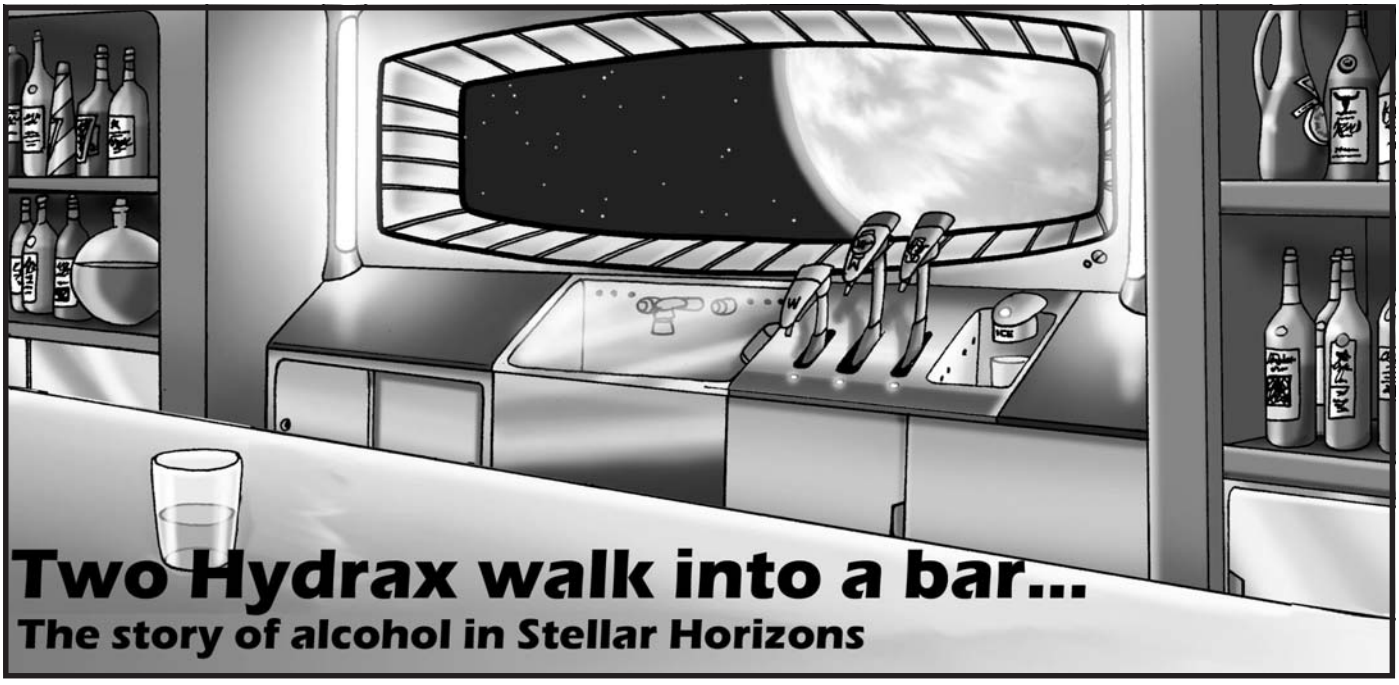

Having a Drink...

Characters having a drink in science fiction are as old as the genre itself. Whether it's a Victorian adventurer sipping strange wine with a Martian princess, to an exotic alien filled cantina in a seedy starport, to a ship's doctor who prescribes a drink nearly as often as he does medicine, alcohol and its effects have been a fundamental element of science fiction.

This isn't surprising since alcoholic beverages have been around in one form or another since the dawn of civilization. In Stellar Horizons alcohol also plays a role. Its abuse is listed as a major game disadvantage. In this article we will examine the history, significance, and impact of alcohol in the Stellar Horizons universe. It will also discuss the physics of drinking in microgravity and the effects of alcohol on the different species.

A Brief History of Alcohol in Space

The first documented use of alcohol in space occurred in 1969 when Buzz Aldrin sipped wine from a small chalice as he took Communion on the lunar surface. In the eighties and nineties Russian Cosmonauts were allowed to bring small amounts of alcohol on board the Mir space station. It was only with the establishment of the International Space Station that alcohol became unwelcome in space. This was due to the American space agency, NASA, decreeing that the station would be an alcohol free zone. The agency developed this policy from their long established twelve hour 'bottle-to-throttle' rule which stated that no alcohol could be consumed twelve hours prior to a flight. The policy was not strictly enforced and around the turn of the century it was alleged that several space crew members may have been intoxicated prior to, or during their missions.

Strict prohibitions against alcohol continued to be observed by both governments and private ventures through the teens and into the twenties. Early orbital platforms and the first lunar colonies were risky ventures where alcohol was seen as a hazard to judgment in the hostile space environment.

Even so, alcohol did find its way into orbit. Business executives would bring beer and wine onto their stations to celebrate corporate milestones, diplomats would have brandy and vodka served at important state functions, and colonists would pay top dollar for smuggled whiskey. As the years passed it proved almost impossible to stop the spread of alcohol in space with the exception of the Freedom I colony on Mars which never allowed alcohol of any kind.

The growing familiarity of space travel combined with a healthy black market demand for alcohol was slowly leading to an acceptance of the drink in space, but it was the Keplar Conflict that forced a liberalization of alcohol policy. During the war large numbers of soldiers and Marines were transported to Luna to fight Chinese forces stationed there. These troops began finding ways to smuggle alcohol to their Lunar bases. When authorities attempted to stop the process by searching supply vessels drinks were smuggled to the soldiers by aerospace fighter pilots who would sell it at a hefty profit. In an effort to maintain good order troops and pilots were permitted limited amounts of alcohol between missions in rear areas. The Chinese adopted similar policies when faced with the reality that troops would find ways to obtain alcohol no matter what prohibitions were enacted.

This led to the brewing of the first non-Terran beers, Keplar Select and Resting Dragon. Keplar Select was an unflavorful, pale lager brewed in the East Industrial Wing of the Keplar Colony Complex. It attained popularity simply by being the only beer sanctioned by the US military for the troops on Luna. Resting Dragon, derisively termed 'Rusting Dragon' for its deep amber color by US troops, was the Chinese equivalent. It was manufactured on Chinese orbital facilities and on Earth. The beer was shipped to Chinese orbital and Lunar forces along with their regular supplies. It was a stronger, better tasting lager that was highly sought after by US troops on Luna.

Following the Keplar Conflict alcohol in space became almost as common as it was on Earth. Its use was seen as normal and harmless so long as precautions were made to avoid intoxication. Regulations and taxes soon followed the fledgling alcohol industry and things appeared to be on the way to normalization. Then the Unification War began.

Almost immediately following the Emerald Creek incident the United States government enacted tight controls over orbital and lunar facilities. The numbers of missions into orbit were greatly restricted and much more heavily regulated. As the war continued alcohol production was reduced to a trickle. Newly appointed Department of Civil Service regulators claimed that the beverage was unnecessary, harmful to the war effort, and detrimental to US space assets. This hard line was copied by the Chinese, Russians, and European Union who were already planning wars of their own and saw the presence of alcohol in space as a hazard to these plans.

When the Contact War broke out in 2037 the nations of Earth found themselves abandoning their regional conflicts to fight a war of survival against a powerful alien intelligence. Its early battles were marked by punishing defeats and heavy casualties as Terran forces were swept from the solar system to an area between the Earth and the moon. In an effort to increase sagging morale alcohol regulations were relaxed once again. In Russia, Europe, and Asia troops were given an alcohol ration, which was increased in the case of orbital or Lunar service. The North American Alliance reluctantly followed suit and made beer available on military installations in orbit and on the moon. It was a token gesture, but one that mattered greatly to those pilots, Marines, and ship crew who flew missions against an enemy that an average of one third wouldn't return from.

The end of the Contact War marked the beginning of a new era of hope for Humanity. The hyperdrive given as reparations from the Krylan Federation had been unlocked, new colonies were being founded across the solar system and around nearby stars, and life in space was becoming commonplace. It was during this era of prosperity that the alcohol industry became established in space alongside the rest of Mankind's achievements.

The first extraterrestrial cognac was distilled on a commercial platform orbiting Jupiter. Old Jove was purported to even use water ice from the moon of Europa. Despite this obvious sales strategy the liquor proved to be of very high quality. Another popular beverage of the era was Evening Star Vodka which was made on the Russian Nadezda-1 station orbiting Tau Ceti. It soon joined the ranks of super premium vodkas in spite of the bias against hydroponically grown potatoes at the time. The tall thin bottle with a silver edged black label became known across the Inner Colonies as a quality beverage. It is also the only vodka to be bottled with small flecks of silver which are a harmless novelty designed to make the brand all the more unique.

This golden age of colonization was brought to a sudden end in 2045 when a group of alien vessels arrived in the outer solar system. They were soon proven to be hostile and were quickly destroyed by the reformed Terran Military Command. Yet many more alien ships were to follow culminating in a mighty armada that began the Hydrax Invasion. Initially the invasion had little effect on the alcohol industry. It was believed by many that the war would take a course similar to the Contact War, but against an Earth that was stronger and better prepared. They were wrong. Within a few short months all organized Terran resistance in the outer solar system ended. Only a few pockets of resistance remained around Jupiter, Mars, and Luna. The Earth was soon subject to a massive invasion followed by a genocidal cleansing of all life around the Hydrax landing sites.

It was then that the true magnitude of the disaster set in and the evacuations began. Nations rushed to evacuate their governments, wealth, and artistic treasures to the Outer Colonies. In Europe these treasures included samples of grapes from numerous vineyards, as well as the historic distilleries of Italian Amaretto and German beers. European Cultural Minister Andre Besson claimed that the wines and spirits were as essential to European culture as the art in the Musee du Louvre.

The sentiment was similar in North America as famous manufacturers of Kentucky and Tennessee whiskies had their entire plants shipped as far as Vega. Even the Blue Agave plant of Mexico was transplanted to a dry dusty Jovian moon orbiting Epsilon Eridani so that the base ingredient of Tequila would not be lost.

Naturally these mass movements caused huge dislocations in the alcohol market and prices soared as it became scarce. For a time the colonies on Luna became the best location to buy alcohol. This was due to its location as a distribution point for the Terran exodus as well as its being a focal point for military forces operating against the Hydrax on Earth. To those on Luna it ensured access to a steady supply of high priced Terran alcohol bound for the Outer Colonies.

These prices proved to be too high for the average soldier enroute to Earth and to the Lunar colonists. They had to settle for local products such as the recently reformulated Keplar Select and other common beers. To its credit the popular lunar beer had been improved since its introduction years before, but it was still seen as a low end lager by many who enjoyed it only because of its availability.

As the war progressed alcohol production beyond the Inner Colonies began to stabilize. Some European grapes took to the soils of alien worlds, while others were hydroponically grown on the larger European stations such as Crystal Haven. By 2047 the Vega colony became the center of North American whiskey and beer production.

But perhaps the most amazing story of alcohol production in space is that of those who deserted following Operation Skybolt and went on to found the Regulan Coalition in the Pirate Worlds. During their long desperate search through uncharted space for a new world to settle they developed their own whiskey. The drink was distilled on board the medium supply ship USS

Sedgwick and named Wayfarer's Whiskey. It proved to be a smooth flavorful drink in spite of its humble beginnings. As their colonization prospects brightened and new worlds were discovered the same crew turned their attention to beer. Within a year they released Red Planet beer, named for the deep russet color of Typhon which had become a major Regulan Coalition industrial center.

The end of the Hydrax War marked the start of both the recovery on Earth and a huge economic boom in the colonies. The alcohol industry has grown with this boom. In fact new brands of wine and spirits are being developed every day from recipes both old and new. One of the most popular along the Hyades Route is Seven Sisters Brandy. It is produced on Crystal Haven from an old formula using French grapes saved during the war. While Istelle Originale is a minty peach tasting liqueur produced on the European colony of Pomona on the K'puran Route using the local Aapya fruit.

Perhaps the most important concern regarding alcohol today is its availability. It is very expensive to transport classic wine and spirits across the stars. This has made such drinks rather rare in many places. It can be very difficult to find a bottle of Kentucky Whiskey out on the deep range. If it can be found then it will most certainly be at many times its usual price. Conversely a product can be found quite affordably if purchased near its source of production.

Alcohol in Microgravity

One of the first things a person in a microgravity environment will notice is that you cannot simply pour yourself a drink. This is due to the fact that when left to their own devices liquids will either adhere to the sides of the container they are in or will form a sphere under their own surface tension. In either case having a drink is not easy.

Over the years there have been a number of methods developed to overcome this problem, many of them as complicated as they are novel. The most common solution has been to package beverages in single serving aluminized pouches. These pouches feature a drinking straw that can be capped when not in use. This allows the user to drink the liquid through the straw while squeezing the pouch.

Other methods have used traditional looking bottles with specially designed bladders and compressed air. These use the compressed air to shrink the bladder and force the liquid outward. The liquid is then captured in glasses or plastic pouches for individual consumption. Common sizes for pouches are 12 and 40 ounces for beers, 750 ml for wine and spirits, to flask sized pouches for whiskey.

Another problem with alcohol is low gravity is that, without gravity, there is no mechanism to separate the frothy head of a beer from the remaining drink. The bubbles will remain suspended within the liquid without rising to the surface. This will hold true even when the liquid is consumed as there is no mechanism to separate the gas bubbles from the liquid as it enters the stomach. Astronauts who experimented with soft drinks around the turn of the century said that drinking frothy, bubbly liquids often result in a sloppy wet burp. On the other hand the unique properties of microgravity have led to a number of new mixed drinks which can be swirled and mixed in ways not possible in planetary gravity. New glasses like the Orbital, which is a sphere with some six equally spaced openings for a drinking straw, and the Waterfall glass, which has special grooves that use capillary action to bring the drink around the inside of the glass to the users mouth, are common on stations and orbital habitats today.

Despite these novelties most stations and large spacecraft have spin habitats that simulate gravity through the spinning action of their hull. This allows drinks to be enjoyed in a conventional manner. Drinks can also be enjoyed normally on worlds with gravity as low as 1/6th that of the Earth.


Orbital Glass


Waterfall Glass

XT's and Alcohol

The effects of alcohol on the different alien species vary dramatically from one to another. The one rule that seems to hold true is that the more closely aligned to Terran biology the more that alcohol will affect them in the conventional manner.
Most closely related to Terrans are those of the Krylan species. In most ways they are virtually identical to Humans. The primary difference is in their immune system which is fortified with a variety of microscopic machines that repair cellular damage, remove poisons, fight cancers, and replicate themselves. Over the centuries Krylans have developed a symbiotic relationship with these mechanical antibodies which react to alcohol as the poison it is and begin to break it down at a high rate as soon as it enters their blood stream. This has led to a general disregard for alcohol in Krylan cultures. Most view it as a dangerous substance that is best avoided. Not surprisingly they have no alcohol related traditions or industries.

The Sha'kavri, on the other hand, have a long history of alcohol use and are affected by it much like Humans are. Sha'kavri beverages do tend to have a stronger flavor and much lower alcohol content than their Terran counterparts, however. This is due to their lower body mass and poorer sense of taste. Conversely, Sha'kavri tend to view Terran alcohols as very strong and flavorless. Three examples of Sha'kavri alcohol that are commonly encountered by Terran spacefarers are Ashyathi, Nakshat'ra, and Shak'rasya.

Table 1-1
Alcohol Consumption Effects

Type of Drink	Damage	Interval**	Charges	Notes
Glass of Shak'rasya	1-5	30-90 minutes	4	Mild hallucinations at Dazed damage level.
12oz beer	1x	30-90 minutes	2	
Glass of Ashyathi	1x	30-90 minutes	4	Terrans must roll WPR to drink.
Glass of Nak'shat'ra	1x+5	30-90 minutes	3	
Glass of Wine	1x+5	30-90 minutes	3	
Shot of Vodka*	2x	30-90 minutes	4	
Shot of pure alcohol	5x	30-90 minutes	9	Rarely drunk alone. Listed for comparison.
750ml bottle of Wine	5x	30-90 minutes	10	Standard size wine bottle.
40oz of Malt liquor	10x+5	30-90 minutes	25	
750ml bottle of Whiskey	25x	30-90 minutes	50	Standard size whickey bottle

* For game purposes Vodka, Whiskey, Rum, mixed drinks, and other distilled liquors are functionally identical.

** The interval will vary depending on if the alcohol is consumed with a large meal or on an empty stomach. It will be a longer interval if ingested with a large meal and a much shorter one if on an empty stomach.

Ashyathi is a deep red drink made in the Crystan empire from fermented Akiirti berries. It is often used in religious ceremonies and as an evening drink when one wants to relax. Ashyathi is not for Terrans however. The beverage contains high levels of capsicanoids, which are soothing to Sha'kavri, but are sensed as intensely 'hot' by Humans and Krylans.

Nak'shat'ra is the second beverage that Terrans may encounter. It is a thick syrupy wine that has its origin in the city of Li'shai in Sha'to'kal. It has an intense flavor that makes it a popular drink in most of the northern Arealen Confederation. It can be enjoyed by Terrans as a thick form of brandy. The third common beverage is known as Shak'rasya. This mildly hallucinogenic coffee-like liqueur originates in Kir'vera where it is made from the Sha'u seed. It is a very popular after dinner drink in Liva'keth, Kir'vera, and Kal'shrivva.

All three beverages can be found in Sha'kavri space and on some border worlds. They are only a tiny sample of the diversity that can be found in the Sha'kavri alcohol industry. All have long histories of questionable accuracy and form the basis for many drinking traditions.

On the other end of Terran space lie the Rogue Hydrax. These genetically engineered insect like creatures have a biological makeup so alien that they are unable to metabolize alcohol in any way. They instead excrete it as inert waste. This has led many Rogues to be genuinely confused as to why Terrans and Sha'kavri would willingly ingest a mildly toxic chemical such as alcohol in the first place. It has been speculated that other chemical substances may be able to have an effect similar to alcohol on the Rogues and their larger cousins, but none are currently known to Terran science. Alcohol also has no effect on the Shraziss.

Game rules for alcohol consumption

Alcohol and other intoxicants in Stellar Horizons are best treated under the Poison rules. This is because alcohol is a metabolic poison that kills half of those who reach a 0.40 blood alcohol percentage. It only affects Terrans, Krylans, and Sha'kavri characters. Rogues, Hydrax, and Shraziss are just too different in terms of biology for it to affect them. In many cases their bodies do not even absorb alcohol and excrete it without affecting them.

Use Table 1-1 above to determine the effect of alcohol on a character. It lists the type of drink and the amount of poison damage it causes. The damage is applied at the end of the listed interval. The **delivery method** is always ingested and the **interval** will vary between thirty and ninety minutes depending on how much the character has eaten with the alcohol. If it is drunk on an empty stomach then it will be closer to thirty minutes. If the drink is taken with a full meal then it would be ninety minutes.

Charges are the number of doses from a medical kit (or better) used to counteract the effects of alcohol. It should be noted that alcohol damage is halved after the character reaches Unconscious on the damage table.

--- Other Alcohol Notes ---

Level of Intoxication
A person is considered 'Buzzed' when they are at the 'Dazed' portion of the damage chart. A person is 'Intoxicated' when they are at the 'Stunned' or greater portion of the damage chart.

Problem Drinkers
Characters who are chronic abusers of alcohol will develop a tolerance of sorts for the drug over time. This is reflected the disadvantage: **Addictive Substance:Alcohol**.

Anyone with this disadvantage takes only **half** the listed damage from alcoholic beverages. This benefit applies ONLY to alcohol and not other poisons.

--- Credits ---

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