

## **Food Smash Trainee**

My game idea, Food Smash Trainee, would be an interactive novel, with scenes based on memories I had at my first job at a cafe. The emphasis is on the characters/coworkers you meet, with their personalities making each scene memorable. The scenario is that you're a new hire, training on a Food Smash night, when all the employees meet at the store to try all the menu items together. All you have to do in order to progress is go through the training positions and items in any order you want.

In the introduction you enter The Cafe from Your Car in the Parking Lot, walking through the dining room to reach the Training Board, except you're stopped to meet Cute. The store is about to close and they have just finished their Soup, which they ask you where to put away. You offer to put it away for them, which they accept kindly. Cute says they'll see you around and you head to the back of house.

After being guided to The Dishwash to put the Soup away, you'll have The Manager meet you in the back and turn your attention to the Trainee Board. On it, there's a small menu of items and illustrations of the positions for you to choose from. The Manager wishes you luck and says they're excited to have you here for their Food Smash night.

Choosing a section from the Trainee Board guides you to the respective area, where your coworkers are waiting to start training. After completing each dialogue and respective interactions you will be asked to return to the Trainee Board.

After each 3 scenes/sections of training, you will have break-time. Each break-time has you grab a sandwich and walk to Your Car. On Your Car, you will see a note left by Cute. You read each note and have a moment to eat your sandwich before returning to The Cafe.

The game/series that inspires the design is Frog Detective, with its cast of charming characters and quirky scenarios. The plots are simple and the story is easy to complete, so the focus is on the interactions the player has with the cast, with everything

coming together in the end. The structure would be similar, with the player choosing who/what to interact with in any order, with a finite resolution.

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Thematically, the game is similar to the Book-in-a-Box format introduced by The Unfortunates, with the scenes based on my real-life experiences. They are recalled in random order by the player, in the same way Johnson chose to do, but in this case it won't be presented as such, because Food Smash Trainee is played out in a linear story. This difference means that the player is free to associate their own meaning onto the game's narrative, regardless of the actual order events took place in order of memory. This also mirrors how I would tell others of my memories, because I recalled them in random order as well. In fact, I don't think I could even tell you what order they all actually happened in, so playing through them in this way resembles my own re-lived experiences.

Structurally, the game is similar to a dendritic format, with the scenes all being self-contained, but essential to make progress after the intro and towards the ending. Even though each scene stands on its own, the setting of the narrative unifies each part together. The scene order being left to the player is essential to this, it's not tied to any specific linear path, but it's contained within an overall narrative comprised of its specific parts.

If this game were to be playable, I would like it to feel personal. It would be a chronicle of specific moments in my life, with specific characters that I remember in a small time and place. It would be more than just writing about my memories, in a game anyone could experience them in a fun format, an approachable way.

I think the idea of creating playable memories is a fascinating way to approach game-design, because whether it's fiction or not, that's what we're doing, creating memories out of experiences. The advantage in the medium of game-design lies in its flexibility, where we can choose to present players with a linear

story much like any novel, that happens to let them interact with it along the way, or we can give players more freedom to interact with sections individually, potentially creating more variations in nuance and meaning. There's no limit on the number of potential story-telling structures we can create while combining these approaches. Because we're creating a personal experience of stories at play, presenting themes in various narrative structures is crucial to our understanding of them.