

Alchemy Best-of-Three Meta and Deck Guide

To help players who do not typically play Alchemy prepare for the upcoming Alchemy Qualifier (Bo1 March 16, Bo3 March 22), I have compiled a list of most played decks in the format, the key cards and strategies of those decks, and some other less played decks, to help prepare players to find their strategy for the qualifier.

Table of Contents:

General Notes about the Format	p.1
Esper Rusko Control	p.2
Esper Midrange	p.3
B/W Dollmaker	p.4
G/R Fiery Inscription	p.5
Jund Midrange	p.6
B/G Roots Combo	p.7
B/G Food Combo	p.8
Legendary Creature Combo	p.9
G/R Doors of Durin	p.10

General notes about the format:

The mana bases in Alchemy consist of the surveil lands from Murders at Karlov Manor, creatures lands from Wilds of Eldraine and Lost Caverns of Ixalan, the pain lands from Dominaria United and The Brother's War, the allied fast lands and [Mirrex](#) from Phyrexia: All Will Be One, [Captivating Crossroads](#), and occasionally [Thran Portal](#), which was buffed in Alchemy to always come into play untapped. Other utility lands that see play include [Cavern of Souls](#), [Great Hall of the Citadel](#), [Plaza of Heroes](#), [Phyrexian Scrapyard](#), and the cycle of mono-color legendary lands from Lord of the Rings, such as [Minas Tirith](#). All of the decks below that are two or three colors will have access to several creature lands, so keep that in mind when evaluating the threats available to each deck.

Being able to quickly answer artifacts and enchantments is a key part of the Alchemy metagame. Typical sideboard cards such as [Tear Asunder](#) and [Haymire Mite](#) and usually maindeckable in some numbers as all of the tiered decks play some number of artifacts and/or enchantments in their main deck, and they are frequently key pieces of those decks. Format staple [Porcine Portent](#) can conjure the [First Little Pig](#) letting B/W/x decks exile artifacts and enchantments. While a card like [Destroy Evil](#) is fine for removing enchantments, [Abrade](#) is usually not a good option because it does not answer the indestructible [The One Ring](#), making a card like [Cast into the Fire](#) a better option in red decks for removing artifacts.

Graveyard hate and preventing death triggers is also important, making [Stone of Erech](#) another premier sideboard option. [Soul-Guide Lantern](#) is also a fine option, but I've found when there is only space for one in the sideboard I tend to lean toward the Stone due to it preventing "dies" triggers.

While a card like [The End](#) isn't an efficient card, as we are far past the point in Magic where [Vraska's Contempt](#) is a good card, several decks rely on having a particular creature in play to combo, making cards like [The End](#) or [Deadly Cover-Up](#) decent sideboard options to cleanly disrupt an opponent's strategy.

Sometimes you will play against random low power level decks because Alchemy is the "starter" format that new players are pushed to play and sometimes low queue population will match you against someone far below you in the ranks just playing cards they own.

Alchemy:MKM just released, so it is possible that new decks will emerge in the week or two before the Qualifier. If a deck is created and gains popularity, this document will be updated.

Esper Rusko Control-

Key Cards:



There are several different ways that Esper can be built in this format, but the key cards are frequently the same across different versions. The deck's most powerful card is [Rusko, Clockmaker](#) both in its ability to slowly drain the opponent if left unchecked, but also providing ramp and an eventual draw 7 to refresh the Esper player's hand with the [Midnight Clock](#) he conjures. The deck's main strategy will be built around getting Rusko into play and then controlling the board until they refresh their hand and then continue to grind out the opponent. Outside of Rusko, the deck is usually filled with various removal spells such as [Porcine Portent](#), which serves as both removal on the adventure side and a threat later in the game, [Go for the Throat](#), and board wipes such as [Sunfall](#). The other threats vary across versions but can include [Oracle of the Alpha](#), [Juggernaut Peddler](#), and [Sheoldred the Apocalypse](#). Some versions will play counterspells like [No More Lies](#), [Reprieve](#), and [Saruman's Trickery](#), as well as hand disruption in the form of [Phantasmal Extraction](#). Common card advantage spells include [Sauron's Ransom](#), [Hymn to the Ages](#), and [The One Ring](#). When playing against this deck it is important to apply pressure early, while being prepared to remove Rusko and/or the [Midnight Clock](#) he conjures immediately. Hand disruption and counterspells can help break up their card advantage or removal suite.

[Sample Decklist](#)

Esper Midrange-

Key Cards:



Similar to the U/B midrange deck in Standard, this deck looks to resolve early creatures like [Spyglass Siren](#), [Deep-Cavern Bat](#), and [Juggernaut Peddler](#), gain card advantage through cards like [Gix, Yawgmoth Praetor](#), and [Cryptic Coat](#), and remove the opponents threats with cards like [Porcine Portent](#) and [Go for the Throat](#). [Reprieve](#) or [No More Lies](#) helps protect threats and delay the opponents strategy. At the top end a variety of four mana creatures are available to round out the deck, such as [Sheoldred, the Apocalypse](#), [Rusko, Clockmaker](#), [Raddic, Tal Zealot](#), and/or [Ertai Resurrected](#). When playing against this deck, removing Gix to prevent it from drawing cards or Cryptic Coat from bouncing over and over are the most important things to prepare for. While the rest of their cards are very efficient, they are usually able to be answered one-for-one.

[Sample Decklist](#)

B/W Dollmaker Combo-

Key Cards:



This is a midrange deck that tries to create an insurmountable board state by resolving [Three Blind Mice](#) and then resolving [Dedicated Dollmaker](#) targeting the saga, creating a token copy of it, which can then target itself with chapters II and III on later turns, making more sagas and more mice tokens every turn. The deck protects itself and the combo by playing disruptive creatures such as [Deep-Cavern Bat](#) and [Juggernaut Peddler](#), and [Relieve](#) to buy time to assemble the combo. Rounding out the deck are removal spells like [Go for the Throat](#) and [Porcine Portent](#), as well as other threats like [Virtue of Loyalty](#), [Sheoldred the Apocalypse](#), and [Raddic, Tal Zealot](#), which is very hard for the other top tier decks to remove. When playing against this deck it is important to have a plan to answer Three Blind Mice either the turn they play it, or the first turn after they use Dollmaker to exile it and create a token copy. It is important to note that while enchantment removal will work on the saga before and after it is exiled with Dollmaker, the token copy will be an artifact as well, so colors with no enchantment removal like red can try to use their artifact removal instead after the Dollmaker has resolved and exiled the saga.

[Sample Decklist](#)

G/R Fiery Inscription-

Key Cards:



Built around the namesake card [Fiery Inscription](#), this deck is the premiere aggressive deck in the format. The goal of the deck is to resolve a Fiery Inscription on turn three, by either drawing it naturally or fetching it with a turn two [Perilous Iteration](#), which is guaranteed to find the Inscription as it is the only mana value 3 or greater card in the deck. From there the deck looks to cast burn spells at the opponent's face, such as [Ranger's Firebrand](#), [Shock](#), and [Lightning Strike](#), all of which will do an extra two damage from the Inscription. The deck keeps the gas coming through [Wrenn's Resolve](#) and the adventure side of [Questing Druid](#). Aggressive creatures such as [Monastery Swiftspear](#) round out the deck. When playing against this deck it is critical to have a plan to remove the Inscription as quickly as possible, as if left unchecked it can easily do 8-10 damage over 2-3 turns. Life gain can help buy time but it is more important to establish a board presence and finish the game before they burn you out.

[Sample Decklist](#)

Jund Midrange-

Key Cards:



Built around powerful 3-drop legends [Crucias, Titan of the Waves](#) and [Jarsyl, Dark Age Scion](#), this deck looks to get on the board early with turn one [Delighted Halfling](#) into turn two 3-drop legend and disrupt the opponent with discard spells such as [Dreams of Steel and Oil](#), efficient removal like [Cut Down](#) and [Go for the Throat](#), and powerful top end cards such as [Sheoldred the Apocalypse](#) and [The One Ring](#). The deck grinds incredibly well through 2 drop adventure creatures [Mosswood Dreadknight](#) and [Questing Druid](#), as well as the recursive ability of Jarsyl. When playing against this deck, removing their 3-drop legends before they get value is important, while also putting on a clock before they establish insurmountable card advantage.

B/G Roots Combo-

Key Cards:



A relatively new combo built around [Insidious Roots](#), this deck looks to fill its graveyard, stall the board, and eventually make infinite [Propagator Primordium](#) creatures and plant tokens. While difficult to explain in a paragraph, the key cards are [Tyvar, Jubilant Brawler](#), whose minus 2 fills the graveyard, brings back a creature, triggers the roots, and gives all of the plant tokens haste to tap for mana, and [Chitinous Crawler](#), which while able to recur various pieces of the combo from the graveyard, is also the engine for the combo. With a Crawler in a play and a Primordium and at least 7 other permanents in the graveyard, the Crawler can activate and allow the player to cast the Primordium. When the Primordium comes into play it will conjure two copies into the graveyard, which means that the Crawler will still be at Descend 8 or above. If there are two copies of Roots in play (it is possible with one Roots but much faster and consistent with two copies) and a Tyvar to give those plants haste for mana, the two plants created by the Primordium leaving the graveyard will be able to tap to cast another Primordium, which will create two more plants, and so on and so on. While able to just play a grindy game by gumming up the board with plants and recurring creatures from the graveyard, the infinite combo can come out of almost nowhere, as a Crawler can come down with a stocked graveyard and cast previously dealt with Roots and Tyvars. While it can seem like the deck requires a lot of pieces to combo, because of its ability to stock the graveyard, an unanswered Crawler can usually assemble the combo itself over 1-2 turns. When playing against this deck it is imperative to have a plan to remove Roots from play, to keep the graveyard clean, and to answer Tyvar and Crawler as quickly as possible.

[Sample Decklist](#)

B/G Food Combo-

Key Cards:



This is a combo deck based around [Peregrin Took](#) and [Experimental Confectioner](#). With both creatures in play and three food tokens, the player can sacrifice the three food tokens to Peregrin to draw a card, the food tokens being sacrificed will cause the Confectioner to trigger three times and create three rat tokens, which will also create three food tokens due to Peregrin's other text, this creates a loop that can be used to create a very large amount of rat tokens and draw the entire deck. The deck supports this plan by playing food makers such as [Many Partings](#) and [Tough Cookie](#), and tutors such as [The Huntsman's Redemption](#) and [Beseech the Mirror](#), to find their combo pieces. [Pile On](#) is able to be convoked with rat tokens making it a "free" removal spell while the deck is comboing off, and cards like [Go for the Throat](#) and [The One Ring](#) provide more removal and card advantage. When playing against this deck, saving removal for their combo creatures is essential, as is pressuring their life total as the deck is very good at reassembling the pieces.

Legendary Creature Combo-

Key Cards:



A Legendary Creature combo deck based around [Ratadrabik of Urborg](#), the deck looks to have Ratadrabik in play alongside [Boromir, Warden of the Tower](#), and either [Smeagol, Helpful Guide](#) to mill the opponent out or [Elas il-Kor, Sadistic Pilgrim](#) to drain the opponent out. With Ratadrabik in play, Legends that would die return as 2/2 tokens but they aren't legendary. However, when Boromir is sacrificed, in addition to giving creatures indestructible the "Ring Tempts You" causing a creature to be chosen as a ring bearer. If the ring has tempted you at least once, the ring bearer is legendary, so when the Boromir token is chosen as the ring bearer it will become legendary. Thus, when it is sacrificed again, it will return again as a token and can be chosen as the ring bearer again, creating a loop of infinite sacrificing and returning. With Elas in play, the opponent will die to creatures dying trigger, and with Smeagol in play, the opponent will mill out as the ring is tempting you an infinite amount times causing Smeagol to take all of the lands out of the opponent's deck and milling them in the process. The card plays other legendary creature synergy cards such as [Frodo Baggins](#) and [Samwise Gamgee](#) as well as [War of the Last Alliance](#) to find their missing pieces. When playing against this deck it can be difficult to find spots to find removal as Ratadrabik has ward 2, and Boromir can protect their other creatures. Killing Boromir in response to a Ratadrabik being cast might be able to help delay the combo, giving time to remove Ratadrabik itself. [Stone of Erech](#) is an essential sideboard card against this deck, as it negates Ratadrabik all together, and gives you time to remove their key creatures.

G/R Doors of Durin-

Key Cards:



This deck looks to put its namesake card [Doors of Durin](#) into play early using ramp creatures, such as [Delighted Halfling](#), [Intrepid Paleontologist](#), and [Bramble Familiar](#), then attacking and put big value creatures such as [Etali, Primal Conqueror](#) and [Trumpeting Carnosaur](#) into play with the Doors of Durin trigger. The deck can be quite resilient, as even after removing a Doors of Durin, they can still cast their top end off their ramp, as well as the Paleontologist providing recursion for the big dinosaurs, and the Familiar also having a powerful adventure. When playing against this deck it is important to remove their early ramp creatures, and have a plan to remove a Doors of Durin the turn it resolves to prevent any triggers. Putting pressure on the board and ending the game quickly before they can hardcast their top end is also important to keep in mind.

[Sample Decklist](#)

Let me know what you think in the comments and if you would like to see future breakdowns like this. Also feel free to share other decks you've played/played against!