

Better Drinking Rules

“The world’s greatest roleplaying game” has no rules for being drunk. What a tragedy! We’re left to saddle our players with that onerous *poisoned* condition, as though a trip to the pub is no better than falling into a pit of vipers. Highs shouldn’t hurt so bad! This supplement brings a bit of joy back to your euphoria. Ditch the poisoned condition and try on some of these new mechanics for mind-altering substances in your fantasy setting.

Content warning

Your particular players might think the lack of such rules is no tragedy. Some people struggle with substance abuse or are otherwise uncomfortable roleplaying intoxication. Session-zero is a great time to discuss whether this subject is right for your game.

Spring, the 1st day of 4th month

I didn’t complain about Sir Varnloft’s morning sermons until the 44th day of our fellowship, when he again extolled the virtues of “pure living.” I remember that day clearly. We were planning to crawl into a giant snake’s burrow at sunup on the monumentally foolish notion that the ancient beast might have some treasure. (It did not.)

Maybe the moralizing finally got to me. This wasn’t our paladin’s first condemnation of “strong drink” and “recreational herbs,” and this lecture seemed out of place over what might have been our last breakfast among the living. Maybe it was the stress of the coming encounter. Maybe I just don’t like chalk-dry biscuits for breakfast. I admit that my temper got away from me. But that smug son-of-a-sow just went on speechifying and smirking like I was proving his point!

Being the great leader she is, Janice settled the matter by saying I could make speeches of my own. A rogue’s sermon! I can’t wait. The moment we crawled out of that snake’s pit, I started making this list of the delightful and unusual inebriants I’ve experienced. These will be the topic of my own morning homilies. Sir Varnloft will hate it!

Here’s what I’ve got so far...

ME!

Sir Varnloft
the boring

Janice

I have no fucking idea
who this dwarf is

Intoxicants

These substances are not traditional poisons, meaning they offer few strategic advantages in combat. Intoxicants are difficult to administer to the unwilling and their effects take too long before setting in (1d10 + 20 minutes). The mechanics for these substances are included only because combat can—hilariously—spring up at even the most inopportune moments. Each dose lasts up to an hour (2d20 + 20 minutes), though excessive consumption can prolong the effects in unpredictable ways.

BLUE SWEATS

Other Names: Tumble Beer, Extract of Waterberries

Composition: A thick, cerulean-colored fruit beer

“I encountered this lumpy brew while searching out curatives for anxiety. (It wasn’t for me, mind you—Sir Varnloft asked our druid for a laxative, and I thought we might cure him of two ailments at once. But that’s another story.)

I never felt more real than in the hours I spent with this drink. I remember telling anyone who would listen how “normal” I felt, even as I gawked at all the beautiful shapes floating around me. I couldn’t stop sweating for the whole hour. The anxiety-curating effect worked too! I didn’t worry about the blue color of my sweat—not until I went to relieve myself and discovered that the strange coloration was affecting other things.

Blue Sweats. The consumer experiences calming hallucinations. The glittery blue perspiration makes it obvious the user is under the influence of something strange, but the consumer remains hyper-fixated on acting normal. The consumer can’t take reactions for the duration, unwilling or unable to “overreact” to things.

COLOR VISION

Other Names: Unicorn Water, The Bifrost

Composition: A candy-flavored wine said to come from the Feywild

“This is another of my favorite hallucinogenic substances. I found some shifty dwarves selling it at a crossroads. They said it was a “mild” intoxicant for lightweight drinkers. I hadn’t seen a tavern in over a week, so I bought out their entire stock.

Color vision tastes like rainbows. I don’t know how else to say it. I hope they’re not squeezing this out of unicorns or something.

Color Vision. Consumers perceive colors intensely, to the point of distraction. While in areas of bright light, subjects have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

FRIENDLY FUMES

Other Names: Krackles, Boyfriend, Group Tattoo

Composition: Gas inhalant, administered by diffusion into a confined space

“I first tried these fumes in Kaldesh. They’re a naturally-occurring gas scooped out of the depths of some caves near the city. Good news—the little bottles are exported worldwide! Open it in a small room with people you won’t mind hugging.

Friendly fumes let you experience the joys of intense friendship. Expect lots of induced appreciation. Consumers often say, “I love you, man!” and “You guys are the best!” (Do not take it with Sir Varnloft. He’s not the best.)

Friendly Fumes. The first time a consumer rolls a d20 on each of its turns, the player must say one thing their character appreciates about another party member. Failure means being overwhelmed by unprocessed feelings, thus having disadvantage on that roll.



LORD OF DANCE

Other Names: Get Steppin', Staccato, Happy Pappy
Composition: A mix of ingredients fermented inside a gourd, typically drunk from that same gourd

“This fermented drink is created inside gourds. Sometimes pumpkins. Those are my favorite—big.

A belly of this will make you smile, like you got accepted into dance school and your daddy still loves you. The taste is foul but the feeling is good. Side effects include eye-twitching and compulsive dancing. Lots of dancing. Don't expect to go anywhere unless you want to dance along the way.

***Lord of Dance.** The consumer can't travel more than 10 feet in a straight line; movement must include at least 5 feet of diagonal or perpendicular movement relative to the intended destination, made between each 10-foot stretch. Each time the consumer tries to defy these mandated "turns," the creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone, legs still shuffling.*

BLEACH

Other Names: Ordo Locus

Composition: An alchemically crafted solid, burned like a stick of incense. The active substance is administered by inhaling its fumes.

“At some point last year, I woke up in a temple I didn't recognize. Someone must have hauled me up there after I passed out behind the pub. The place was immaculate. I didn't question why beggars and supplicants were busy cleaning the place, or why I was so happy to join them. Turns out the priests were burning “bleach” in their dangling thuribles, dowsing us drunks in fumes during prayers.

I was so happy cleaning for those bastards. Everything orderly looked unnaturally pleasing to me. Janice came to rescue me the same day. She was wearing a nose plug and a big smile. I suspect she's the one who brought me there, but I can't prove it. She's often telling me I need to clean up after myself. Now that I'm thinking about it, maybe I shouldn't do a sermon about this one.

***Bleach.** Consumers feel alert and fixate on making their environment orderly and clean, usually with no regard to the boundaries of personal possessions or property. In combat, users have disadvantage on attacks with weapons or spells that inflicts slashing or piercing damage (blood is so messy), or area-affecting magic that might somehow create a clutter or damage the environment.*

CYPHER

Other Names: Spontaneous Linguist, Love, John-Roger-Huntington

Composition: A small, waxy shrub, administered by chewing or smoking the leaves

“I don't know if this herb expands the mind or simply clouds it. It makes me understand people on a deeper level than the words they use. It's like having a “universal language,” something that speaks directly to people's hearts and hears their own feelings in return.

If you're hungry for personal connection, look no further than cypher. Unfortunately, these communications are dreamlike, making them difficult to remember in the morning.

***Cypher.** Consumers lose the ability to convey complex meaning through speech and cannot cast spells with verbal components. Half of what they say is nonsense but this nonsense feels profound to the speaker. Neither can they fully understand the speech of others, believing they're reading between the lines and finding meaning “deeper” than the spoken words.*

LURCH

Other Names: Zombie, Slow-Jerk

Composition: An exotic vinegar “reconstituted” with necromantic magic

“Zombie came about after an argument with our druid about “plant life.” She insisted that fermentation was the death of a plant, not reincarnation. This seemed a profound topic, so we carried it on for a few days before eventually turning to experiments. Can plants be healed? Do they want to be? What happens when you bring wine back to life?

There's a lot of fun to be had here. You get to see your mates lurch around in circles, grunting and drooling like zombies. When your head clears, they'll describe your laughter as having come out in grunts and, if they're good friends, they'll ignore the drool on your own chin.

***Lurch.** Consumers' movements become slow and jerky; their speeds reduced by 10. Everything seems funny to them but their laughter comes out as zombie-like grunting. Consumers tend to lose all sense of comedic timing and retell the same jokes, though other consumers still find these jokes funny.*

PIXIE PIE

Other Names: Pixie High, Sky Dust, Groveling Dust

Composition: A gritty, glittery dust, typically inhaled by snorting

“Pixie Pie is worth an intense high. The side effects include a comedic fear of literal heights, including your own height. I don’t recommend taking this if you’re tall. Plenty of users end up crawling on the floor. Nobody likes walking on pixie pie. Janice tried it once, swore she needed a balance pole to help her get from the table to her bed.

***Pixie Pie.** Consumers have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks when (because) they are not prone. They can only move by crawling—standing is fine, but walking is straight out. Neither will the consumer climb, swim, or fly anywhere.*

SPECTER

Other Names: Ghost Body, Dropout, Invisibility Scroll

Composition: This slow-growing fungus is administered by contact with the gums, chewed and held in the mouth for maximized absorption. It’s also added to beer, ground into a powder and infused late in the brewing process.

“Have you ever wanted to be invisible? If so, learn to cast some simple spells; this crunchy fungus isn’t the answer. But do you want to laugh at your friends because they think they’re invisible? Then I’ve got the stuff for you!

Being invisible feels great. No one judges you. No one expects you to do anything because you’re not there. It’s incredibly freeing and mildly euphoric.

***Specter.** Consumers irrationally believe themselves to be invisible. They quickly rationalize away any evidence to the contrary. Consumers compulsively tell others that they’re invisible and delight in pranking those who “can’t see them.” In combat, they can’t (won’t) use the Disengage action, thinking enemies already can’t see their backs being turned.*

WIZARD COCAINE

Other Names: Cocaine

Composition: A powder alchemically-distilled from the leaves of a tropical shrub. Wizard cocaine appears in various physical forms, administered by inhaling, injecting, or consuming.

“Look, I wasn’t going to try wizard cocaine. I heard the rumors. I know better. This snort-able powder isn’t even legal in most kingdoms. But in the end, I wanted my research to be thorough. And here’s what I can tell you.

It’s fucking amazing.

Seriously. It’s stimulating. It’s euphoric. It’s psychedelic. It’s got everything you want!

I don’t know why they call it “wizard cocaine.” Maybe a wizard invented it. Maybe it’s the way your clothes and possessions tend to magically disappear while you’re semi-lucid. Now I’m thinking of it, I should offer some to Janice and see if it affects wizards differently.

***Wizard Cocaine.** Consumers feel invigorated. They have advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and on Wisdom (Perception) checks. Subjects also feel growing paranoia and agitation, culminating in depression and listlessness when the substance wears off.*



I hope that's enough topics for the first week. I wonder if I can convince Sir Varnloft the Boring to try some "sacramental" samples?

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

Originally published 31/05/2022

Latest version 08/05/2023

Credits

Writer: Randall Right

Steel Patrons: Abbi Taylor, BlackbirdofTx, Brian Smith, Caitlin Bellinger, Charles Bryant, Craig Savage, David, David Dyer, David McCall, Dragoon Of Kyri, Enrico Viscione, GenX Jedi, James Makkyla, Jill Potter, Joseph Brown, Kerry McCorkle, krishna chivukula, Kyle Somers, Lara Ty, Luke Hermann, Luke Rule, Max David, Paul Carmichael, Paul S, Phillip Brown, Platypulogist, Scott Thomas, SonOfSofaman, Steve Yahnner, Thomas Dutton, Tim, William Bond

Everything Else: Matthew Perkins

