
5: Sandy Petersen
4. 1: Mike Pondsmith 2: Mark Rein-Hagen 3: S. John Ross 4: Kevin Siembieda
5: Jared Sorensen
5. 1: Greg Stafford 2: Pre-d20 Jonathan Tweet 3: Post-d20 Jonathan Tweet
4: John Wick 5: Erick Wujcik

To discover the theme and ingredients, open a newspaper to the movie listings. Look for the first as-yet-unreviewed movie and it will suggest the theme. Argue about the interpretation of the theme until more than two players are satisfied, and the theme is now locked in. As for the ingredients, open the newspaper to the first interior page with a news story. Look at the first story under the fold (or in the bottom half of the page) and take the first adjective out of the first paragraph, the second verb in the second paragraph, the third noun out of the third paragraph, and the last noun out of the last paragraph. These are your four ingredients; use three. Argue about this year's choices and the possible interpretations. Each player now gives a one-minute "elevator pitch" about their game and titles it. Argue about the marketability of each game.

Each game has six stats: Realism, Playability, Crunchiness, Gimmickry, Art, and Buzz. Players now get a full set of dice: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and a d20. Starting with the d4, each player in turn chooses one stat to receive a value, then rolls. The chosen stat gets the value (higher is better). Argue about what this number means for each game, then move to the next stat. Once all six stats have values, roll a d6 to determine the Judges' favored category this year. Second place goes to the game with the highest stat in this category. Argue about the Judges' lack of vision.

The winner is the unknown designer who has never entered an indie games competition before and has snuck out of left field to win the Golden Spatula with a masterpiece of innovation, design, and skillful use of the ingredients. Argue about the ruling.

Many obvious thanks to Mike Holmes' Iron Game Chef, to Andy Kitkowski, and to all of the above designers for their senses of humor. Any resemblance to any actual living persons is meant as satire.

Tapas Numero Dos: Hotseat (Time range 4, Glass)

Hotseat consists of ten one-hour sessions played after your regular roleplaying game, in a psychological team style.

After each regular roleplaying session, select one player to sit in the Hotseat. It's important to physically rearrange your seating and place the Hotseat in a position of importance, like the regular GM's chair or the seat at the head of the table, or standing when everyone else is on sofas.

Whoever sits in the Hotseat must remain as their real self; they *cannot* roleplay while in the Hotseat. To begin play, give this player only their character sheet (and any relevant notes or ancillary sheets) and a tall glass filled with ice water.

The Hotseat player now chooses any other member of their play group by handing the person their character sheet. The target player must now roleplay the Hotseat player's character; they *cannot* act as their normal self or any other character from the regular campaign.

The target player, now roleplaying the character, asks the Hotseat player any one question. The question must be in character but may reference any in-game or out-of-game knowledge whatsoever, breaking the fourth wall completely and allowing the character to directly address their player. Other players may roleplay as other characters only when directed by the target player.

The Hotseat player must now answer the question, responding without roleplaying, justifying any actions or motives. Once the question is answered, the Hotseat player takes a drink of water and the target player returns the character sheet.

The Hotseat session is over when the glass is empty or at the end of one hour. The Hotseat player's character retains no knowledge of this question and answer session, but the Hotseat player always does.

At the end of the next session of the regular roleplaying game, choose the next PC in turn.

Many obvious thanks to John Tynes' Power Kill.

Tapas Numero Tres: Traditional Fantasy Trilogy (Time range 3, Ancient)

Make level three characters using only d20 Open Game Content.

Use a d6 to determine the following:

- One player makes a Fighter or Monk, one makes a Rogue or Bard, one makes a Cleric or Druid, one makes a Sorcerer or Wizard, one makes a Barbarian or a Paladin, one makes a Ranger. No player may multiclass nor even think about Prestige classes.
- One player should be the party leader, one is the learned so-and-so, one is the comic relief, one plays their opposite gender, one plays an elf, and one plays a dwarf.
- One of these six players is also the GM.

The GM preps the module and considers an alternate experience system like Sweet20, or simply elects to double all granted experience.

In the first session, the party gets the Call to Adventure and refuses the Call. They next gain Supernatural Aid from an NPC, which they use to defeat the First Threshold Guardian and enter the Belly of the Whale. Include orcs or any favored mook race.

In the second session, the party moves down the Road of Trials and Meets the Goddess. They then endure Temptation in any form and Atones with a Father Figure or appropriate Authority. Don't forget to introduce the main villain. The party then reaches Apotheosis or Enlightenment and uses this as the Ultimate Boon. Make sure that this session ends on a down note, a partial success, or a Pyrrhic victory.

In the third and final session, pick up with the party Refusing to Return. After deliberation, they then take the Magic Flight and must be Rescued from Without by an NPC. Now the party defeats the Final Threshold Guardian in an over-the-top, better than before, cutting-edge special effects extravaganza and becomes Master of Two Worlds. At the end, they are Free to Live.

The campaign is now over and these characters must never be played again. The GM keeps all character sheets and promptly loses them.

Many obvious thanks to Joseph Campbell.

Tapas Numero Cuatro: Quatrina (Time range 1, Team)

A quatrina is two thirds of a sestina, which is itself an intricate poetry form knitting together six words into six stanzas plus a final couplet. This gaming quatrina, presenting as a 1930's pulp action serial, knits together four players into a four-chapter story, with each player taking on the roles of each of three PCs and the GM.

Make three characters and play using your favorite light system: TWERPS, FUDGE, FATE, Clinton R. Nixon's the Solar System, Mountain Witch, Signature, Seven Leagues, Soap, Puppetland and Baron Munchausen all work well. In Quatrina, system does not matter; only the structure. Ensure that all four players get equal voice in creating the three PCs. Spend no more than a half-hour doing so.

In Pulp, the default setting for Quatrina, the three character archetypes are the Adventurer, the Mechanic, and the Scholar.

The GM for each chapter must give each character enough spotlight time. The first three chapters always end on a cliffhanger. The GM must leave the characters in an appropriately suspenseful situation and can not have planned a way out.

For the next session, each player changes what role they play according to the chart.

	GM	Adventurer	Mechanic	Scholar
Chapter 1: Introduction	Player A	Player B	Player C	Player D
Chapter 2: Investigation	Player D	Player C	Player A	Player B
Chapter 3: Trials	Player B	Player A	Player D	Player C
Chapter 4: Climax	Player C	Player D	Player B	Player A

Variant genres: For Noir, use Private Investigator, Journalist, and Dilettante. For Fantasy, use Fighter, Bard, and Magic-User. For High School drama, use Jock, Nerd, Socialite. For Horror, mix Noir and Pulp. For Sci-Fi, use Captain, Pilot, and Scientist. For Supers, use Tank, Gadgeteer, and Psionic. For Dark Future, use Merc, Hacker, and Fixer. For Office Politics, use Manager, Worker, and Boss. For any other genre, use a character good at combat; a character with a skilled trade or profession; and a character good with science, magic, socializing, or fringe powers as appropriate. Schtick protection is paramount.

Many non-obvious thanks to Ryan Shehee and a play group far, far away.

Tapas Numero Cinco: Ships in the Night (Time range 6, Actor)

Ships in the Night is a roleplaying game about Hollywood actors and the inherent loneliness of life in the spotlight. Each player is a famous actor who is looking for love at various social functions and has placed two personal ads in the hopes of meeting the person of their dreams.

Game setup:

1. Open your newspaper to the personals section, and have each player cut out one "Gender seeking Gender" ad as appropriate and one "I saw you"-style ad. The first ad indicates the kind of person the actor seeks, whereas the second ad indicates the style of seduction the actor prefers.
2. Based on these two choices, the player now decides what real actor they wish to portray (feel free to use the IMDb for this). Attach your personal ads to an index card with their actor's name on it. It helps to write down the player's name, as well as any fun facts about the actor: a headshot, recent films, etc.
3. Take a number of tokens equal to twice the sum of the headlines from both ads; this number should be around twelve or fifteen. Normalize as needed.
4. Put all the index cards in a hat. Each player draws one and memorizes the new "I saw you" ad. If you draw your own, draw again. *Their actor is also the person seen by the other actor.* Keep this information secret! Set aside each card as drawn.
5. Each player now gets their original card back and play begins.

Session one takes place at a party. Collaboratively decide on the party's theme using a method that works for your group. Each actor will find their "I saw you" person and will find romantic attachment by the end of the party. The two are not necessarily the same person.

Two weeks later, someone else (decide who) throws a second party with a second theme, inviting at least every actor from the last party. Any couples formed at the last party have since broken up. Get the new weekly newspaper and determine which two ads your actor has placed in the intervening two weeks as above.

The actor with the most Oscars (break ties with Golden Globe awards) begins by framing a scene. They can now spend a token into the hat to introduce other PCs, facts, NPCs, etc. into the scene. If another player objects, they can interrupt by giving a token to the speaking player. Courtesy dictates that the speaker may finish a reasonable sentence. Any player may give three tokens to the current speaker in order to guarantee an end to the current scene within five minutes and dibs to frame the next scene.

If an actor runs out of tokens, they can receive twice their Kevin Bacon number in tokens by sitting out for five minutes and giving someone else a chance to play.

Many thanks to the rampant idolatry of American journalism and infotainment.

Tapas Numero Seis: Sitting in a Tin Can (Time range 6, Law)

Sitting in a Tin Can pits one player's wits against another in a race against time. One player is a criminal dissident in cryogenic suspension en route to a prison facility orbiting a distant star for reeducation, while the other player is the intelligence guiding unmanned ship itself.

The dissident's cryotank has malfunctioned, allowing them to avoid cryosleep, remain conscious, and open their tank at will. Fortunately, the voyage will take a very long time. Unfortunately, the ship has limited life support; the dissident has only eight hours to achieve freedom.

One player takes the role of the dissident. They have a stopwatch and complete control of game time.

The other player takes the role of the ship AI.

After agreeing to play, the players create their characters separately. From this point forward, the two characters may never interact without the clock running. The players may never discuss the game in any fashion without the clock running. The AI may only start play with the dissident's agreement.

The dissident: A rogue scholar, prisoner of war, teacher, freedom fighter, terrorist, witness, political prisoner, etc. Give the character a name, background, a reason to overthrow the State, and decide their area of expertise.

The AI: An artificial personality in a ship of their own design and a manifest of their choosing. The ship must include other prisoners, but may not include any means to signal the prison facility. The ship may have an escape pod. The AI player should sketch the ship's layout and make as many notes as desired.

When apart, both players come up with any means to outwit or defeat the other. When together, the dissident starts the stopwatch and interacts with the game world (the ship, the AI, anything on the ship) as desired.

At any time the AI has stymied the dissident, the dissident may reenter their cryotank and stop the stopwatch, ending play.

The AI wins if eight hours elapse without the dissident escaping. The dissident wins if they escape, disable the ship, or otherwise avoid incarceration.

Many thanks to the game of riddles and to HAL.