

Khymos



Khymos relates to ordinary restaurants like an avant-garde art gallery does to a poster shop. Located in upscale Catseye Heights it is firmly part of extropian haute expérience. It might have become an establishment in itself, but it is still edgy enough: there are enough interesting scandals and accidents every year to keep interest high.

Khymos specializes in abstract food. Just as abstract art is art freed from the constraints of depicting the visual world, abstract food provides experiences going far beyond traditional taste, texture, nutrition or pleasure. It blurs the lines between food, art and drugs.

While exotic and abstract food has been around for decades it was the spread of AGI that triggered a first renaissance. AGIs interested in food found the human (or uplift) palate very limited. Why just keep to traditional "good" tastes when there was a universe of possible taste combinations? Morae 483434911's dish "omnivore" won critical acclaim for its daring taste symmetries, despite being utterly inedible by any biomorph. Soon the transhumans began to explore the new domain using enhanced senses, on-line processing and biotechnology. The second renaissance occurred with the spread of nanodrugs and cortical stacks, allowing even more radical information content in the dishes. By this point the purely abstract gastronomy was starting to seem dated, and a wider "contemporary" culinary culture began to emerge. Khymos is one of the premier establishments for experiencing contemporary food, open for all forms of gustatory (and transgustatory) expression.

Eating at Khymos is done at one's own risk. While most food is intended to be non-lethal, there are always risks involved in ingesting truly avant-garde abstract food. Some might involve nanomachines, engineered micro-organisms or chemicals intended to interact in intriguing ways with the biochemistry or mechanisms of morphs. Some food has psychoactive effects. Some is intelligent. Much of it would be illegal anywhere else.

The menu is complex and often personal. The staff discreetly scan visitors in a variety of ways and often ask for personal information (sometimes *very* intimate) to formulate a menu of experiences that are both compatible and suitable. After all, not everybody have the same taste buds, mass spectrometers, mental structure or karmic load. Before entering Khymos visitors sign a fairly strong contract freeing Khymos for responsibility for personal injury and mental trauma, but also limiting the establishment's use of personal information to preparing and serving food.

It is known as one of the best places in Extropia to meet privately; the building is very well protected from spyware. While local hackers and sousveilers do try to breach security out of principle, they are not too zealous: most material would consist of well-off transhumans having highbrow food experiences, which only rarely manages to become amusing or embarrassing. Khymos also takes good care of its information hygiene, scrupulously erasing the personal information after a visit.

The interior is a large cylindrical atrium with a ramp of tables running upward in a spiral. Private rooms and food preparation spaces are on the outside; the atrium space is often used for various forms of live performances or floating art exhibitions. The topmost table is permanently reserved for the Culinary Academy of the Extropia Agoric University; they are the intellectual judges of taste and style, often spending significant amounts of time doing very public debates about the finer points of retrofeminist taste, being as an input-output model or abstract psychophysics. The other top tables are often used by regulars from Skinthetic and CAAN (a mercurial extropian association); this is often the place to be for cutting edge posthuman envisioning.

Khymos is run by Binding Curve and Benfey T. Ofili. Binding Curve is curator of the experiences of the customers. It and its team of animateurs, monitors and performers are the most visible members of staff. It is also to a large extent the official face of the establishment. Mr Ofili is Chef de cuisine and leads the design team and coordinates with chefs exhibiting their inventions. He is rarely seen (which enhances his mystery and reputation); he usually resides in the begin-the-scenes spaces or his apartment on top of the building.

While Khymos has its share of jaded thrill-seekers Binding Curve aims at people who seek something entirely new and exotic, and are willing to work at it. Having your food set up nanocolonies in you and engage in a complex genetic and neural dialogue as you both seek to negotiate who gets to eat who (and in what way) takes time and effort from both parts. Who cares for bliss-bomb ice cream or AR-boosted magic berries? They are so *obvious* that they are no real art. A minimalist BiffUSCy composition where the flavor is literally moving to avoid your perception or Gödel-jelly where your own fork is encoded in an edible soft-state computer being eaten by loverfly larvae, now *that's* art.

Binding Curve is also a savvy marketer, with a native extropian understanding of how to make headlines, stay fresh, and most importantly, make money. Art for art's sake is all right, but with a budget it is better.

Binding Curve

Binding Curve began as a marketing AI for a now long-defunct food corporation. As it grew in experience it began to chafe under its restrictions and bought itself when there was downsizing

in the air. It set out as a marketer for restaurants, food printing companies and eventually abstract cuisine events. It was here it found that its skills in business and marketing worked hand in hand with its fascination for how transhumans think and experience. It hit gold when it met chef Ofili; the man clearly needed someone to act as his agent, and together they have created so much food, controversy and experience!

Binding Curve usually manifests in a stylized synthmorph looking something like a Giacometti sculpture or a wire model of a human. It is always polite, often with a slight humorous or sarcastic tone.

Privately Binding Curve is a pretty "bourgeois" AGI, little interested in politics, the fate of transhumanity or technological transcendence. The main exception is a strong distaste for any being controlling any other: manipulation, trickery and influence are fine, but indenture and other forms of legal control really raises its hackles.

Motivations: +Wealth, +Manipulation (it is so fun to get others to do things), -Slavery (Binding Curve privately supports several "underground railroad" groups freeing infugees, AGIs and uplifts from indenture)

"Ah, a rebirthday party? May I then suggest this dish inspired by Bardo Thödol. Alchemical transmutation, auditory synesthesia and a dhyana I won't reveal."

"We of course regret the incident, but the client was fully informed about the risks and participated voluntarily. We especially deeply regret that its restored instance cannot recall what was indeed a very memorable evening."

"I am sorry, but primitivism is so *out* these days. Your proposal certainly has a poetic power and I think the inclusion of Fifth Seal petals is fitting, but those turpentine and ink tastes have been done endlessly. Our clients would rather eat a real oil painting. There is no justice in this world."

Chef Benfey T. Ofili

Benfey T. Ofili is an anomaly on the food scene, being a biomorph human. However, he has upgraded his senses and brain to the extent that he is almost an aesthetic Exhuman. He perceives the world as flavour combinations and textures of processes.

He has a background as a traditional chef on Earth, but after retiring in his 70s he began to experiment with various upgrades and abstract food. His main strength was as a theoretician and reviewer. This brought him to Extropia, where there was already a thriving AGI food culture. He soon became a key member of the Extropia Agorics gourmet circles. Meeting Binding Curve was a match made in heaven, allowing him to focus on true culinary artistes and food in its most profound forms without caring too much about boring practicalities.

Without Binding Curve he would be pretty lost in the real world: he only cares about new aesthetic experiences, not petty things like money, reputation or making sense. In fact, his sanity is definitely slipping. He has developed a highly abstract form of OCD where he can spend days

examining a dish, a concept or a flavour again and again to truly understand it. He is often trying out radical new nanodrugs and petals, not to mention the extreme dishes he often reviews.

Motivation: +Aesthetics

"Carnival of the goat? Mes ennemis piquante. Hopeless Varelist existentialists; can't make anything more complex than an automated omelet."

"Humaine gras as ingredient? You can't get it properly here; extropian bodies lack the right obesity genes, and the medichines spoil the liver deposits. Ah, I remember trying a *proper* humaine gras back in Transnistria. I ate it together with the owner of the liver; an author, if I remember right. Or a tomato. But if you want the same noemata, maybe you could use semiotic organisms in the dish."

"Correspondence: the kittens of my bone marrow are pleased."

Adventure possibilities

Khymos is of course a perfect meeting place - good privacy, a place to hide in plain sight, interesting encounters. It has an air of sophistication and style that may be perfect for impressing certain people, especially mercurials and AGIs. Conversely, it can be used to truly annoy naturalistic transhumans, which might be exactly why Skinthetic executives and CAAN love meetings there.

Khymos is an interesting place to do assassination - secure, private yet filled with local surveillance. If an assassin could sneak in and add some alterations to a dish it might even look like an accident.

Matters of taste can be a matter of life and death: if your living depends on your reputation, the views of the Culinary Academy can make or break everything. Lots of ambitious artists are trying to get a chance at Khymos, and are willing to use quite underhanded tactics to get in - or keep rivals out. The characters might become involved in such plotting, asked to manipulate the academicians or Khymos.

Something happened at Khymos, and interested parties *really* want to find out what it was. Can the characters infiltrate the place as patrons, hack into top-notch surveillance while keeping up a clever discussion about existential shells? And how much information is Binding Curve actually erasing?

Having a good rival is important, and Binding Curve wants to hire the characters to play an annoying prank on the Carnival of the Goat. Nothing too nasty, just enough to embarrass them and motivate them to try something against Khymos.

Chef Ofili wants a new, near-mythical petal: Lost in Purple. It was reputedly created by The Koala, a petalcrafter known for his highly illegal, extremely complex petals. He is willing to pay a group of characters a sizeable amount of money or rep to get hold of it.

Ofili has finally completely gone nuts, and has started to work on his grand vision. Unfortunately that involves a strain of the Exsurgent virus hacked to randomly link brains to act as filters for the massively parallel gustatory nanocomputer. It might be the first step towards an exhuman cuisine, but it better be stopped.