

Pocket Protectors

PART 3

You probably thought you'd take all the money you're saving by eating cheap and dating smart and blow it on booze this weekend, but you're wrong. CONAL PIERSE and PAUL OWEN are back one more time to remind you that no matter what you do in life, especially drinking, there's always a way to do it that costs less money.

Photos by Tara Stieglitz and Pete Yee



If you're reading this, then it's quite likely that you have drinking problem—the problem being that, as exams approach and stress rises, you simply can't afford to drink away your woes anymore due to a shrinking bank account and the looming threat of the holiday season. It's an unfortunate situation—after all, having to make a choice between a twelve-pack and making rent is about as heinous a dilemma as deciding whether you're going to feed a baby to a tiger or an alligator—but luckily, with a little sacrifice and gastrointestinal fortitude, you'll find that you're able to go out and enjoy yourself while still being able to afford that spa package for mom.

Now, the obvious way to save money is to simply not buy liquor. This isn't to say that you become a tea-totter, but rather, that you become a bit of a bastard. How you go about this will depend on the situation you're in—and will almost inevitably mean finagling it from your pals—so you'd best have a plan for any occasion.

When a bunch of your friends gather at a pub for happy hour pitchers, show up after the first round is bought. They'll happily pour you a glass, and hopefully they'll be onto their second or third. A good indicator for when to show up is when you start getting angry phone calls that consist of a lot of different people yelling and threatening to have you fired. If they're drunk enough and you don't down a whole pitcher on your own, you'll easily be able to slip by without them noticing that you haven't purchased a round.

The opposite of this ploy is also a good technique to getting cheaper drinks. Be the one buying during happy hour—or, even better, 25-cent-highball hour. Buy for everyone. Take advantage of the cheap prices to build up credit that you will call upon later in the evening when everyone's hammered and prices skyrocket. And be sure to pay extra attention to your friend who enjoys buying rounds of tequila when they're sloshed. Get them loaded early, and you'll be rewarded with Irish Car Bombs and Muff Dives for the rest of the night.

If you're willing to clean up the mess and deal with no longer having any clean cups the next morning, hosting the pre-drinking party is a good way to get free booze as well. Not only do you gain ownership of any and all forgotten liquor, but during the night, you can discretely mix yourself drinks using other people's happy sauce. You can even use another person's mix to spread the sharing around and reduce the cost

to yourself even more. If you get caught, you can choose to either get offended and say that you were simply being a good host and fixing them a drink, or tell them “Fuck you, it's my goddamn house.”

When it comes to actually purchasing liquor, there's not a heck of a lot you can do at the store to get your booze cheaper. If you're a nice, polite individual who doesn't try cracking lame jokes, then you might get the occasional price drop. However, if you're loud and boisterous or ask for a discount, all you'll get is an eye roll. The person working the till is not your buddy, bro, homey, or friend; they're someone working a Friday night shift who just wants to get through it and go home.

If you're buying hard liquor, you can go around and take a free sample off another bottle and attach it to yours without any worry of being called on it. These bottles are put there by liquor reps and aren't technically store property, so the employees generally don't give a shit about them.

Deciding between cheap beer and hard liquor isn't so much a matter of price, but is based rather on how you want to feel the next day. Liquor will last you longer (in fact, sometimes a single bottle of Russian Prince can last over a year), but it will give you one hell of a hangover. This ain't your run-of-the-mill tiredness and headache; these hangovers are equivalent to being fucked by a large bear while being dragged behind a truck. Cheap beer is less likely to make you regret life the next morning if you over-drink; however, it will give you porcelain-shattering shits, and even with the most pillolesque of toilet papers, your O-ring's going to be sore by the end of the day.

There are plenty of choices for cheap beer, so it tends to come down to personal taste. Bow Valley used to be a solid choice, and out of all the cheap beer we've tried, it definitely has the best taste. However, it's not readily available, as Liquor Depot and its affiliates no longer carry it, and most smaller stores never bothered to.

Brewhouse is a decent beer (though has strong hints of “can”), and you can get a twelve-pack for just over \$13.

Lucky Lager is also quite good, but stay away from the Extra: even though it's extra-stronger, it also means extra-bad flavour and extra-bad hangover.

TNT is just shit. Even when it's cold, it still tastes like warm beer, and you shouldn't give it to a man dying of thirst.

If you want to go the route of the 40, Colt 45 is one of the better choices—plus it's endorsed by Lando Calrissian.

Olde English is a decent option as well. The taste of a 40 is definitely stronger than beer, and it feels thicker, almost chewy, in the back of your throat. But if you can get past that, it's a dirt-cheap way to get drunk.

Stay away from Big Bear. It tastes like a bottle depot smells, and the flavour doesn't get any better when you're drunk. In fact, it's worse because by the time you get to the dregs of the bottle, it's as warm and foamy as a morning piss.

Now that you have your drink, you need to think about how you're going to get the best bang for your buck. One of the simplest ways is simply not to eat before drinking so that you don't have any food kicking around your gut to sop up the booze and slow its entry into the bloodstream. Drinking in a hot tub makes you feel drunker; however, don't be an idiot and pour good booze into the tub thinking that it will soak through your skin and get you sauced. That's just stupid.

Likewise, power-drinking will also do the trick. While you drink, your metabolism is constantly working against you to clear it out of your system, so by drinking faster, you can somewhat bypass this problem. Be warned, though, that this is a lot like fire-walking: you won't have an accurate gauge of how drunk you are until it's too late, and you could very well get burnt. Some popular methods include beer-bonging, shotgunning (both of which are excellent ways to get the foul-tasting beers past your tongue), and the power hour, in which you take a shot of beer every minute for an hour—though that last one can get a bit pricey. Drinking in the shower is also a good way to ensure that you maximize your drinking time—plus, since you're already cleaning yourself, you can easily wash away the stink of shame.

Have any tips of your own on how to save money? Email your tips to managing@gateway.ualberta.ca, and we'll publish the best ones on our website.

