



HOW TO USE THESE PAGES

In *Occult teas*, you're a witch. Witches listen and witches weave help behind the scenes. Offer your visitors a brew designed to calm their anxieties and seek their own deep reserves of fortitude, or perhaps something to rein in rose-tinted love that needs perspective, or maybe their sense of emptiness needs recognition and validation to begin refilling again. Do your work through the tea, offer words of advice, (or don't and let the tea do the talking), and offer anything else you feel comfortable using to help your visitors.

Occult teas can potentially be used a few different ways. Maybe you're looking for a springboard for a one-shot or short story. Maybe you want some ideas to build a location or character in an overarching campaign in a particular system. Or maybe you shouted, "Tea? Witches? Sign me up!" when you saw this thing. Honestly, that's how I felt trying to write it. There are suggested roll (or not) mechanics further down. Depending on how you're using *Occult teas*, the players can be the witches or they could play the patrons while the GM takes up that mantle.

WHO ARE YOU?

You're a witch. And you can be pretty much any kind of witch you like.* We're using witch as a gender neutral term, by the way. If your character(s) would use a different word to refer to themselves, go for it.**

"Do I *have* to be a good witch?" you ask, and I admittedly sigh a little and gaze out the nearest window in dramatic fashion. No, you don't *have* to be. I'm not going to come bust down your door if I find out you're using your powers to do the evil stuff. Just be clear about your goals with your GM or your players, and make sure everyone's on board. (Also, good and bad can be relative. I personally love witches who dismantle oppressive systems from behind the scenes. Just saying.)

WHERE ARE YOU BREWING

And on that note, *when* are you brewing? Is this a local hangout on the corner circa 1999 or a vine-covered hut on the outskirts of some vaguely medieval town? Maybe you retrofit a previous villain's volcano lair after offering them council over a nice chamomile. Some suggestions: Your shop can...

- be upfront about the witchy stuff.
- provide general refreshments with the witchy stuff happening behind the curtain, (your call on it being a literal curtain or not, I won't judge you for wanting one with glow-in-the-dark stars).
- just be about the tea, nothing extra, just happens to be run by (a) witch(es).
- be a haven for local misfits, outcasts, "undesirables".
- offer warmth and sustenance to the homeless.
- be in the process of being built.
- be on the verge of closing and needs the community to pull together to save it!

If you're looking for a quick start, here's some ideas you can roll (d100) or choose from:

01-10	A cozy downtown spot with seating for less than ten, lots of antiques around.
11-20	It's haunted. Like, really, REALLY haunted.
21-30	Whatever it is, it's at a crossroads. Legends about devilish deals are optional.
31-40	It used to belong to your grandma, and you're not really sure how she ever kept it running. Heck, you're not sure how you keep it running but somehow, the people- and the money- comes as it's needed.
41-50	Full of teenagers, possibly run by teenagers, the manager is never there.
51-60	Payments (offerings) are made directly to a corvid companion of your choosing and must be appraised and accepted by them in advance. Offerings should be shiny, sparkly, smooth, or warm.
61-70	A far future dive, offering an alternative to the usual "caf" and "stim" of semi-scifi.
71-80	Forget haunted. This place is run by ghosts, for ghosts.
81-90	Literally under a rock. Bring on the moss, vines, and friendly fungi!
91-00	The roof <i>just</i> caved in on one side.



WHAT ARE YOU BREWING

Where and when you're brewing will certainly influence what's on the menu. Below are some straightforward potential base components, but you definitely don't have to conform to them. Go nuts and get creative! Pop a sour candy in there. Use fried wiring to add a metallic bite to the aftertaste. Pretend aged spider silk has a light flavor reminiscent of after-dinner mints. Ghosts totally taste like marshmallows.

Necessary disclaimer: I'm not a doctor and this isn't medical advice. This chart is for a game, for fun.

MINT: good for tummy aches and iffy circulation; also for revealing deceptions, be they within or without	CATNIP: make friends with cats; gain insight into your relationships with others, mixed with roses it aids in those love-tinted issues
ELDERFLOWER: fight that flu; best for musing on the divide between life and death	BASIL: nice for headaches; for dealing with changes in one's living situation
SAGE: recommend adding citrus for an awesome breath freshener; seen as a cure-all, it mixes well with others to create potency, whatever you need it for	CHAMOMILE: old reliable for sleep troubles, add cinnamon for delicious funksies; attract solutions for financial difficulties that often cause those sleep troubles
DANDELION: ground and roasted they boost intuition; also good for calling spirits, so be wary of not tidying up an unfinished cup	JASMINE: a classic floral touch to any blend; helps guard you against the ever-present mind goblins/demons/etc
VIOLETS: soothes a sore temper; helps you take a step back and process what happened	VANILLA: energy boost incoming; helps in seeking a clear mind and self love

WHY ARE THEY HERE

Your visitors will arrive for varying reasons and some may be dependent on your shop setting and how upfront all the witchy business is. This is the heart of *Occultas*, the folk you're lending an ear. I encourage you to dive as deep as you like when building these patrons' history and needs. Be aware of who is at your table and what troubles may invoke anxieties (or worse). Be prepared to chat ahead of time, if necessary, about absolute no-go's and things to avoid.

Patron troubles may come to your players in the form of ongoing chapters or they may have more of a "trouble of the week" flavor to them. It's up to you and the kind of shop you're looking to run. Here's a few thoughts:

- Troubles may be direct or indirect. Perhaps it's something they're dealing with on behalf of someone else, or carrying that emotional weight for them.
- At the end of the day, it's actually up to your visitor(s) to help themselves. You're just aiding with the witchy, magic-ish side of things. Then again, if you want your witch to double as an evil fought by moonlight type, I'd be totally down for that. (Actually, maybe I just had an idea for a future expansion page...)
- It's ok for your witch to say no. Say no, say nothing, set your own boundaries.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE (IF YOU WANT)

Other services your tea shop offers can fall under a few umbrellas. The two most obvious are food and divination. Build your food options around your shop: exquisite fruit tarts, vegan mousse, hearty rabbit stew, whatever suits the space and your fancy. The food could double as a tool to gain a leg up on solving troubles, or merely aid in filling the bellies of the weary.

One of the most obvious divination choices for a tea shop would, of course, be tea leaf reading. If you'd like to get specific, there are a lot of references out there, possibly in your local library. Here are some less grounded, just for fun ideas:

SPECTRE	The solution is staring you right in the face but you're looking past it as though it isn't there. Stop fooling yourself or don't be surprised when there's a loud crash in the middle of the night.
PIXIE WINGS	Not to be confused with fairy wings. A warning against not taking small problems seriously enough. A paper cut is just a paper cut until you've got a hundred.
TOADSTOOL	You've got friends in low places, know where to look for them. They'll be there for you on rainy days.
RINGS OF SATURN	Reach out to one of the many contacts you have in your personal orbit, they've stuck around for a reason. Don't doubt their loyalty.
PORTABLE RADIO CIRCA 1997	Huh, radio. Listen carefully and read between the waves. Don't let the hum of the static in everyday life make you numb to the truth inside. You're somebody, now go meet yourself.

Tarot is another common (and popular) divination tool. Again, lots of references out there, and you can always substitute tarot-likes from your own system or story. You can stick to the major arcana to simplify things in-game, if you prefer. And just to put it out there, as someone who has used tarot for some time, tools like these tend to be something that's more helpful to put the "now" in perspective, versus actually telling the future as it will happen. This is why I've included them as a suggestion for ways to understand and allay the troubles of your visitors.

Another potential service your shop could offer is merch! Mugs, boxes of your patented blends, sample packs, embroidered towels, screen printed tees by some other local spot. Just a friendly reminder that people love mascots whether that mascot is an artistic creation or a live-in shop pet. Maybe you house adoptable shelter animals looking for new homes, or maybe the local strays (that you totally pulled a catch & release on) come and go as they please.



HOW TO ROLL (OR NOT)

Occultas is meant to be malleable to your preferred dice (or lack of). Are you more into pure narrative? Collective storytelling without dice, tables, or tallies? Have at it, as you please. Looking for some guidance on stats and other numbers? See below.

◆SUGGESTED STATS FOR CHARACTERS

INTUITION: Are you better at reading people or situations?

SAVVY: Are you more keen with business or pleasure?

BREWING: What's your style?

Other potentials include: SECRET CIRCLE (sneaky sneaky), WEB WEAVER (it's all about connections), TANGLED ROOTS (it's a family business)

◆BREWER'S CHART (choose one or roll a d6, or make your own)

1	You don't have time for loose leaf, teabags only, but the cups are always clean and cute.
2	You're a master of on-the-spot blends, picking herbs off the wall, eyeballing everything. You serve your concoctions in mismatched (and possibly cracked) teacups, mugs, or bowls.
3	It's more hot water than it is tea... This is also a measuring cup, not a teacup.
4	Honey? Sugar? Lactose free creamer? The mug handle might be missing but it's full of love.
5	Make it iced. By the pitcher.
6	Full ceremony, loose leaf preferred, in teacups with matching saucers.

◆PLAYING OCCULTEAS AS ITS OWN THING, IF YOU'RE INTO THAT:

Choose three stats that suit your character. You have ten slots total to distribute amongst those stats. You may spread them out evenly (3-3-4 for example) or lean into strengths/weaknesses (more like 6-3-1 or 7-2-1). Actions connected to those stats will drain your slots, one at a time. Any unstrained slots will refresh upon a full rest, (proper sleep, not just a nap). Actions not connected to those stats may be considered free or you could introduce a chance element, such as a block tower pull game, or rolling against the GM using d20's. (There's no leveling up in the core version of *Occultas* currently.)

Running out of slots in a stat does not mean you are barred from action, but you may become strained. You might begin to second guess your hunches, make a spur of the moment decision where normally you would meditate, or break your favorite mug, (the horror). When out of slots in a stat, you may act by rolling to try to meet or exceed a necessary number of successes. The number needed (difficulty) should be set by your GM per action or scene. However you choose to roll at your table, present what you

want to use to avoid the strain- a tarot pull, a cat cuddle, taking a nap first, or recalling something from earlier that seemed unrelated at the time. Use these things to build your preferred pool, (d6's, 10's, why not even show some love to the 12's, your call).

If you're successful, you may act without strain, pulling from your inner reserves of strength. If you fail, you may choose to accept the failure and move on or shoulder a slot of strain. A strained slot does not automatically recover upon a full rest. For each slot of strain you receive, an additional rest is required. (For example, if you have two slots of strain, you will need three rests to recover fully.)

What happens in the unpleasant situation where your strain in a stat is maxed? You may still act with that stat, but now you risk a shutdown. (Stakes should be appropriately tweaked by the GM relative to what's happening.) If you succeed, you avoid a shutdown and lose one slot of strain per success rolled, hurray! If you fail when attempting your action this time though, you will experience a shutdown. What this means narratively should be unique to your character and the situation. Do they quietly excuse themselves to the restroom for a good cry? Do they close their shop for the next week? It's up to you. The good news is that after the shutdown plays out, all strain drops from your character and you may recover your slots normally again.



***IN THIS GAME, WE OBSERVE THE “OLIVIA HILL RULE”**



If you're a fascist, you're not welcome to play this game. It's against the rules. If you're reading this and thinking, "You just call everyone you disagree with a fascist," then you're probably a fascist, or incapable of drawing inferences from context and acknowledging a dangerous political climate that causes the oppressed to be hyperbolic. Don't play this game. Heal yourself. Grow. Learn. Watch some Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood or something.

The "Olivia Hill" Rule was created by Machine Age Productions [<https://machineage.tokyo/>] and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 4.0 license. [For more information, please see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>]

****ON THAT NOTE,
SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND....**

Witches come from all over the world in every possible composition our bodies and minds can conjure. Be aware of the sometimes sordid histories, the prejudices, the influence of colonialism, cultural appropriation, and the twisting of paganism to serve fascist ideals. When building your shops and your characters, be sensitive to these issues, strive to create safety at your table, and be willing to listen, talk about, and educate yourself on these topics.

My own witchy background comes from white-centric, mixed European roots plus some Indigenous American, so this first version leans heavy into that influence. Just wanted to be up front about the potentially narrow presentation I've got going on here. Please feel welcome to use your own backgrounds and knowledge to expand and alter what you find here. Hope to maybe evolve this into a bigger 'n better "thing" in future, when I have more time for it on my hands. Feedback is welcome.

Keep your chin up and your fangs out.
-Marley D

