

## Four Recipes for Instant Strangeness

It's summer. Living is easy. Who wants to work hard at making Salem stranger? Instead of laboring to cook up a stew of strangeness, here's four ways of making our town seem tastier instantly.

(1) Observe like an alien. There's several hundred billion stars in our galaxy and about a hundred billion galaxies. Imagine what unknown marvels exist in the cosmos.

Now, look around. Picture yourself having just arrived here from a star system far, far away. Can you freaking believe what you're seeing!? Earth is so weird!

Every bit of it. Utterly unlike anything you've known before. These beings get in metal containers and buzz about on the planet's surface. Wow! They ingest solid and liquid matter through a bodily orifice. Double wow!!

We really do live in a strange land like none other in the universe. Behold with wonder.

(2) Marvel at what life has wrought. The big bang brought everything into being 13.7 billion years ago. Earth came into existence 4.5 billion years ago; life a billion years later.

Now we have Lancaster Drive, south Commercial Street, Keizer Station, and other monuments to the ugliness us Homo sapiens' can construct. A bowerbird creates beauty; it takes people to fashion crap.

But it is our crap. More than three billion years of evolution have made us what we are, along with what we make. Salem is us.

That evolutionary process resulted in you — a being who wouldn't exist today if any link in the chain of your countless descendants had been broken. One missed sexual coupling in the treetops of ancient Africa and you'd be a goner.

So look around with amazement. That all this is. That you are.

(3) Imagine this is your last day. Yes, we hear this often, “Live for today.” Do we really get the message, though?

News flash from Reality Central: everybody dies. It’s natural to visualize the trajectory of our lives making a gradual descent into an 80-90 year landing zone.

However, frequently unexpected crashes happen. The good (and bad) can die young. Accept this possibility. Not fearfully, gratefully. Everlasting life would dilute the preciousness of every passing moment.

Eventually there will be a last time for everything. Problem is, chances are we won’t know when that is. Last buying of a latte at a downtown coffeehouse. Last hug of a loved one. Last mowing of the lawn.

If you knew this was a Last Time, how precious would it seem? Since it might be, why not enjoy the treasure of each moment now?

(4) Get out of your mind. The inside of our heads is undeniably strange. Yet the strangeness has a boring sameness to it. Habitual ways of looking at the world keep us from seeing things freshly.

Recreational drugs and alcohol, in moderation, can open the doors of perception pleasingly. So can thinking less while sensing more.

Smell. Hear. Touch. Taste. See. Strangeness is being broadcast 24/7. We just need to tune ourselves to its thoughtless frequency.

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Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city’s Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like. Brian Hines blogs at [hinesblog.com](http://hinesblog.com)