

The Skull Cavern Thread

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Foreword

Four quick definitions:

The Mines: The mines located in the Mountains. A boulder blocks access to the Mines until Spring the 5th Year 1. There are 120 Floors in the Mines. Each Floor has a pre-determined layout, and the layouts of Floors 1-40 are the same as the layouts of Floors 41-80 and Floors 81-120. For example, the layout of Floor 17 is the same as Floor 57 and 97.

An elevator saves progress every 5 Floors. There are rooms with chests every 10 Floors (excluding Floor 30). Floor 120's chest contains the Skull Key, which is *required* to enter Skull Cavern.

Skull Cavern: The mines located in the Desert. The Desert is unlocked once the Vault is completed in the Community Center (requiring 42,500g all told), or the 40,000G "Bus" is purchased from the Joja Community Development Form.

There are infinite Floors in Skull Cavern. Skull Cavern does not have an elevator to save progress, you have to start from Floor 1 every trip. Each Floor is randomised, and the layouts it can pick from are copies of the Mines.

The deeper the Floor, the higher chance there will be for Iridium Nodes to spawn. Past Floor 100, the rate of increase will slow down.

The Dangerous Mines: The Mines turns into the Dangerous Mines when Mr. Qi's "Danger in the Deep" Special Order is taken. The elevator's progress is set to 0, so you must make it down to Floor 120 again.

This time, there are "Dangerous" Monsters and different special drops. If you have completed the Special Order at least once, Floor 120 will now have a statue called the Shrine of Challenge. Interacting with this statue will toggle between the Dangerous Mines and the Mines, but will only come into effect the next day.

Dangerous Skull Cavern: Skull Cavern turns into Dangerous Skull Cavern when Mr. Qi's "Skull Cavern Invaded" Special Order is taken.

While the Special Order is active, there will be "Dangerous" Monsters and different special drops. Reaching Floor 100 will complete the Special Order, and the next day Skull Cavern will be back to normal.

The Shrine of Challenge has no effect on whether Skull Cavern is Dangerous or not. The only way to return Skull Cavern to its dangerous state is to accept the Special Order again.

What's The Hype About?

Before we cut the red ribbon, I thought I would try to answer the simple question of “*Why should you bother with Skull Cavern?*” Several reasons:

- **Iridium Everywhere** – Skull Cavern is the main source of Iridium Ore, a valuable resource used for the final upgrade of your tools, Crystalariums, and more.
- **Prismatic Glory** – Iridium Nodes have a 4% chance of dropping a Prismatic Shard, an illustrious gem that is used for many late game advancements.
 - *Prismatic Shards can also drop from Mystic Stones (25% chance), but you probably won't be seeing many of those in your playthroughs.*
- **Happy Mining** – If you need ores or gems of any type, Skull Cavern should be your go-to place. There are *loads* more ore and gem nodes in Skull Cavern than in the regular Mines. Although, you should keep in mind that you won't get to hunt specific ores like you can in the Mines; you'll get more of a variety.
- **RAWR!** – Skull Cavern is home to the Pepper Rex, a fearsome, fire-breathing, furnace-mimicking Monster. Pepper Rexes have a 10% chance of dropping a Dinosaur Egg, an otherwise very-hard-to-obtain Artifact, plus plenty of other bone Artifacts needed for the Museum.
 - *Pro Tip – Put the Dinosaur Egg an incubator and you'll get more super easily.*
- **The Bad Guy's Base** – It isn't just the Pepper Rex that is found in Skull Cavern, there are lots of other Monsters that only live in Skull Cavern that have useful drops and awesome Eradication rewards.
- **Oh Wise One** – Skull Cavern is a great place for upping your Mining and Combat Skills. If you keep at it, you should be up to 10 in each in no time.
 - *Obliterating Monsters on floors 20-30 of the Mines is a pretty good way too.*
- **Qi Time** – There are many quests that use Skull Cavern as a stage, so Gettin' Good at the 'Caverns is definitely gonna be useful.
- **A Whole New World** – Stardew Valley has many different activities on offer, and especially if you like the Mining/Combat part of the game, Skull Cavern might be a fun place for you to spend your time in. I sure like it!
- **MoneyMoneyMoney** – You can make huge profits from selling Iridium Bars and Monster drops. If that idea interests you, I suggest checking out [this thread](#).

Monsters

The infamous Monsters of Skull Cavern can be deadly if you don't know how to deal with them. This section gives tips for combat with them, plus a list of their most prominent loot and how much to expect from each drop *per trip*. These numbers assume no Burglar's Ring, and will obviously differ between trips.

Serpents

Where – Serpents can spawn on any Floor.

Strategy – Serpents will almost always fly straight toward you, meaning it is tricky to avoid them. Speed Buffs and experience with their movement pattern will certainly help. Given this, it is better to take a few hits at them whilst waiting on them Bombs to ignite. Make sure you swing nice and early; Serpents come at you faster than you think. Often Serpents will make it into your bubble when you don't want them to, however, in which case you'll have to drop whatever you're doing and land a few blows. A good weapon will make your job much easier.

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 250 and you get a Napalm Ring. I personally hang around to kill Serpents because the Napalm Ring is just epic.

Drops:

- *Void Essence: 15-30* – Since Serpents are almost unavoidable, Void Essence is going to be a plentiful resource if constant trips to Skull Cavern are your thing.
- *Bomb: 3-5* – With a 15% drop chance, you will most likely get a few extra Bombs to detonate.
 - *This is part of the reason why I bring just plain ol' Bombs, not the Mega or Cherry variants.*
- *Spicy Eel: 3-5* – This drop is great, because Spicy Eel is one of the best foods to bring to Skull Cavern.
 - *With a Burglar's Ring I will more often than not end up with more Spicy Eels than I brought in.*
- *Rabbit's Foot: Very Rare* – 0.8% of Serpents will hand over their prized possession, the fabled Rabbit's Foot. Rabbit's Feet sell for 565G (678G with Rancher) plus they have a whole bunch of other uses (in my priority order)...
 - *Enchanter's Bundle: Super useful if you haven't yet invested in a Deluxe Coop or you don't want to test your Rabbit's goriness. Keep in mind that you may not have the Enchanter's Bundle if you chose "Remixed Community Center Bundles" in the Advanced Settings of your farm.*
 - *Lucky Charm: Trade it at the car outside JojaMart/the Movie Theatre. This gives you a permanent Daily Luck boost of + 0.025.*
 - *Ship It: A necessary item for the "Full Shipment" Achievement (ship one of every item).*
 - *Gift It: If I don't need the cash cuz-I'm-a-millionaire I'll go ahead and gift it. It's a universal love; just make sure you don't give it to Penny (she's the only one who hates it).*

- *Red Cabbage Seeds: Extremely Rare* – A great but rare (0.2% chance) drop from Serpents and Mummies. Super handy for the Community Center if you get it before Summer Year 2.
 - *If you ticked the “Guaranteed Year 1 Completable” box in the Advanced Options, a Red Cabbage Seed will definitely appear in the Traveling Cart sometime during Year 1.*
 - *If you chose the Remixed CC Bundles, than you might not necessarily need a Red Cabbage (unless you have my type of fate: I needed a cabbage the first two times I chose Remixed CC Bundles ;D).*

Big Purple Slimes

Where – Regular Floors and Treasure Rooms.

Strategy – Big Slimes have a 75% chance of splitting into 2-4 tiny slimes. These lil’ ones have an uncanny knack of sneaking through your legs, so it’s best to corner Big Slimes. Big Slimes can’t fit through 1-rock-wide vertical gaps.

Monster Eradication Goal – These do *not* count towards the Kill 1,000 Slimes goal, but Tiny Slimes do.

Drops:

- *Slime: 10-20* – Big Slimes can drop 2-3 Slime (Very, very rarely you might get 0 or 1 Slime). And given that they swarm Skull Cavern, you might be killing them while waiting for Bombs to ignite.
 - *Slimes (Big or not) are mostly avoidable, but the Slime Charmer Ring makes it a breeze. The Slime Charmer Ring (the reward for the “Kill 1,000 Slimes” Monster Eradication Goal) will prevent Slimes hurting you/giving you the “Slimed” Debuff.*
 - *If you hunt them for Iridium early on, that figure could be much bigger.*
- *Tiny Slimes: N/A* – Although being around half the size (thus being harder to hit) these Slimes have the same damage, same health, and same drops as regular Slimes (see below).

Purple Slimes

Where – Regular Floors and Treasure Rooms.

Strategy – Regular Slimes are easiest killed when they are in a tight spot; the Purple variety is no different, making them an easy kill. Be very careful around these, else: OUCH!

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 1,000 (all the different Slimes count, *except* for Big Slimes) and you will get a Slime Charmer Ring. While I do think it’s very nifty, I don’t go to Skull Cavern to fulfil Gil’s slimy wish; I head to Floor 20 in the Mines and obliterate the Green Slimes. Any mid-tier weapon can one-shot the Monsters found in this part of the Mines.

Drops:

- *Iridium Ore: 1-5* – While this might not seem like much, if you try hard enough that could be 10-15! It can be great for your first few Skull Cavern trips to just pen Big Slimes to collect Iridium.
 - *On my first trip to Skull Cavern with a Burglar’s Ring, I just slaughtered Big Slimes Floors 1-10 with my Galaxy Sword and ended the trip with 15 Iridium Ore and 1 Bar (see below)!*

- *Iridium Bar: Very Rare* – Really fun to see it appear amongst the Slime in your “Just Collected” notifications!
- *White Algae: Occasionally* – Eat it, I guess...That’s what I do. There’s not much else you can do with it.
- *Slime: 5-10* – Slime has many crafting uses, but it’s very easy to collect, so you don’t have to keep this. If you craft a Slime Egg-Press with 25 Coal, 1 Fire Quartz, and 1 Battery pack at Combat Level 6, each Slime you collect is worth around 15G on average.
- *Purple Slime Egg: Very Rare* – Only if a Slime Hutch has been built will you have a chance (1%) of this dropping. Sells for a grand 5,000G, or it can be incubated in a Slime Incubator.
 - See [this thread](#) or [the Wiki page](#) for more information on Slime Hutches.
- *Diamond: Very Rare* – This drop is more common from Slimes (in general) than other Monsters.
- *Sap: Why would you keep this?* – Useful for feeding your Trash Can.
 - *Only included in this list because with a 50% drop chance, you might be getting quite a bit.*

Mummies

Where – Mummies are only found on “Mummy Floors”; the Floors that have golden bricks for walls.

Strategy – Mummies will absorb 260 HP worth of hits and then crumble to the ground. They last in this stage for 10 seconds and then revive back to full health. During this phase, a bomb of any type (or Explosive Ammo) is required to *fully* kill them. It is possible (and recommended) to attract several Mummies into a single bomb’s range and then defeat them all at once. However, this requires you to be speedy, as you’ll have to knock down all of the Mummies and ignite your bomb *before the first one you knock down revitalises*. Also, it is worth noting that felled Mummies cannot be passed through (however, no damage is taken by attempting this), and bombs *cannot* be placed directly on top of half-dead Mummies.

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 100 and you get an Arcane Hat. While it looks cool, I don’t give it too much thought.

Drops:

- *Cloth: 5-20* – If you bring plenty of Bombs/Explosive Ammo, and have some to spare, killing Mummies can be pretty rewarding. Cloth sells for 470G without any professions, Rancher bumps it up to 564G, and Artisan slaps an additional 188G onto the price sticker for 658G
 - *Assuming you have a Burglar’s Ring and are an Artisan: Bombs from the Dwarf cost 600G, and since 50% of Mummies will drop Cloth, killing more than 1 Mummy with a single bomb will statistically always be monetarily profitable. Also, often you might get more than 1 Cloth. However, it might not be time worth spending, as often even 20 mins (Stardew Valley time) will yield a good chunk of Iridium that money cannot buy.*
- *Solar Essence: 10-30* – Every Mummy should drop at least 1 of these. Solar Essence sells for 40g – that’s a fair amount of cash – plus it can be used in crafting many items.

- *Miner's Treat: Rare* – Not a very frequent drop from Mummies, but can be chomped on when heading to the Mines for Notice Board quests, *laziness convenience*, or other reasons.
- *Red Cabbage Seeds: Extremely Rare* – Ditto [Serpent](#).

Armored Bug

Where – Armored Bugs can only be found on the regular Floor type, and will move up and down, changing direction when they hit a rock or a wall.

Strategy – Unless you have the Bug Killer enchantment on your weapon, you can't deal any Damage to these Monsters. But that doesn't mean they can't hurt you. Dodge them if you want, but they deal very little Damage to you, so you can just run through them.

Monster Eradication Goal – Armored Bugs count towards the 125 Bugs that reward you with an Insect Head. You won't want to be using that sword in Skull Cavern!

Drops:

If you have the Bug Killer enchantment, well, you'll just have to find out. I have never had this enchantment before, so I can't tell you, and the Wiki doesn't yet have information on it. My guess is that they would drop the same as regular Bugs, but I can't say for certain. If somebody else has knowledge on this, please comment below! I will update this section if somebody informs me.

Carbon Ghosts

Where – Carbon Ghost are only found on Mummy Floors. They will spawn right when you first enter the Floor (if at all), and will often come in pairs. They can also spawn on Floors 31-39 in the Dangerous Mines.

Strategy – My top tip for Ghosts (Carbon or not) is that you do things while you wait for them to centimetre towards you. Also, a good Club is a tonne more effective than a good sword, because swing speed is irrelevant. Just don't use the Club's special move (more on that later), because then it will take longer to come back to you.

Monster Eradication Goal – None for these fellas.

Drops:

- *Omni Geode: 4-10* – With an 99% chance of dropping, essentially this number depends on how many Mummy Floors you find. Equipped with a Burglar's Ring, Carbon Ghosts will give ya loads of Omni Geodes.
- *Refined Quartz: Occasionally* – Mainly just goes to the trash to accommodate for better/more frequent drops, TBH.
- *Ectoplasm: Occasionally* – 9.5% chance, and can only be found if "A Curious Substance" is an active Special Order.

Iridium Crabs

Where – Iridium Crabs only spawn on Floors 26+ (except Prehistoric Floors). They are like a Rock Crab, but with an Iridium Node for their shell.

Strategy – Rock Crabs (of all types) are easily recognisable in most situations because of their tendency to not stick to the “Rock Grid”; they’ll often be misaligned. Knowing how to spot them through this method is often the difference between whether you have to eat another Sashimi/Cheese or not. Do not bother to hit their shell with a pickaxe, just slice, slice, slice! Also, if you see a green creature running away from you, chances are you probably bombed an Iridium Crab’s shell off.

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 60 (including any other type of Rock Crab) and you get a Crabshell Ring. I don’t kill Iridium Crabs for that, I kill them for their awesome drops.

Drops:

- *Crab Cakes: 5-15** – With a 50% chance, I will often get quite a few, which I then use for running around on my farm/in the Mines, on top of Triple Shot Espresso.
 - *Off-topic Randomness Alert: Have you tried Horse + Coffee + Crab Cakes/ Pepper Poppers/some other food Speed buff before? It’s sooo fuuun! Although it’ll make anything other than that feel Sluggish to the Max (or is it Minimum?), so be warned!*
- *Iridium Ore: 5-15* – Rolls a 50% chance 3 times, and for every success it will grant an ore.
 - *It makes killing these critters a good use of time, especially if a Burglar’s Ring is equipped.*

Iridium Bats

Where – Iridium Bats spawn on Floors 50+ (including Prehistoric Floors, excluding Mummy Floors).

Strategy – You’ll have to deal 300 HP – double a Serpent – to defeat them, *and* they’ll do more damage. Fight them like any other bat, just make sure you don’t get hurt (...which can be tricky!). Just remember that if they flock with Serpents: now’s a good time to use a Staircase!

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 200 (any Bat counts) and you get a Vampire Ring. I have typically already finished this Goal by the time I reach Skull Cavern, but I still slam them with my Club for their high chance of Iridium.

Drops:

- *Iridium Ore: 6-16* – 1-4 per bat; most frequently 1 or 2.
- *Solar Essence: 4-10* – Every second bat should drop a Solar Essence, to stack with the drops from Mummies.
 - *During my trips where I’m not there for Iridium*, I can collect up to 20 Solar Essence; AKA 800G (20 essence * 40G sell price).*
**Trips that I fight lots of Monsters because I already have 500 Iridium Ore sitting un-smelted in my chests...*

- *Uncommon:*
 - *Battery Pack* – Most useful for makin' Crystalariums.
 - *Mega Bomb* – Most useful for blowin' stuff up.
 - *Life Elixir* – Most useful for stayin' alive.
 - *Energy Tonic* – Most u Ditto: Life Elixir.
- *Iridium Bar: Very Rare* – A 0.8% chance; a Purple Slime has a 0.9% chance.
- *Bat Wings: None!* – Strangely, Iridium Bats don't drop none o' these, so don't be expecting any!

Pepper Rex

Where – Swathes of Pepper Rexes are found on Prehistoric Floors, although occasionally you'll find one or two on regular Floors. Prehistoric Floors are dark Floors covered in moss. A skull icon will appear next to the floor number on these Floors. They are quite a rare Floor to find, I encounter them every 75ish floors I cover. The plants found only on Prehistoric Floors and Floors 40-70 in the Dangerous Mines can drop Ancient Seeds when hit with a sword.

Strategy – Pepper Rexes will mind their own business until you get fairly close, and won't chase you very far. When you do agitate them, they will breathe flames towards you. Dodge these, then land your attack. Simple!

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 50 and you get a Knight's Helmet. Generally regarded as one of the hardest-to-finish Eradication Goal due to Pepper Rexes spawning so randomly; I try to kill any I set eyes on.

Drops:

- *Dinosaur Egg: Occasionally* – Even if you already have it as an Artifact, it's still a good drop, because stick it into a Mayonnaise Machine and you'll get a jar of mayo worth 800G (Rancher: 960G; Artisan: 1,120G).
 - *If you're needing this as one of your final Artifacts, I suggest killing Dust Sprites for the Burglar's Ring before tryin' yer luck with some 'rexes.*
 - *In my experience, I don't think I've had a Prehistoric floor before Floor 10, I'm not sure whether that is a rule or not, since Treasure Rooms don't spawn below Floor 10.*
- *Bones: 5-10 (if Prehistoric Floor)* – Prehistoric Tibia, Rib, and Vertebra all have an equal chance of dropping (22.5%), and each are rolled separately (meaning it is possible to get one of each). They are all needed for the Museum. Bones only have a sell price of 100G, but you can process them in the Bone Mill (thanks 1.5!). Speed-Gro & the Deluxe variety, Quality Fertilizer, and Tree Fertilizer can all be obtained through this way.

Mutant Flies

Where – These Monsters spawn on Prehistoric Floors in Skull Cavern, not just the Mutant Bug Lair. They cannot be found anywhere else. There are no Mutant Grubs in Skull Cavern, just Flies.

Strategy – You can't have gotten to this point without learning how to kill Flies. So nothing special, just whack 'em when they get close. Do make sure that you don't have these swarming you as you're fighting the dinos, though.

Monster Eradication Goal – Kill 125 (including the other Bugs/Flies) and you get an Insect Head, the least pleasant to wield weapon in the game (although it's pretty good if you get it early on).

Drops:

- *Bug Meat: 5-10** – Pretty awful compared to most of the other drops you'll be getting, but if it manages to stay away from your Trash Can, then it's useful for bait. *That number is just an educated guess, though. I have never brought any guts home. Their permanent place of residence is my Iridium Trash Can!
 - *Can also be crafted into Bug Steak if you somehow manage to collect 10.*
- *Ancient Seed: Very Rare* – Great if still don't have lots of the plant-able version; otherwise pretty useless.

Lava Bat

Where – Occasionally you'll find a Floor with a few of these.

Strategy – Fight them like you did on Floors 80-120 of the Mines...

Monster Eradication Goal – Same as Iridium Bat, except I'll just attract all the Lava Bats on the Floor to me and then show them who's boss.

Drops:

- *Bat Wings: 5-10* – If they make it home, I suggest using it for Monster Musk next time you hit the Mines.
 - *Monster Musk requires 30 Bat Wings and 30 Slime.*
- *Rare Disc: Extremely Rare* – Although Void Spirits or Fishing Treasure Chests are probably a better option, keep in mind that you could get one if you kill enough Bats, as they have a 0.1% drop chance.

Preparation

Preparation is just as important as execution when it comes to getting the most out of your Skull Cavern voyages. This section covers the bare essentials of packing for a successful trip, convenient extras, and additional gear that can be brought.

First, let's start with a...

Beginner's Packing List

- **A Good Sword** – Notice that I said a *Sword*, not a *Weapon*. Daggers are essentially a waste of time, and Clubs are covered in the [Convenient Extras/Additional Gear](#) section below, because they are trickier to master. Anyone can wield a sword, and swords will never fail you, unlike Clubs, which can be slightly unreliable in a bad situation. Here's a list of weapons that I, personally, recommend to bring into Skull Cavern for your first time that you should have access to (organised in least to most recommended):
 - **Bone Sword** – A possible reward for Floor 90 in the Mines, *only* if you chose Remixed Mine Rewards. Otherwise, you can buy it from Adventurer's Guild for 6,000G, or you might get it from Skeleton (4% chance). Although it doesn't deal out that much damage (20-30), the +4 Speed (swing speed) is great for confidence building, and the +2 Weight (how much Monsters get knocked back) is convenient for fighting Serpents, as it gives you more time to prepare in between blows.
 - **Lava Katana** – The only way of obtaining this weapon is by spending 25,000G at the 'Guild after reaching the bottom of the Mines. Youch. That's the price of an Auto-Grabber! I wouldn't be surprised if that's an amount that you're not willing to cough up. However, it has more than twice as much damage as that of the Bone Sword (55-64), as well as +3 Weight and +3 Defense (less damage taken from Monsters). IMO the Steel Falchion (below) is superior because of its +4 Speed; this means that you can fit around 2 hits of a falchion to 1 swing of a katana (the katana has no speed advantage or disadvantage). And because spending 25,000G then finding a Prismatic Shard (AKA a Galaxy Sword) *ONE DAY LATER* is >:[. Which is what happened both times I bought a Lava Katana, of course. How did you expect anything less?
 - **Steel Falchion** – A possible reward for Floor 110 in the Mines, *only* if you chose Remixed Mine Rewards. It is also a possible drop from Monsters and crates on Floors 110+ in the Mines, as well as crates in Skull Cavern itself. If you've reached Floor 90 in the Mines, the Adventurer's Guild will stock it for 9,000G. While 9,000G might seem like an awful lot to some people, this weapon has the +4 Speed of the Bone Sword, *and* 28-46 Damage, making it worth every penny.
 - **Galaxy Sword** – The sole way of obtaining this princely sword is to trade a Prismatic Shard for it at the Three Pillars (in Calico Desert). I think that it is 100% worth the trade. It has +4 Speed, but combine that with 60-80 Damage and you're looking at a Monster-crushing *machine*. I mean, only the Dragontooth Cutlass and Dwarf Sword come close to this level. Spend a Shard on this, and it'll make obtaining more Iridium a much smoother process, period.

Notes: There are a few other decent weapons that you can bring, however they are rare or late game drops (e.g. Dwarf Sword) that you probably won't have. The Obsidian Edge does not make this list, any weapon with negative speed is going to be tricky to wield while fighting the Monsters of Skull Cavern. Infinity Blade is the other exclusion, because I don't think many people would be bringing one of those along for their first trip.

- **An Upgraded Pickaxe** – I suggest having your Pickaxe upgraded to Gold before taking a trip to Skull Cavern. It will take 2 hits to destroy a rock in Skull Cavern with a Gold Pickaxe. But one of your first uses of Iridium should probably be upgrading it to an Iridium Pickaxe. This will one-shot Skull Cavern rocks, plus it will destroy boulders in just 3 whacks. It does cost 25,000G and 5 Iridium Bars to make the jump however, so make sure you don't go broke. A Pickaxe of Steel or below should not be brought into Skull Cavern, as in a tight situation, you need a quick Pickaxe. If you are going to enchant your Pickaxe, I would suggest Swift, but Powerful is good too. Because of how infrequently you should be using your Pickaxe, none of the enchantments make or break Skull Cavern.
- **A Big Backpack** – Don't head into Skull Cavern without a Size 36 Backpack; you'll be getting so much that you don't want to miss out on. Just in case you don't know, the first backpack has 12 Slots, then you have to head to Pierre's General Store and exchange 2,000G for 12 more. The Deluxe Pack (the one you want) is bought from the same spot for 10,000G.
- **Healthy Snacks** – Any food will do really, but make sure you bring a generous stack. To give you a better idea, that means 100 or so Salmon or Black berries (11 HP each), around 80 Common Mushrooms (17 HP each), approximately 35 Sashimi (33 HP each), around 25 Salads (50 HP each) and at least 20 gold-quality Cheese (56 HP each). Even if you are bringing other highly-restorative food, make sure you bring at least 20. One or two whacks of a Serpent is enough to ensure another food gone, because you never want to have a Health Bar below half-way in Skull Cavern. Plus, even if you don't use it all, you can use the leftover for next time. Salads are popular snacks, so are gold-star Cheese and Sashimi, as these are all easy-to-stockpile, high-restoration foods. Note that you *should not* bring food with Buffs as your health restoring food. You'll have a whole other 2 stacks for that!

Notes: Gold-star Cheese or Sashimi are my typical go-to foods. Gold-star Cheese only requires a barn, a few cows and a couple of hours daily. Sashimi is also easy; buy or craft 10-15 Crab Pots and a couple hundred Bait and you're good. But if you're Artisan and like to be really efficient, it is slightly better to sell your Cheese and buy Salads. I see why people bring Salads, because you can turn any source of money into easy Health, but I just prefer something that I can stockpile and never have to leave the farm for.

- **Dishes with Buffs** – You're not going to make it far into Skull Cavern without some solid Buffs behind you. To start, let me debrief the 2 different types of Buffs: Drink Buffs and Food Buffs. You can have *up to* 1 Drink Buff *and* 1 Food Buff at one time. If you currently have a Drink Buff active, taking on another Drink Buff will replace the previous Drink Buff. Same goes for Food Buffs. Eating a food with *no* Buffs *will not* replace any existing Buffs. So, to optimise your Skull Cavern trips, you should always have one of each active. There are a handful of dishes with Buffs that are worth taking to Skull Cavern; here's a list (in order of least to most recommended):

- **Pumpkin Soup:** +2 Defense; +2 Luck; 7m 41s – The +2 Luck can be handy, and the +2 Defense might save you a snack or two. This recipe requires you to have 1 Pumpkin, 1 Milk and 7+ ❤️s with Robin. The Pumpkins and the Milk are both fairly easy to stockpile, and it won't take too much more than gifting Robin a Hardwood every time you get something built to learn the recipe. You'll probably be needing 2 of these to last the trip, though.
- **Crab Cakes:** +1 Speed; +1 Defense; 16m 47s – With almost 17 minutes of duration, this handy dish will last you the whole trip. However, it costs 1 Crab, 1 Wheat Flour, 1 Egg and 1 Oil to cook, and the recipe comes from the Queen of Sauce on the 21st day of Fall, Year 2. Typically I start going to Skull Cavern to early Fall Year 1, so not the most convenient for some people. But if you obtain it through an Iridium Crab, consider it. The Speed is *great*.
- **Lucky Lunch:** +3 Luck; 11min 11s – The +3 Luck is will give you a +3% increase in rocks dropping a ladder; this means that getting Ladders through bombs will be super effective. But again, the recipe is a severe limiter. It comes from the Queen of Sauce on the final day of Spring, Year 2. And it requires 1 Sea Cucumber (easy enough to fish for), 1 Blue Jazz (just plant a bunch in pots, the Greenhouse or on the farm) and 1 Tortilla (essentially a Corn).
- **Spicy Eel:** +1 Luck; +1 Speed; 7min – My favourite food to bring, Spicy Eel is easy to stockpile and you'll be getting it from Serpents anyways, so it doesn't even take up an inventory slot. The Speed is extremely useful for dodging enemies, and the Luck increases ladder drop rates. So you're thinking: what about the recipe? Well, that is negligible because you can trade 1 Ruby for 1 Spicy Eel at the Desert Trader (any day), plus Serpents will often drop some Spicy Goooodness. If your stack starts decreasing, you can always pop a Ruby in a Crystalarium or two and end up catch back up in no time.
- **Magic Rock Candy:** +2 Mining; +5 Luck; +5 Defense; +5 Attack; 8m 24s – That's a whole-lotta-buffs, ain't it? This luxurious item is obtained through trading 3 Prismatic Shards at the Desert Trader on Thursday. I have not tested it yet (we likesss our ssshiny prissmtic ssshards, *gollum*), but I can only assume it is the best food to take...

And for Drink Buffs, well, there are only 3 realistic options, because nobody wants to bring Green Tea or into Skull Cavern. In no particular order:

- **Coffee:** +1 Speed; 1min 23s – Vroooooom!; Ciao!; Auf Wiedersehen! I am SPEED! Coffee is a very handy drink that'll send you flying to your destination. Coffee Beans are obtained either through Dust Sprites (1% drop chance) or the Traveling Cart for 2,500G. Plant them in Spring or early Summer. After 8 days they will yield 4... more... Coffee Beans, then continue to harvest every 2 days. Place five in a Keg and let them sit for just 2 hours and you end up with Coffee (the drink). If you plant some in your Greenhouse; you'll end up with an almost infinite stack of Coffee; nobody can stop you now...except Gus.
- **Triple Shot Espresso:** +1 Speed; 4min 12s – Isn't it annoying having to drink every 1min 23s to keep up with the pace? Well, there's a way to fix that! Spend 5,000G at the Stardrop Saloon to earn the recipe for Triple Shot Espresso. Then head over to your kitchen with a big stack o' Coffee and make some Espresso for 3 Coffee Each. This triples the standard Coffee's Buff Duration. The other way of getting this is to trade 1 Diamond for 1 Espresso at the Desert Trader on any day.

- **Ginger Ale:** *+1 Luck; 5m* – I don't like bringing Ginger Ale with me to Skull Cavern. There. I said it. I would so much rather the speed of Coffee, which I find helps me find Ladders much faster than +1 Luck ever can. One possible use case is if you have a need for Auto-Petters. But the recipe isn't easy to come by either. You first have to make it to Ginger Island, and then you have to reach Floor 5 of the Volcano Mines with a Dwarfish Translation Guide and 1,000G to spend. Once you have the know-how, 3 Ginger and 1 Sugar are required to cook it, and you'll need to bring at least two to last the trip. All in all, I just don't bother, and I don't see the benefit.

Notes: I typically bring 3 Spicy Eels and 3 Triple Shot Espressos as they are easiest to stockpile and I have a Need for Speed, but I think using a Lucky Lunch and Ginger Ale to rapidly dive for the first "buff stint" could be a reasonable option, if you're at that stage of the game. Although, it's usually more effective to bring in lots of Staircases instead.

- **Lotsa Bombs** – Bombs are used in Skull Cavern for either fast descent of Floors or fast destruction of Ore Nodes. You want to bring regular Bombs, not Cherry or Mega ones. Bombs (regular) drop from Serpents and have a niche explosion range; big enough to be useful; small enough so that you can get out of their range before you take damage. These can be bought from the Dwarf for 600G each, crafted with 4 Iron Ore and 1 Coal each (at Mining Level 6), or swapped for 5 Quartz at the Desert Trade (any day). They can also be dropped by quite a few Monsters. You'll want at least 25 Bombs to start with, more if you can afford it. Anything less won't be very helpful.
- **Staircases** – Staircases are useful for skipping unproductive Floors (more on that later), and can also be used to bypass the first x number of Floors. You can craft Staircases with 99 Stone once you are Mining Level 2. Staircases can also be bought for 1,980G each in Year 1 or 9,900G in Year 2 (buy the Stone at the Carpenter's Shop). As you can see, this is quite a bad deal. Instead, get a few Crystalariums producing Jade and go to the Desert Trader on a Sunday to trade Jades for Staircases at a 1:1 ratio. I typically bring either 10 (early game) or 100+ (late game) with me. On my first trips if I haven't yet traded any Jades I'll bring 500 Stone (collected from good ol' fashioned schmakin' rocks), just in case I run into an Infested Floor or five.

Convenient Extras/Additional Gear

There are a lot of add-ons that you can bring, and some of them you won't have when you first enter Skull Cavern. Here's a rundown:

- **Fancy Rings** – I think it's safe to say that you can craft a Glowstone Ring by now (5 Solar Essence, 5 Iron Bars, Mining Level 4). This leaves you with one ring slot left. A fair few Rings will be useful; here's my favourites (organised in least to most useful):
 - **Vampire Ring:** *Restore 2 HP after slaying a Monster; reward for eradicating 200 Bats* – 2 HP is almost nothing... even a Salmonberry is more than 5x that. However, this Ring is super easy to get.
 - **Protection Ring:** *Increases invincibility time after taking damage by 0.4 seconds; Volcano Dungeon chests* – Can help with Tiny Slimes, but still not very good.

- **Savage Ring:** +2 Speed Buff for 3 seconds after slaying a Monster; reward for eradicating 150 Shadow Shaman/Brutes – This is where it starts to get Good. I just love zooming around with this. Slaughtering a Serpent then speeding over to the Big Slime, taking the Ladder and then zipping between Mummies will become more than frequent. Great if you can remove the Monsters in the immediate vicinity with precision and haste.
- **Crabshell Ring:** +5 Defense; reward for eradicating 60 Rock Crabs – Reduces those Situations where your Health Bar is Screamin' in the Reds.
- **Ruby Ring:** +10% Attack Damage; Haunted Skulls, Fishing Treasure Chests, Adventurer's Guild – Haunted Skulls have a 1.3% chance of dropping this, so you probably won't have one, but if you do, that's great. With this Ring equipped some Monsters will take one or two less hits than before!
- **Slime Charmer Ring:** Slimes can't damage you; reward for eradicating 1,000 Slimes – Mitigates Slime dodging; this saves time. Although I enjoy avoiding Slimes, this Ring is super handy for those moments when A) the game lags, B) I make a mistake or C) I just can't be bothered to kill the Slime that's keeps sneaking through my legs. But 1,000 Slimes is... *a lot*. I suggest crushing the Slimes of Floors 1-30 with Monster Musk to fulfil this goal.
- **Napalm Ring:** Slain enemies explode; reward for eradicating 250 Serpents – While you won't have this Ring yet, due to the fact that you can only get it from... yer 'no... Skull Cavern, this Ring is awesome. Whenever you defeat a Monster, it will destroy any rocks or Ore Nodes (and crumbled Mummies) in a 5x5 “squirrel” radius of where it died. This means that by fending off a Serpent or slaying a Slime you could uncover a Ladder, or better, a Shaft. If you can only take 2 Rings with you, prioritise the Rings below; but if you can bring 4 (due to the Forge), or you don't have a Lucky Ring, this should probably be one of them.
- **Lucky Ring:** +1 Luck; Skull Cavern and Quarry Mine Crates, Panning – This Ring is very hard to obtain, but it's very handy. Increased Ladder frequency, more Iridium, plus a few other bonuses make this second only to one Ring, although it is incredibly close. However, this Ring is useful in almost any scenario, even outside of Skull Cavern/Mining in general.
- **Burglar's Ring:** Double chance for Monster loot; reward for eradicating 500 Dust Sprites – One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the shadows give lots of loot? ... *ahem* ... With this Ring you'll be rolling the chances for Monster drops *twice*, this means it's twice as likely to get the precious drops like Rabbit's Feet, Red Cabbage Seeds, Dinosaur Eggs, Iridium Bars, and, of course, Prismatic Shards. Plus, it's possible to get double items (I've gotten 2 Dino Eggs from 1 Pepper Rex before...) for almost every drop! It makes even the worst trips still pretty good, and if you're ever hunting some Monsters for an Eradication Goal, you'll get a tonne of stuff along the way.

Notes: If you manage to get your hands on an Iridium Band through Fishing Treasure Chest, definitely take that. An Iridium Band is a Glowstone Ring + a Ruby Ring in 1 slot, so you'll be doing 10% bonus Damage as well. It can be crafted with 5 Iridium Bars, 50 Void Essence and 50 Solar Essence at Combat Level 9.

- **Warp Totems** – Warp Totem: Desert and Warp Totem: Farm are both useful items to bring. Use a Desert Totem as soon as you are ready to leave and/or use a Farm Totem at 1:30am to get you speedily to your desired destination. Desert Totems can be obtained from swapping 3 Omni Geodes for 1 Warp Totem at the Desert Trader (on any day). Alternatively, you could spend 10 Iridium Bars at the same place for the recipe, and then use 2 Hardwood, 1 Coconut, and 4 Iridium Ore every time you want to head to the Desert. The first option is definitely better. You could also use the Desert Obelisk when you have it.

Farm Totems are slightly harder to get; they have to be crafted with 1 Hardwood, 1 Honey and 20 Fiber once at Foraging Floor 8. Trekking to the Secret Woods every now 'n then isn't too much effort; the Honey can be bought at the Oasis (Sandy's store) in infinite amounts for 200G every Friday; collecting Fiber is achievable, especially with 1.5's Fiber Seeds. Foraging Floor 8 isn't particularly tricky to clear.

You can also get them through other means:

- Artifact Spots have a small chance of dropping them.
- Donating 80 Items will get you 5.
- Blobfish Fishponds have a small chance of giving you 5.
- 500 Qi Coins at the Casino will get you one.
- You can get them from the Crane Game.
- Plus, you can also get them in fives from Treasure Rooms in Skull Cavern itself.

IMO early on the Farm Totem is more powerful, especially if you have enough farm "chores" to keep you occupied until 10am, as the Bus only starts takin' orders from 10:10am. However, if you value 3 Omni Geodes over the 500G Bus toll and glaring at slow-coach Pam (~~pun completely not intended~~), then go Do The Deal!

- **Return Scepter** – The 2,000,000G Return Scepter, available from Krobus might seem a bit... pricy. However, it fills in for Farm Totems, and then does the job better; instead of taking you to the Warp Statue on your farm, it'll whisk you straight to your door! (Any injury resulting from teleportation is not under warranty in any shape or frequency. Terms & Conditions apply.)
- **Master Slingshot** – Quite a few people load up their Master Slingshots with Explosive Ammo and use it instead of Bombs in most cases. The Master Slingshot is the Mines Floor 70 reward (even with Remixed Rewards), and Explosive Ammo can be bought from the Adventurer's Guild for 300G each or crafted with 1 Iron Bar and 2 Coal (makes five). The Ammo will only explode if it hits a Monster, a Ladder or a wall, so it can be tricky to wield. The upside is it will explode instantly, good for quick descent or rapid clearing of Floors. Explosive Ammo's radius is the same as a Napalm Ring's. I think you should give it a few tries before making up your mind on it. I didn't like it at first, but after a few trips I got used to the firing mechanic and it ended up being really useful!

You can also use the Master Slingshot as a weapon, loaded with Gold Ore or it will do up to 61 Damage, but it is a very unreliable, with a low of 15 Damage.

- **A Good Club** – If you can manage its difficulties, a top-tier Club will be very beneficial. Clubs have a special move that lets you do more damage, over a bigger range, with more knockback. Activate this ability with the button you use to eat food, then very quickly spam (repeatedly press) the normal attack button. The more times you press the normal attack button during the animation of the Club swinging, the more damage you'll do, however keep in mind that knockback will be applied afresh after each hit. This means that for flying Monsters you might not get more than a hit or two in before they are sent to the other side of the Floor. There is a restriction to how often you can trigger it, sadly (but fairly). Look down at the Club in your hotbar after performing a special move; see the red? When that disappears, you can use your special move again. The waiting time can be reduced by giving your Club the Artful enchantment (50% reduction) or by picking Scout then Acrobat for your Combat Profession (also 50%). For the Clubs themselves, a **Slammer** is nifty, but the **Galaxy** and **Dwarf Hammer** are quite a bit better. If you manage to snag a **Dragontooth Club**, great! But for <posh_voice> *Optimal Monster Obliterating* </posh_voice>, upgrade your Galaxy Hammer into an **Infinity Gavel**. Here's an expanded explanation on each:
 - **The Slammer:** The Slammer comes with -2 Speed, and does 40-55 Damage. It can be dropped from Crates and Monsters on Floors 80-100 (Mines), Floors 40+ (Skull Cavern) or the Quarry Mine. If you chose Remixed Mine Rewards, it's a possible reward for Floor 110 in the Mines.
 - **Dwarf Hammer:** +2 Defense and +5 Weight come with the Dwarf Hammer, along with 75-85 Damage and a "very faint whirring sound"... The sole way of getting one is through opening Common Chests in the Volcano Dungeon (around a 4% chance).
 - **Galaxy Hammer:** This Club has +2 Speed and +5 Weight coupled with 70-90 Damage, and it's handy. It is bought from the Adventurer's Guild for 75,000G, only after obtaining a Galaxy Sword.
 - **Dragontooth Club:** This 'un has +50 Crit. Power and +3 Weight to its name, as well as 80-100 Damage. An uncommon item from Rare Chests in the Volcano Dungeon (also around a 4% chance).
 - **Infinity Gavel:** This beauty has +2 Speed, +1 Defense, and +5 Weight, as well as 100-120 Damage per hit. But (because of course there's a but), you'll have to head over to the Forge with 3 Galaxy Souls, 60 Cinder Shards and a lowly Galaxy Hammer. There are three ways of getting Galaxy Souls: Firstly, you can buy them for 40 Qi Gems apiece at Mr. Qi's Walnut Room. Secondly, if it's the last day of the season, you can swap 10 Radioactive Bars into 1 Soul through the Island Trader (only if you've killed at least 50 Dangerous Monster). Finally, you might happen to get them as a drop from Monsters in the Dangerous Mines/Dangerous Skull Cavern. I focus on the first option, because Radioactive Nodes don't seem to spawn frequently enough to collect 150 Ore, and it's a very rare drop from Monsters and the like.

Notes: Don't bring a Slammer unless you really know what you're doing or you've enchanted it, because in most cases Galaxy Sword easily trumps it, and you could end up in a few tricky situations because of its -2 Speed.

- **Next Level** – More Bombs and more Staircases never hurt...

During Your Trip

When you enter Skull Cavern for the first time, you might be thinking: what do I do now? Well, check this out!

Floors

Floors (or Levels) are an indicator of how much "progress" you've made upon entering. You can see how many Floors you've descended in the top left of your screen. The deeper you get, the more frequent ore and gems nodes, most significantly Iridium Nodes, spawn. Floors can be increased in 3 ways:

- **Ladders:** Ladders can spawn under rocks, but they can also be "dropped" from Monsters (15% chance; does anyone know if this is doubled with a Burglars Ring?). They will *not* drop from Monsters if the Monster dies in a sandy patch. Ladders will take you down 1 Floor.
- **Shafts:** 20% of Ladders that spawn under rocks will be Shafts. Shafts drop you 3-15 Floors and take off some Health (don't ~~get your hopes up~~ worry, they can't kill ya; taking Shafts never drops your Health below 1, and they can't take you past Floor 100 if you haven't already reached it).
- **Staircases:** I'm sure that at this point in the Guide you know how to craft/trade for Staircases... Considering placement: they must be placed on "solid ground" e.g. not sand, not on top of a Monster, not on a Crate, and obviously not on a rock. Staircases will send you 1 Floor closer to your oblivion :0.

Generally, I take a Ladder or Shaft as soon as I uncover it, the exceptions being if one of my Bombs is still igniting or I get side-tracked because of my oh-look!-me-like!-gimme! talent. Take a guess at which happens more often.

Unproductive Floors

If the layout is particularly narrow, there aren't any dense groups of rocks, or there are too many Monsters, it will often take much longer to find a Ladder.

Luckily, Staircases were invented.

I'll skip any of these Floors and Infested Floors (not including Prehistoric Floors, I kill every Pepper Rex I find). Once I've done Mr. Qi's Floor 100 challenge with ≤ 10 Staircases (more on that later) I'll be more liberal with my usage, because by that stage I'll have quite a few Jade-filled Crystalariums going. Once I surmount my initial shortage of Jade and have Staircases in the hundreds, I'll skip the first 50-ish Floors just to speed up the process of Iridium collection.

Mastering when to use a Staircase will be very useful, so spend some time finding out what's best for your playstyle.

Free Ladders

There is a chance that a Floor will generate with a Ladder already exposed. This means it is impossible to find Ladders from rocks on that Floor. If you have hit a lot of rocks and the Ladder still hasn't spawned, there is a good chance that there is a free Ladder hidden nearby.

The layout with a long minecart rail extending to the right *a/ways* has a free Ladder at the end. Whenever I happen upon this layout, I normally run straight to the end, grab the Coal (if there is any) and then take the Ladder, ignoring everything else.

Treasure Rooms

Treasure Rooms are a very small kind of Floor that contains a chest in the centre and a Ladder in the bottom right corner. They can only spawn below Floor 10. As well as having an easy-to-access Ladder, Treasure Rooms are great because you can get certain items from the chest that you can't get anywhere else. These items are:

- **Auto-Petter:** *3.8% chance* – This Joja-patented masterpiece is the king of Treasure Rooms. People will hunt Treasure Rooms specifically for this. What does it do? Well, exactly like as says. It'll pet any animals in the building you place it in, every day. Combine it with an Auto-Grabber and you're looking at only going into your Barn/Coop as infrequently as your number of processors allow. Or not at all if you don't want to bother with processing.
- **Blue, Red, and Dark Cowboy Hats:** *3.8% chance each* – See how many you can collect, basically. Unless you're like me and your second favourite hat is the Blue Cowboy Hat, in which case: quick, I need it *now!*

...although there are a lot of other great (and not so great) items that you can get. If you want to check them out, [here's](#) the Wiki link.

There is a 1% base chance of a Treasure Room spawning. For each Luck Buff that is active, there is another 1% added. Daily Luck / 10 is also added to the total. Lucky Rings are worth 1 Luck Buff, and the Special Charm adds 0.025 to the Daily Luck.

Therefore, the highest chance you can theoretically give yourself is *1% (base chance) + 1.25% (Very Happy day AND Special Charm) + 4% (Magic Rock Candy OR Gold-star Lucky Lunch) + 2% (Gold-star Ginger Ale) + 2% (two Lucky Rings) = 10.25% per Floor.*

Bomb Placement

I'll just reiterate what I've said previously: bring regular Bombs only. Therefore, this section assumes that you use regular Bombs.



(excuse the sashimi-face)

Shown above are several important things:

- The radius of a Bomb (the Wiki doesn't have any information or images on this so I thought I'd make my own). After thorough research, AKA logging onto Sell Out Farm and spamming bombs on one spot, I can conclude that the actual radius (the area in red, as well as that yellow tile) is shaped rather like itsa-me-a-Mario's Mushroom powerup, not a "squircle". Additionally, FWIW only the blue area can become tilled. Yeah, probably not worth much...
- Two possible spots for maximising the Bomb's Explosion Radius: The one on the yellow tile would yield around 8 Iridium Ore, 4 Copper Ore, 2 Iron Ore, 1 Ruby, and 8 Stone. The other would give about 2 more Stone, but two less Copper. Generally speaking, Copper is worth more than Stone, making this a no-brainer. Keep in mind, that, when you're rushing through the Floors as you will be when playing, you will not have time for calculations like this, you will simply hurl one or two down in the general vicinity of the Nodes and hope for the best.
- Although I'd found a Shaft by this point (highlighted in green on the left), I decided that it is worth the 10-20 mins to collect the valuables, as opposed to skipping several Floors straight away. To decide when it's worth spending time on resource collection, you should ask a few questions:
 - *Are you nearly at Floor 100 for the first time?* – If yes, then I focus on reaching that target first.
 - *How much is over there?* – If it's 1 Iridium Node, I don't bother too much about it, but 3+ gets my attention.
 - *How near is it?* – If it's on the other side of the Floor, I don't give it my time, but if it's within a few tiles, I'll *totally* expend a little more time to gather it.
 - *Are there any Monsters nearby?* – The more Monsters in the way the more time it takes, so chose carefully when there are a lot around.

- *Have you already passed Floor 100 on this trip?* - The frequency of Iridium spawning doesn't change much after 100, so I'll grab any big chunks before heading downwards.
- *How many Bombs do you have left?* - If I'm running low on Bombs, I'll start fighting every Serpent I encounter (in the hope that they'll drop me more Bombs), and only swipe the biggest of stashes. Alternate version: be prepared and bring more Bombs.

- My typical Skull Cavern Inventory setup, bar Coffee instead of Triple Shot Espresso. Short story, I was lazy. Long story, I wanted to keep some back-up cash after purchasing some expensive things (including 50,000G worth of Bombs), and I hadn't yet bought the 5,000G Triple Shot Espresso recipe. Plus, I was inexperienced, so I didn't think it would make much of a difference. I was wrong. Also, I was presumably waiting for my 150,000G harvest of Pale Ale the next day.

Keep in mind that I bring a few things that aren't in the first row of the Inventory, such as a Farm Totem/Return Scepter and Staircases.

Making Grandpa-rivalling Evaluations just takes experience. I rely purely on instinct now; I've gone more than 50 times at the time of writing, but you should get the knack of it by trip 5, then continue refining until you reach a state where you don't even have to think about it.

Other Things to Think About

Time

In Singleplayer, time runs about 25% slower, which means you'll need more Buff Dishes to last a day in Skull Cavern than outside it. On the other hand, this lets you do more with your day: more time = more output.

Time will also pause when you eat, so if you have your food close to your tools you should be able to eat any time you need. I like using this to my advantage; I'll push sideways during the eating animation to dodge the Monster pursuing me.

This does not work in Multiplayer, but if all the other players have paused, it will work in Splitscreen (FYI this Splitscreen trick also works for Heart Events/Cutscenes, shop menus and other things).

Timing Of The Skull Key

Reaching Floor 120 in the Mines has five effects. Obviously, the first is obtaining the Skull Key. The lesser-known bad news is that a few Monsters will be harder. The Wiki is vague on details, but from my experiences Shadow Brutes, Shadow Shamans, Duggies and possibly Dust Sprites (?) increase in Health. If you have information on the subject I'd love if you shared!

On the other hand, all Monsters now have a 0.05% chance of dropping a Prismatic Shard and an equal chance for Diamonds. Plus you can find Gems and Purple Mushrooms from Garbage Cans, and those items can be requested for noticeboard Quests.

Since I like my Monsters as easy as they get, I normally reach Floor 115 and wait it out until I unlock the Desert. The day I do, I'll rush down the final 5 Floors. Go to sleep, the Bus gets fixed, wake up, head to Skull Cavern.

But weigh out the odds depending on the save, who knows, you might just get a Prismatic Shard!

Mr. Qi's Quests

Mr. Qi sure does like Skull Cavern. There are 3 different Quests related to Skull Cavern that he can give you:

- **Qi's Challenge:** The day after entering Skull Cavern for the first time, you'll receive a letter from Mr. Qi himself:

*I see you've entered the Skull Cavern. Well done.
I've got a better challenge for you, kid. Make it at least 25 levels deep. I've got a mountain full of G to send if you can do it.
Your friend, Mr. Qi*

If you do just that, you'll end up 10,000G richer via mail the next day.

- **Qi's Hungry Challenge:** To complete this rather ridiculous challenge, you must make it to Floor 100 in Skull Cavern *without eating or drinking* a single thing. Buffs that you took on before entering will stay. Pretty much the only way to complete this is to just use 99 Staircases. It is one of Mr. Qi's Special Order, and it rewards 25 Qi Gems.

- **Skull Cavern Invasion:** Another Special Order to reach Floor 100, but this time all the Monsters will be much harder; they'll do loads more damage and absorb more hits. On the upside, there are special drops that you can only find here and in the Dangerous Mines. I personally like this Special Order for the unique drops and the Radioactive Ore. I'll go a few times on days 2-5 without finishing the Order by reaching 100 (just for the drops), but I use 75+ Staircases on one of the final days for the 40 Qi Gems.

Secret Note #10

I've mentioned it several times above, and now I'll elaborate. And don't worry, I will not spoil what you get for completing the Note.

First, I'll start with how you get the Note, because this Note is trickier than most. Assuming you already have the Magnifying Glass (which cannot be obtained until Winter the 1st), you'll have to complete Qi's Challenge (above) before you can even have a chance to find this Note. Then you have to actually find it.

But if you've got all the rest but this one just won't pop for whatever reason, remember that Giant Crops have a 100% chance of dropping a Secret Note.

Here's what the Note says:

Someone is
 waiting for you
 on level 100
 in
 the
 skull cavern...

This is my favourite Note, simply because of the formatting. Oh, and the reward.

Next time you reach Floor 100, a cutscene will play out. But if you've used 10 or less Staircases to get there, you'll have special dialogue. Some players (myself included) only want to see the cutscene if it's got the special dialogue, so they'll only bring 10 Staircases with them. Generally, this means more Bomb usage, but continued efforts are also rewarded; on some trips you simply just get more Shafts than others.

Other people bring 99 Staircases and get it over and done with. And then there is the group in between, who'll be fairly liberal with their Staircases, but don't quite want to part with 99 of them.

Conclusion

Well, 10,596 words later and we're nearing the end of the Guide. I just want to briefly touch on how I ration out my Skull Cavern-sourced resources, and then we're done!

My Setup Improvements

I typically finish the Vault by late Summer or early Fall, but when I start, I start small. Whenever I have a free afternoon, I'll use a Desert Totem and head in just to kill the Big Slimes with my Burglar's Ring equipped. After a few trips of this I'll have enough to get myself an Iridium Band and an Iridium Pick.

Now that I can kill Monsters and hit rocks faster, I'll start bringing more with me. Farm Totems, 25+ Bombs, and 10 Staircases. I'll use any Iridium I collect to make as many Crystalariums as I can. I'll normally do 2-3 with Rubies and the rest with Jades.

I'll almost definitely have a Prismatic Shard by now, so I'll get the Galaxy Sword. I'll buy the Galaxy Hammer as soon as I can.

Once things have started picking up on my farm, I'll think about upgrading my other tools to Iridium. I'll also start bringing as many Bombs as I can afford.

I'll be Mining Level 10 sometime around now, and I'll pick Blacksmith (I always pick Miner for my first choice. Miner is a must-have in Skull Cavern). Once I'm Combat Level 10 I'll choose Brute.

Once I've reached Floor 100 with ≤ 10 Staircases, I'll use all my stockpiled Jades for hundreds of Staircases. I'll be using 75+ per trip, and soon I'll have enough Iridium that I'll start selling some Bars. I'll be making good money from Skull Cavern now, and I'll be able to have all my tools Iridium, as well as all my Sprinklers.

I continue like this for a while, until I finish the Community Center. I don't find the boat's cost that tricky, and I'll bring some Iridium Sprinklers to put on the Island Farm. I will forge my Rings, usually going for Iridium Band + Slime Charmer Ring & Burglar's Ring + Napalm Ring. I'll swap the Slime Charmer Ring out for a Lucky Ring if I get one.

I'll get all the Obelisks when my wallet allows, and soon I'll be officially end-game. Once I get the Golden Clock I'll just hoard Iridium Bars and see how much I can collect.

But of course, this varies from farm to farm, depending on my goals for that farm.

Final Thoughts

I hope you have found this useful in some way! If you have any questions, just ask. I'd love feedback!

If you want me to add anything to the Guide that I didn't cover, I can do that.

I look forward to seeing your comments, thanks for reading!

– Hill Myna