

ATHASIAN FOOD AND BEVERAGES AT YOUR TABLE



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INTRODUCTION

This document is intended as a practical and immersive companion to *Athasian Emporium*, expanding upon its material by focusing specifically on how Athasian food and beverages can be represented and experienced at the gaming table.

In addition to serving as a reference for Athasian cuisine within the Dark Sun setting, this document is also designed as a tool for players and Dungeon Masters who wish to bring elements of that cuisine to the table in a tangible way. Whenever possible, Athasian foods and drinks are paired with close real-world equivalents, chosen for their texture, preparation and stability rather than for strict accuracy.

All descriptions take into account the defining constraints of Athas: extreme heat, aridity, scarce water, limited preservation methods, and the dominance of subsistence-oriented agriculture. Food on Athas is rarely fresh, rarely abundant, and almost never refined by modern standards.

CREDITS:

This work draws on the concepts, categories, and material presented in *Athasian Emporium* (Designers: Yanick Moreau, Alexis Gervais; Development Team: Daniel Bandera, Bruno Fernandes; Editor: Yanick Moreau), and is intended as a fan-made expansion and practical companion to that supplement.

DRINKS

A wide range of beverages exists on Athas, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. They have been divided into three categories - Beers and ales, Wines, and Nectars and Spirits. Each category begins with a brief general explanation of why these drinks exist in the forms described, followed by lists of specific beverages taken from *Athasian emporium*. For each entry, one or more plausible real-world equivalents are provided. Where relevant, a small number of complementary suggestions consistent with Athasian conditions are included.

Beers and ales

On Athas, beer is primarily a subsistence product rather than a recreational one. Brewing exists because it solves several practical problems at once: it preserves grain calories in liquid form, renders marginal or contaminated water safer to drink, and produces a beverage that can be consumed quickly before spoilage in extreme heat. As a result, Athasian beers are almost always low-alcohol, opaque, and consumed fresh. Long storage, aging, or transport over great distances is rare and usually limited to city-states with access to ceramic jars, trained brewers, and protected water sources.

The grains available for brewing are dictated by climate and soil exhaustion. Malting is often incomplete, achieved through brief soaking and sun-germination rather than controlled kilning. Boiling is short or improvised to conserve fuel, and fermentation relies on wild yeasts, reused sediments, or spontaneous souring. Many beers therefore develop a slight acidity, and some are closer in texture to thin porridge than to clear drink.

- Gulg beer (sorghum beer; millet beer).
- Tyr beer (barley beer; einkorn beer; emmer beer). A city-state standard: more workshop-made than household-made, but still typically young and unfiltered.
- Slave beer (small beer; table beer). Very weak ration-drink issued for hydration and calories.
- Raam ale (farmhouse ale; gruit ale). An exported ale; cheap servings are commonly warm.
- Tyr ale (pale ale; table ale). Exported and comparatively standardized by urban brewing practices.
- Palewater ale (light ale; table ale; mild ale). A simple, rough ale associated with Salt View; best treated as a low-strength local brew.
- Honey barley ale (braggot; honey beer; malt liquor). Brewed from “honey barley”.
- Cactus blue ale (pulque). Served in Tyr and made from fermented grall.
- Other plausible beers: Tella, Chicha (maize beer)

Wines

On Athas, wine is a luxury product rather than a subsistence drink. While grapes do grow, intense heat and limited water cause them to dehydrate rapidly on the vine, concentrating sugars but reducing yield. As a result, many Athasian wines resemble raisin wines, cooked musts, or heavily extracted young wines rather than fresh, aromatic vintages. Wine production presupposes access to irrigation, protected estates, or trade networks, and is therefore strongly associated with city-states, nobles, templars, and wealthy merchants.

Fermentation proceeds quickly in the heat and is difficult to control. Oxidation is common, often unavoidable, and in some cases deliberately embraced to stabilize the wine. Long aging in cool conditions is rare; wines intended to survive storage or transport tend to be oxidized, resin-treated, spiced, or fortified. Most wines are consumed young, thick, sharp, sweet, or aggressively dry, and even prestigious vintages rarely resemble the refined wines of milder worlds.

- Asticles wine (Assyrtiko from Santorini; Jerez Fino or Manzanilla; dry Verdelho Madeira; dry amphora-aged white wine).
- Brown wine (dry rancio; vin jaune; dry Oloroso sherry; oxidative vin de voile).
- Bulis berry wine (blackberry wine; cassis wine with low residual sugar; cherry wine; red-fruit passito).
- Klick-win (flower wine such as elderflower or hibiscus; very sweet mead; floral white wine).
- Milkwine (kumis; alcoholic kefir; lightly alcoholic fermented milk drink).
- Palm wine (African palm wine; fermented toddy).
- Port (tawny port; simple ruby port).
- Red wine (Grenache; Carignan; Monastrell/Mourvèdre; Primitivo; Nero d'Avola).

- Sapwine (retsina; resin-flavored white wine).
- Scuppernong wine (muscadine wine).
- Elven wine (simple dry Trebbiano; Airén; light fruit wine; very dry mead; neutral vinho verde).
- Spiced wine (hypocras; medieval spiced wine; lightly spiced mulled wine served warm).
- Other plausible wines: raisin wine (passito-style), commandaria, vin cuit (boiled wine), dry sherry-style oxidative wine, date wine.



Nectars and Spirits

On Athas, nectars and spirits are not distilled liquors, but potent fermented drinks made from sugar-rich substances other than grain or fruit. Distillation requires fuel, water, and technical control that are rarely available; instead, strength is achieved through high sugar concentration, rapid fermentation in heat, and aggressive extraction. These drinks are more stable than beer, stronger than wine, and often culturally or ritually charged.

Most nectars and spirits are harsh, thick, sour, resinous, or heavily sweet. They are rarely clear and almost never refined. Many are diluted, spiced, or warmed before consumption, and are usually served in small quantities. At the table, they represent excess, danger, hospitality under constraint, or deliberate intoxication rather than casual refreshment.

- Broy (traditional mead; rustic unfiltered mead; Ethiopian tej).
- Javo nectar (agave wine; fermented agave nectar; aguamiel ferment).

- Pulque (pulque).
- Spiced mead (metheglin; medieval spiced mead).
- Palm wine (African palm wine; fermented toddy).
- Sapwine (retsina; resin-flavored white wine).
- Klick-wine (elderflower wine; hibiscus wine; floral wine).
- Milkwine (kumis; alcoholic kefir; lightly alcoholic fermented milk drink).
- Other plausible nectars and spirits: date honey ferment, boiled honey wine, concentrated cactus nectar ferment

Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Water is scarce, often unsafe, and tightly rationed, so alternative drinks serve to make liquids palatable, provide mild stimulation, or replace nutrients lost through heat and labor. Cooling is uncommon, sweetness is limited, and most drinks are prepared fresh and consumed quickly. These beverages are strongly local, tied to immediately available plants or animals, and rarely transported.

Milk varies greatly in quality depending on the animal and the degree of domestication. Teas and infusions are made from hardy plants, fronds, or needles that tolerate aridity and poor soils.

- Hay-frond tea (rooibos).
- Kola tea (kola nut infusion).
- Yypr tea (pine needle infusion).
- Aprig milk (skim milk).
- Carru milk (whole non-homogenized milk).
- Goat milk.
- Kirre milk (raw sheep's milk).
- Sygra milk (farm whole milk).

PROCESSED DAIRY PRODUCTS

On Athas, fresh milk is a fleeting resource. Heat and aridity cause rapid spoilage, and water scarcity limits extensive processing. As a result, dairying is only viable when milk is transformed immediately into durable forms. Processed dairy products are therefore far more common than fresh milk and represent a significant source of fat, salt, and protein wherever milk animals are kept.

The most common dairy products are **very dry, heavily salted cheeses**. Fresh curds are drained aggressively, salted early, and pressed hard to remove as much moisture as possible. These cheeses correspond most closely to extremely firm farmer's cheeses or aged brined cheeses (very dry feta; sirene-style cheese; aged tuma). They are sharp, salty, and crumbly rather than creamy, and are eaten in small quantities, often grated or broken into stews rather than sliced.

In hotter or poorer regions, **curds are dried even further**. Pressed cheeses may be cut into small blocks or pellets and sun-dried until stone-hard. These products resemble qurut / kurut (Central Asian dried curd) or chhurpi (hard Tibetan cheese). Such cheeses are famously durable, sometimes kept for years, and are often softened only by long soaking or by being simmered directly in soups. On Athas, this form of cheese is especially common in caravans, garrisons, and remote settlements, where its near-indestructibility outweighs its difficulty to eat.

Whey is never wasted. When consumed fresh, it is drunk immediately after cheese-making. Otherwise, whey is boiled down, salted, and transformed into whey cheeses or curds, which are then dried to extend shelf life. These products correspond to dried whey curd cheeses or very dry ricotta-style cheeses (ricotta salata; dried whey curd). Once dried, they become hard, sharp, and pungent, suitable for grating or dissolving into hot liquid.

Butter is rare and unstable in the heat. Where produced, it is almost always clarified into **ghee** (clarified butter), which stores far longer and tolerates transport. Ghee is used sparingly for cooking, enriching stews, preserving meat, or adding calories to grain dishes. In wealthier households, clarified butter may be infused with salt or spices to mask age and improve flavor.

FRUITS, VEGETABLES, AND LEGUMES

Athas is home to many plant species unique to its environment, adapted to extreme heat, aridity, and depleted soils. Alongside these native plants, a wide range of familiar fruits, vegetables, and legumes have either evolved or been selectively cultivated to fulfill similar nutritional and economic roles. In many cases, these plants differ from their counterparts on other worlds not in function, but in resilience.

The sections below focus on the types of plant foods commonly encountered, emphasizing their practical role in subsistence and trade rather than botanical distinction. Where appropriate, Athasian plants are paired with close real-world equivalents.

Fruits

On Athas, fruit cultivation depends on water control and microclimate management. In oasis systems and irrigated lands around city-states, layered agriculture is common. Date palms dominate the upper canopy, providing shade and reducing evaporation, while beneath them grow figs, pomegranates, and other hardy fruit trees comparable to apricot or peach. In fertile, water-rich regions such as the lands around Draj, where soils are heavier and sometimes marsh-like, softer fruits and water-heavy varieties can be grown, including melons and gourds.

Beyond irrigated zones, fruit production shifts toward plants adapted to extreme heat and desiccation. Cactus fruits are widespread, including figues de barbarie (prickly pear). Shrub-grown fruits such as bulis berries (mulberry; elderberry; blackberry) and scuppernong (muscadine-like fruit) replace delicate orchard fruit. Grapes do grow near city-states, but intense sun causes them to shrivel quickly on the vine, producing concentrated fruit more often dried into raisins than eaten fresh.

Fresh fruit is therefore seasonal and local. Most fruit encountered in markets or caravans appears dried or processed: dates, figs, raisins, dried berries, pressed fruit pastes, and thick syrups.

Vegetables

In oasis agriculture and the irrigated hinterlands of city-states, farmers cultivate a wide range of hardy vegetables selected for resilience rather than delicacy. Root and tuber crops are especially important, including plants comparable to sweet potato, yam, beetroot, turnip, and cassava. These tolerate heat, store well, and provide reliable calories. Bitter cassava (manioc) is widely cultivated in some regions: toxic unless properly processed, it is unattractive to animals and of little value to raiders, making it a reliable subsistence crop. Gourds and squash (squash; pumpkin; marrow) are ubiquitous, valued both as food and, once dried, as containers.

Leafy vegetables exist but are limited. Hardy greens similar to chard, artichoke and tetragon, or drought-resistant spinach are grown close to water and consumed quickly. Fruiting vegetables such as eggplant, peppers, okra, and hardy tomatoes appear in irrigated fields, particularly around stable city-states. In regions where water is more abundant and soils are richer, vegetable diversity increases further, allowing the cultivation of water-heavy plants and soft gourds, as well as onions and fresh greens in greater quantity.

In poorer or exhausted soils, vegetable production narrows to the most robust species. Alliums such as onion, garlic, and shallot are widespread, as they tolerate dry conditions and store well. Vegetables are almost always cooked – boiled, roasted, or mashed – and seldom eaten raw.

Legumes

Legumes are among the most important and dependable crops on Athas. They thrive in both irrigated systems and poor soils, tolerate heat, and help restore fertility to exhausted land. As a result, they form the backbone of non-meat protein intake across the Tablelands. Common Athasian legumes correspond closely to chickpeas, lentils, fava beans, cowpeas, mung beans, and dry peas, all of which are well adapted to hot climates and irregular watering.

In oasis fields and city-state farmlands, legumes are grown in rotation with grains and vegetables. In regions dominated by millet and sorghum cultivation, they are essential supplements, balancing cereal-heavy diets. In fertile areas, fresh legumes may be harvested and eaten green (fresh peas; green beans), but most production is dried for storage and transport.

Legumes store exceptionally well and appear frequently in warehouses, caravan supplies, garrison rations, and slave provisions. They are boiled into thick stews, mashed into pastes similar to hummus or ful medames, or ground and mixed with grain flours to produce dense, sustaining foods.



Merchant's stall with tetragon, lentils, onions, chickpeas, and sweet potatoes

MEAT

On Athas, meat is time-sensitive. Extreme heat and the lack of reliable cold storage mean that fresh meat must be eaten the day of slaughter or converted immediately into preserved forms. For most people, “meat” is therefore encountered far more often as rations, trade goods, or warehouse stock than as fresh cuts.

Fresh meat

Fresh meat is consumed within hours. Slaughter happens when a household, squad, or neighborhood can eat quickly or cook in bulk for preservation. Athasian herd and riding beasts yield lean, strongly flavored flesh; the closest practical stand-ins are goat, mutton, tough poultry, or game. Preparation is rapid: skewered strips, quick roasting, or brief boiling.

For real-world table use, this corresponds to simple grilled or roasted meats served immediately (goat, lamb, chicken thighs, game sausages when eaten fresh), not to “fresh steak” expectations.

Preserved meats

Most preserved meats on Athas match the logic of durable, dry, and transportable provisions.

Sun-dried and air-dried strips are the baseline. These are the caravan staples: thin meat cut, salted lightly or not at all, then dried hard. Practical equivalents are jerky, biltong, and carne seca.

Heavily salted dry meat is extremely salty and unpleasant to eat without preparation, and meant to be soaked or boiled. Practical equivalents are salt pork, salt beef, and very salty dried meats sold as “viande salée/séchée”.

Smoked dried meat appears where fuel is available, producing bitterness and longer stability. Practical equivalents are smoked jerky, smoked biltong, and very dry smoked meats (not moist deli slices).

Sausages are a major preservation format because they concentrate meat, salt, fat, and spices into transportable units. Athasian sausages skew toward dry and aggressively spiced. Practical, easy-to-find equivalents include sujuk/sucuk (dry spicy sausage), chorizo seco (dry chorizo), kabanos, pepperoni-style dry sausage, and saucisson sec.

Pressed, spiced, and dried meats correspond to pastirma/pastrami-type traditions. Practical equivalents: pastirma (also sold as basturma), and peppered cured beef preparations.

Meat preserved under fat exists where fat is available and worth storing. This corresponds to confit, rillettes, and potted meat. Practical equivalents: duck confit, pork rillettes, pâté en pot, or “potted meat” jars.

Very dry shredded meat mixed with fat into dense travel cakes maps closely to pemmican. Practical equivalents: pemmican (if available) or “meat bars” / high-protein travel rations.

Insect protein occupies the same logistical niche as dried meat: stable and compact. Practical equivalents: roasted crickets/mealworms (sold as snacks), dried insects, or insect-based protein bars.

BREADS, FLATBREADS, AND GRAIN PREPARATIONS

On Athas, grain cultivation is constrained by poor soils, limited water, and intense heat, favoring hardy cereals such as barley, millet, and sorghum over softer, water-intensive grains. As a result, most Athasian breads are dense, flat, or hard, designed for durability rather than freshness. Soft, leavened loaves are rare and short-lived, appearing mainly in well-irrigated city-state districts and disappearing quickly after baking.

The most common form of bread is **flatbread**. Dough made from barley, millet, sorghum, or mixed grain flours is pressed thin and baked quickly on hot stones or clay surfaces, producing simple galettes comparable in use to unleavened flatbreads. These breads are eaten fresh when possible, but more often allowed to dry, becoming firm and crackable. Flatbreads serve multiple purposes: food, utensil, and plate, and are used to scoop stews, wrap preserved meat, or soak up broths.



Travel ration with dried figs, dried curd cheese, strips of dried meat and flatbread

In more stable settlements and oasis communities, **thicker breads** are produced in small quantities. These are dense, heavy loaves with little leavening, closer in texture to coarse whole-grain or barley breads than to modern wheat loaves. They stale quickly in the heat and are therefore often eaten the day they are baked or deliberately dried for later use. Once hardened, such bread is broken into chunks, soaked in liquid, or ground back into meal.

Hard breads and biscuits are essential travel foods. Grain dough baked repeatedly or for extended periods produces extremely dry, durable rations similar in function tohardtack or ship's biscuit. These items are intentionally bland and difficult to eat without liquid, but they store well and are common in caravans, warehouses, and military supplies. Broken pieces are softened in water, broth, or stew before consumption.

Grain is also consumed in non-bread forms. Cracked or ground barley, millet, and sorghum are boiled into thick porridges, cooled into solid cakes, or dried into brittle slabs that can be rehydrated later. These preparations blur the line between bread and porridge and form a large part of everyday caloric intake, especially among slaves, laborers, and soldiers.

IMPLEMENTATION

AT THE TABLE

This section is intended to provide practical guidance for bringing Athasian food and drink to the gaming table in a simple and coherent way. It focuses on what to serve and how to present it, without requiring historical accuracy, elaborate preparation, or detailed recipes. The suggestions below are meant to support atmosphere and tone rather than realism.



MVMD

Snacks

Snacks are the easiest and most effective way to reinforce the Athasian tone during play.

Appropriate snack categories include dried meats (jerky, biltong, dried sausages), hard or semi-hard preserved meats (sujuk, dry chorizo, saucisson sec), dried fruits (dates, figs, raisins, dried berries), roasted legumes (chickpeas, broad beans, lentils), nuts and seeds, salted or brined foods such as olives, small cubes or broken pieces of very dry, heavily salted cheese, and simple legume pastes such as hummus, as well as flatbread

fragments or crackers without added sweetness. Insect-based snacks, where acceptable to the group, fit the theme particularly well.

Meals

Suitable meal categories include one-pot dishes (stews, thick soups, curries), grain-based preparations (porridge, polenta-like dishes, millet or sorghum bowls), legume-focused meals (lentil stews, chickpea dishes, bean mashes), and simple flatbreads served with spreads or pastes. Preserved meats can be added in small quantities as flavoring rather than as the main component.

Cooking methods should favor boiling, simmering, roasting, or pan-searing. Meals that can be served from a single pot or shared platter work better than composed plates. Presentation should be simple and rustic.

Presentation and Tableware

Ceramic or stoneware bowls work well for both snacks and meals, especially when unglazed or matte. Wooden bowls, trenchers, or simple boards can be used for dried foods and bread. Spoons and utensils made of wood are preferable to metal cutlery. For drinks, earthenware mugs, clay cups, or thick ceramic mugs are ideal; if unavailable, plain glassware without markings is a reasonable substitute.

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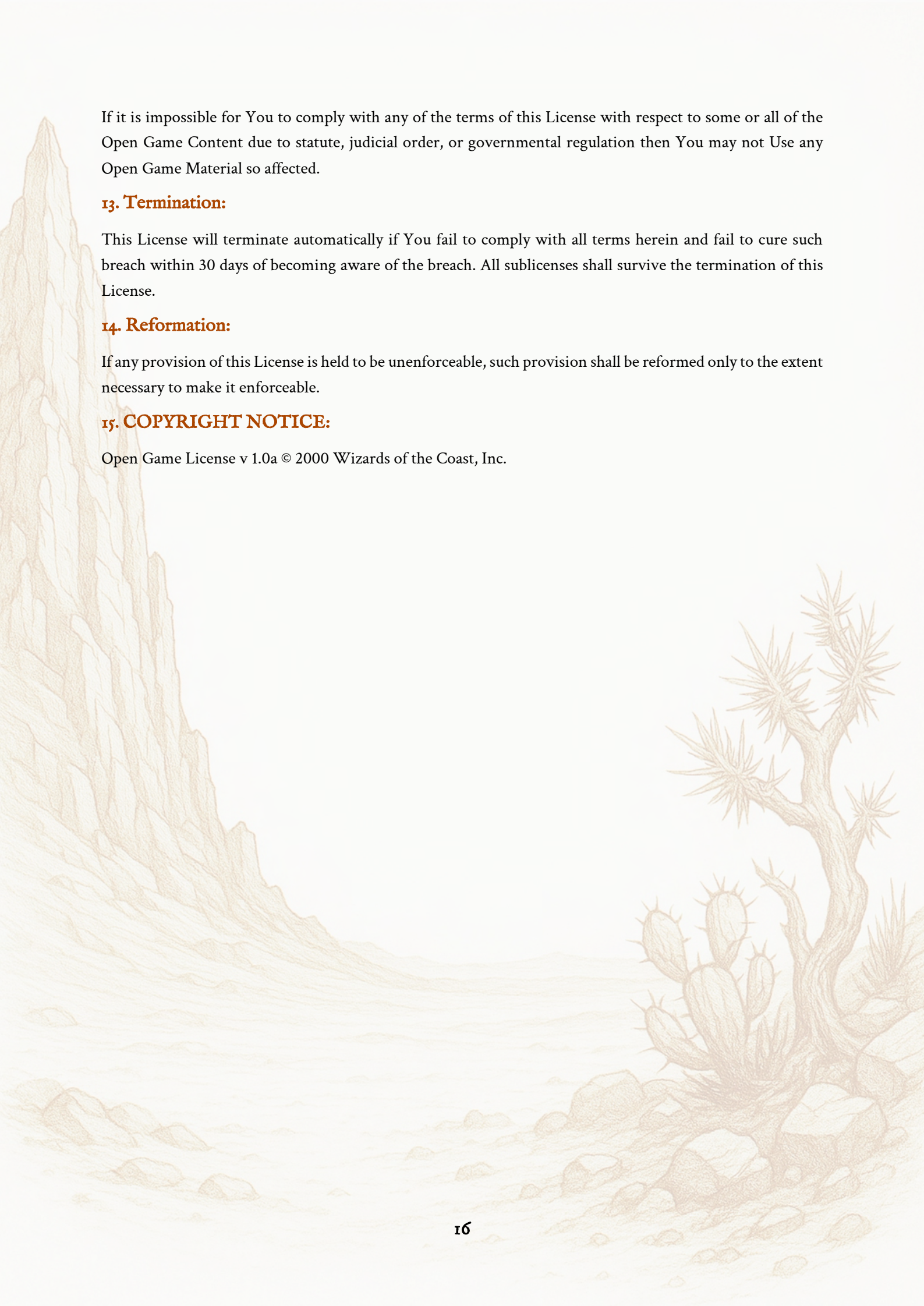
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