

Game Design

The Cupbearer GDD

Play as the King's cup bearer to detect poisons based off of the smell of the drink. Using OVR's Omara Scent Display, use your nose to sniff out the poison or die trying.

High Level Concept

- The Cupbearer features the story of how our unnamed main character goes from the King's expendable cupbearer, to his right hand man.
- Our story mode takes place over the course of 4 Chapters featuring entirely unique mini games solely focused on smelling.
- There will be an Arcade Mode that will allow players to freely play mini games infinitely without any story or dialogue.

Characters

- **King William:** The Good King, caught up in foreign affairs after his crusade hasn't panned out very well.
- **Prince Robert:** The eldest of the twin princes. Seems pretty evil, and is out for his father's throne.
- **Prince Rupert:** The younger of the twin princes. Alcoholic who is pretty aloof to the whole lifestyle.
- **Royal Advisor Geoffrey:** The King's very old advisor. Actually the assassin who has been turning everyone against each other secretly.
 - Has enabled Rupert's alcoholism which has turned the King against him.
 - Telling Robert that the King is plotting to grant Rupert the crown.
 - Created false stories about Ragnar's motives to tell to the Queen.
 - Alienated Ragnar to make him angry with the royal family.
 - Hired the player because he thought you were an idiot.
- **Queen Eleanor:** The King's wife. Pompous and rude to you.
- **Royal Chef Ragnar:** The finest chef in the land, hails from the Dwarven Mines of the East. Frustrated with the Queen and her sons.

Game Modes and Chapter Brainstorming

- **Arcade Mode:** The original version of the game from our game jam.
 - Features an infinite loop with scaling difficulty for the cup smelling mini game.
 - Maybe the finalized arcade mode features different mini game types from the story
 - Create a leaderboard to save user's highscores (cups cleared, rounds cleared?)
- **Story Mode:** A series of chapters featuring new characters, dialogue, and specialized mini games that all build on the core smelling mechanic.
 - As the player gains the trust of the king, you gain reputation and get promoted to protect the king and his family.
 - **Chapter 1: Tutorial + 4 rounds of cup mini game**
 - Introduce main mechanic, Royal Advisor, and the King.
 - Features all content from the original game jam version of the game.
 - **Chapter 2: Serve the correct dish to each member of the royal family based on strict allergy guidelines.**
 - Queen Eleanor fears Ragnar is a foreign spy and assassin. So she tasks you with
 - Smell each dish and confirm it doesn't contain the allergen for each given member of the family.
 - Meet the Royal Chef, who onboards the mini game, and explains that the family is severely inbred hence their lethal allergies.
 - The Chef mentions he is from a foreign land, a potential suspect for the final level.
 - Drag and drop each dish to proper name tag of family member.
 - Gameplay example: The king is allergic to spice so confirm the king's dish doesn't smell like spice. There will be an allergy chart provided by the chef.
 - Each family member will eat at the end and if any of them die you lose. If they all get served the right dish you win.

- **Chapter 3: Hunting Trip with the Royal Family**
 - Possible adventure based level in the dark forest. As a hunting trip goes wrong, you and Prince Rupert get stranded and must follow your nose to get back home.
 - Learn about the elder prince Robert who seems very suspicious, wants his inheritance and to take the throne.
 - Keep finding clues on the ground and you must choose the right paths based off of the smells you pick up. The king wears a very strong cologne, and you find scraps from his clothes leading you in the right direction.
 - You find the King who was kidnapped and knocked unconscious. The suspect gets away without revealing themselves.
- **Chapter 4: Determine the culprit.**
 - After the king is returned to the Castle, you must interrogate your suspects: Robert, Rupert, Abad, Eleanor, and Geoffrey to determine who has been trying to kill the King.
 - You are placed in charge of the investigation by King William himself.
 - While interrogating the Queen she mentions that she fears Abad is out to kill the king. Suddenly you receive word that the King has been poisoned.
 - **STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS**

In Depth Level Breakdowns

Chapter 1: The Cupbearer

Overview

Chapter 1 acts as onboarding to the main mechanic of smelling to solve puzzles that persists in each chapter. It introduces you to Advisor Geoffrey who hires you to be the new Cupbearer to the good King. The simple gameplay loop consists of sniffing each cup, taking notes on scents you pick up, and then pinpointing the poisoned cup based on the poison hint. If the king drinks each cup without dying then you continue to the next round.

Gameplay

- **Objective:** Complete all 5 rounds of drink sniffing without letting the king get poisoned.
- **Flow:** After finishing 1 round some dialogue will trigger between characters, and then flow right into the next round starting from the phase in which you receive the cup.

Mechanics

- **Core Mechanic:** Smelling cups and identifying the scents you pick up on.
 - To make note of what you pick up on you must click a thought bubble prefab that floats around the screen matching the scent you are smelling.
 - Clicking incorrect scents will result in losing some time from the time window to take notes.
 - Pressing **SPACE** will trigger your nose to appear which is the cue to sniff as the OVR sprays the scent.
 - Scents are randomized but cannot be repeated in the same round
 - Descriptors are randomized based on different “tiers” of words, and cannot be repeated in the same round.
- **Resmelling:** The next phase after the initial smelling phase that allows the player to resmell a cup 2x if they wanted to double check
 - WE MAY REMOVE THIS DEPENDING ON PLAYTEST FEEDBACK
- **Pick Your Poison:** Pick the cup that you believe is poisoned based on the hint given to you by Geoffrey.
 - A hint featuring a word from the same list as the poisoned scent is displayed in the corner of the screen.
 - The player needs to pick a cup that matches that hint.
 - Hints scale in difficulty featuring “harder words”.
 - Cups where you ran out of time to pick out notes will not display any notes under it, making it harder to determine the poisoned cup
- **Saving:**
 - Quitting midway during chapter 1 will save your current “day” of the mini game.

Scaling Variables based on each day

Day	1	2	3	4	5
Cup Count	2	3	4	5	6
Time Per Cup	10	8	6	5	4

Chapter 2: The Chef

Overview

Chapter 2 builds on the smelling mechanics the player learned from Chapter 1. You are tasked by the Queen to temporarily take over for Chef Ragnar as she suspects he may try and poison the royal family. Chef Ragnar will introduce you to his kitchen which resembles a dwarven forge, and onboard you to this cooking mini game. In Chapter 2, the game loop consists of viewing each royal family member's order, and cooking it for them while adhering to strict dietary restrictions. You must smell each dish to confirm it doesn't match the order's allergy descriptor.

Gameplay

- **Objective:** Complete all 5 days of cooking for the royal family without poisoning any of the 4 family members.
- **Flow:** After finishing 1 round some dialogue will trigger between characters that will vary depending on how fast you made their meals or if you messed anything up (burnt their food).
- **Core Mechanic:** Dragging and dropping ingredients in order to prepare them for dinner
 - 3 different ways to prepare an ingredient (Each type alters the smell of the ingredient):
 - **Grilling:** Placing an ingredient on the grill will begin to cook it. To keep the grill hot you must press space to fan the flames as it will automatically die down, halting the grilling progress.
 - Ingredient goes from RAW -> GRILLED -> BURNT
 - **Crushing:** Use Ragnar's trusty hammer to crush an ingredient on the anvil. Crushing 3 times will swap the state of the ingredient to CRUSHED
 - This ingredient is still considered raw and cannot be served. Crushing is a precursor to stewing, which will alter the smell.
 - Using multiple sprites, the hammer will animate as if you are lifting it up when you drag it upwards by a specific amount on screen. As it collides with the food/anvil it will swap sprites and spark particles will spray out.
 - Letting go of the hammer will revert it back to its rack.
 - **Stewing:** Crushed items can be placed into the stew pot which can hold multiple crushed ingredients.

- The pot also is connected to the same fire system as the grill, so keeping the fire hot will stew the ingredients faster, but you cannot cook the stew like the grill.
 - The pot can be emptied by dragging it to the fire.
 - Drag the ladle to the pot and then to a plate to serve the stew.
 - Plates of stew have to be smelled once per ingredient to check each one.
- **Incinerate:** To get rid of an ingredient, stew pot, or plate of food, drag it into the fire.
 - Shoot out smoke particles and destroy the food.
 - If you dump a plate it will shatter and explode everywhere. A new plate will fall from above the screen into place.
- **Smelling:** Click a plate on the rack to smell it after placing the cooked meal on it.
 - Triggers the same nose popup from chapter 1, (Press space to sniff)
 - Can be smelled as many times as needed.
 - Confirm the scent doesn't match the scent descriptor of the order ticket. If it does, then it means the dish will poison the person who ordered it due to their allergies.
 - **Easy Example:** The king's ticket shows the raw mutton sprite, and the allergy listed is "Spicy". If you stew mutton, it will smell spicy which would kill the king. So the correct option would be to grill the mutton which smells smoky.
 - **Advanced Example:** The Queen ordered a dish with carrots, goose berries, and mutton. Her listed allergen is sweet, so you cannot stew the goose berries which will smell sweet. Therefore you must crush and stew the mutton and carrots, and grill the goose berries which will then smell like citrus.
- **Serving:** Once each required plate is filled, a SERVE button will appear in the corner. After confirming the scent of each dish, press it to trigger the Serving Scene
 - Each family member will take a bite going down the line from King William to Prince Rupert.
 - Similar to the tasting in Chapter 1, if any dish is poisoned they will die on the spot and you will be executed.
 - If not, they all will smile, and you will trigger dialogue before flowing into the next "day" or finish the Chapter.
- **Saving:**
 - Quitting midway during chapter 2 will save your current "day" of the mini game.

Ingredient States and Smells (NEEDS MAJOR TESTING)

Ingredient	Grilled Smell	Stewed Smell
Mutton	Smoky	Spicy/Savory
Carrot	Sweet	Floral
Cod	Marine	Citrus
Gooseberries	Citrus	Sweet
Mushrooms	Floral	Marine
Mutton + Cod		Savory Spice
Mutton + Gooseberry		Floral
Mutton + Mushroom		Terra Silva
Cod + Gooseberry		Evergreen
Cod + Mushroom		Beach
Gooseberry + Mushroom		Winter

Chapter 3: The Hunt

Chapter 4: The Assassin

Scent Descriptors

Scent Type	Easy Words	Medium Words	Hard Words
Winter ?	Watermelon, cool mint, Cold Air	Snowy, Frosty, Icy	Ozone, Glacial, Arctic

Sweet	Vanilla, Creamy, Chocolate, Sweet, Sugar	Donuts, Cake, Candy,	Icing, Pastries, Custard, Ganache
Evergreen	Pine, Evergreen, Fresh, Forest, Trees	Mountain air, Pine Cones, Winter,	Alpine, Christmas, Coniferous, Winter Forest
Citrus	Orange, Citrus, Lime, Lemon, Fruity	Zesty, Citrus, Bright, Tart, Juicy	Berries, Grapefruit, Yuzu, Pithy, Citron
Floral	Floral, Flowers, Sweet Flowers	Daisies, Roses, Earthy Floral	Garden, Botanical, Pollen
Kindred	Lavender, Laundry, Clean	Cozy, Clean Linens	Blankets, Homey
Marine	Seaside, coastal, ocean mist, Water	Driftwood, Salty, Seawater, Sea Breeze	Seaweed, Nautical, Saltwater, Briny
Desert	Dry, Sandy, Dusty	Desert, Sun-Baked	Ruins, Arid, Ancient
Savory Spice	Spicy, Cinnamon, Meat	Nutmeg, Warmth, Paprika, Peppery	Seasonings, Saffron, Umami, Savory Herbs
Smoky	Smoky, BBQ, Campfire	Fire, Bacon, Ribs	Ash, Smoked Meats, Charred, Embers

Cupbearer Dialogue

Tutorial Script

Royal Advisor

So you're his majesty's new cupbearer, eh? | Our last one met his maker after stealing a sip from the King's chalice. | Ever since our campaign in the Holy Land began, his Majesty's life has been under siege from spies trying to poison his wine. | Before the banquet begins, let's test that sniffer of yours to see if your nose is as trained as you claim.

Swap to Smell Screen

This is a vial of devilsbane extract, one of the deadliest poisons in Brimbletonschustershire. | Give it a sniff and then tell me what notes you are picking up. Press Space to smell.

SmellPhase

If you choose wrong:

Are you sure about that lad? Why don't you give it another go?
Good God man! I thought you claimed you had one of the best noses in the county?
I'm losing my patience here, boy. Our Lord's life is in peril. How is he going to drink his exotic beverages?!

If you choose correctly first try:

So the stories are true... Your nose is as powerful as they say. Good job.

If you chose wrong but eventually get it right:

You scared me a bit there, lad, but you got it. Please don't let me down, or else it'll be both our heads on the line if his majesty perishes.

Transition to gameplay loop (screen goes dark)

Ladies and Lords! Behold! The King!!

Place Cup

Alright son, now's your time to shine. The King's guests have brought barrels of their foreign wines for him to imbibe on. We've received intel that spies have poisoned one of these two glasses with something smelling of **Vanilla**. Take some notes on the odor of these first two drinks. Beware, the King gets

very impatient, so make haste, or else you won't have time to take notes on each drink.

Smell Cup Phase

Pick Poison

Now.. click the cup that you believe was poisoned. Think carefully.

If you picked wrong:

Are you absolutely certain?

Really? You're positive that's it?

Let's think on it for a second more, perhaps Shall we?

If Correct choice

(point and explode the cup)

**King drinks cup
End Screen and Loop**

Day 2 End Dialogue: Meet the Twins

Prince Rupert: You there! Nose boy! What a display that was! I am Prince Rupert the Resilient, Baron of the Barrel, and Connoisseur of.. uh.. the Cork. Hic.

Prince Rupert: Blessed me, this frostwine from the peaks of Glaciara is absolutely stunning. Say, have you seen my idiot brother Robert around? He bet me you wouldn't keep your head for a full 2 days of this lousy job. Guess he underestimated that sniffer of yours eh?

Prince Robert Enters

Prince Robert: Why must you always bother the poor plebians while they are at work brother.

Prince Rupert: Ah! Robert there you are! My new friend and I were just discussing how you owe me 20 crown marks as a result of our little wager. Pay up now would you?

Prince Robert: Fine, as you wish you drunken fool. Please excuse my *younger* brother's idiotic nature, tis the very reason I will be succeeding father's throne instead of him.

Prince Rupert: Pah! We both know I'm the eldest boy, you sniveling fool. Say, this frostwine is positively delightful, I must find myself another bottle in father's cellar. I must!

Rupert exits the screen.

Prince Robert: Do get back to work now boy, father's life hangs in the balance here. T'would be such a shame if his radiance were to be poisoned wouldn't it? For you that is, I hear the dungeons are quite chilly this time of year.

Screen Fades - Transition to Day 3

Day 3 End Dialogue: Meet Ragnar

Chef Ragnar: You! Cup boy or whatever they call you. Good job not killing the King, would make my job a whole lot harder if you did.

Chef Ragnar: I've just about had it with these bloody nobles. Ask what they fancy for supper and all you get is a lecture on their allergies.

Mocking Tone: No Chef, no sweetness in my dinner tonight! No nutmeg, I can't handle any spice! Pah, what a joke. They're all so picky because their bloodline's been stewin' in the same pot for centuries!

Chef Ragnar: And now Her Majesty has the gall to claim that I'm trying to poison their food. I served this family for 80 bloody years and this is how they repay me? But because His Majesty went and started a war in the Mines of the East, suddenly I'm the enemy? Just because I've cousins with beards longer than her patience?!

Chef Ragnar: Cooked for the King's father, and his father before him! I was braisin' mutton while she was still learnin' which fork was which! What a bloody joke.

Chef Ragnar: Tell you what, Cupbearer. If you're to survive this madhouse, you'll need to learn the kitchen. Smell every dish. Trust your snout. And if the Queen keeps accusing me? You and I will prove her wrong. One properly seasoned plate at a time.

Transition to Day 4

Day 4 End Dialogue: Meet the Queen

Queen Eleanor:

Greetings, servant. You are the new cupbearer, are you not? The one with the... *exceptional nose*.

Queen Eleanor:

Hm. I must admit, I expected you to be dead by now. Most in your position do not last long in this court.

Queen Eleanor:

Ever since my husband marched off on that disastrous crusade, these halls are thick with vipers. Assassins. Spies. Foreign snakes whispering in every corridor.

Queen Eleanor:

And yet somehow, *you* continue to keep him alive. Curious.

Queen Eleanor:

I trust you have noticed how... strange things have become around here.

Queen Eleanor:

I have heard whispers that this *dwarven chef* is attempting to kill us with his cooking.

Queen Eleanor:

Tell me, Cupbearer... when you smell the King's wine... do you ever smell something... *wrong?*

Queen Eleanor:

I do not trust this Ragnar. Not for a moment. A foreigner from the Mines cooking for the royal family during wartime? Oh please!

Queen Eleanor:

You will be assisting in the kitchens soon. I want every dish inspected before it touches this family's table.

Queen Eleanor:

If that bearded oaf truly is trying to poison us, your nose will expose him.

Queen Eleanor:

And if he is innocent...

(pause)

Queen Eleanor:

...then we will simply have eliminated another possibility.

Queen Eleanor:

Now return to your duties. My husband grows thirsty, and the night is still young.

Day 5 End Dialogue: Meet the King

King William:

You there. The cupbearer.

King William:

Step forward.

King William:

I have been watching you these past days. Five nights of feasting... five attempts upon my life.

King William:

And yet here I stand.

King William:

You have a remarkable nose, boy. More remarkable still... is that you have managed to keep your wits in this pit of snakes.

King William:

The court whispers of assassins. My wife sees spies in every shadow. My sons bicker like wolves over scraps of a throne that is not yet theirs.

King William:

And somewhere in this castle... someone is trying very hard to see me dead.

(leans closer)

King William:

Tell me, Cupbearer... when you smell these poisons... do they smell like the work of fools?

(pause)

King William:

No. I think not.

King William:

Which means whoever is behind this... is patient.

King William:

Clever.

King William:

And still here.

King William:

But from this day forward, you serve directly under my command.

King William:

If anyone in this castle tries to interfere with your work... they will hang for it.

King William:

Do your job well, and we may yet live long enough to see who is truly behind all this.

(raises goblet)

END OF CHAPTER 1

Game Description

The Cupbearer is a scent-driven puzzle game where you must protect a medieval king from assassination using nothing but your nose.

You play as the king's expendable cupbearer, tasked with smelling every drink before it reaches the royal lips. With the help of OVR's Omara Scent Display, players physically sniff scents released during gameplay to identify poison hidden within the king's chalice. One mistake means death—either for the king, or for you.

Across a four-chapter story campaign, what begins as a humiliating job slowly turns into something far more dangerous. As political tensions rise within the royal court, you uncover a web of lies, betrayal, and assassination attempts that threaten the throne itself.