Marketing (solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

The flavortext clues the game show "The Price is Right", which has a variety of mini-games where players had to guess the prices of various items (often groceries) to win prizes. Players then play the "Showcase Showdown" round and spin "The Big Wheel" to determine who advances to the "Showcase" finale, where they had to guess the price of prize showcases. In the described game in this puzzle, the three shoppers were guessing the prices for a given list of 12 grocery items (in alphabetical order). The aha is that each item starts with and references a HTML color name, which is hinted by the word "shade" in the description. The names of the three shoppers also reference the primary colors RGB respectively, as they can be commonly prefixed by the names of these colors. HTML colors can be defined by either percentages for each of the RGB primary colors, equivalent decimal values (out of 255) for each of the RGB primary colors, or a 6-character concatenation of these values as a hexadecimal string. Observing the given differences between the shoppers' price guesses and the item's "code", the inference is that these are differences with the decimal values of the respective HTML colors.

The table below summarizes the decimal values for the HTML colors, and the shoppers' price guesses after factoring in the given differences:

Grocery (color in red)	Color code	Cliff's guess	Mark's guess	Jay's guess
Blanched Almond flour	255, 235, 205	100	20	30
Brown rice	165, 42, 42	15	30	20
Chocolate bar	210, 105, 30	20	30	45
Lemon chiffon cake	255, 250, 205	15	100	20
Lime leaves	0, 255, 0	5	100	15
Mint cream cookies	245, 255, 250	65	15	100
Olive oil	128, 128, 0	20	65	15
Orange juice	255, 165, 0	45	65	5
Plum wine	221, 160, 221	45	45	65
Salmon fillet	250, 128, 114	30	45	45
Tomato sauce	255, 99, 71	30	20	65
Wheat bread	245, 222, 179	100	15	30

After figuring out the guesses, the description indicates that "The Big Wheel" needs to be used next. The guesses are all round values between 5 cents to a dollar, in multiples to 5 cents. These correspond to the values on the 20 spaces of "The Big Wheel", which are in a fixed order (based on the direction of rotation, and wheel is reset starting from $1.00, so 15 is the first space) - 15, 80, 35, 60, 20, 40, 75, 55, 95, 50, 85, 30, 65, 10, 45, 70, 25, 90, 5, $1.00. So each of the guesses can be mapped to a number from 1-20 corresponding to the order of its space on the wheel, and further mapped to a corresponding letter in that position of the alphabet. In this manner, each set of values for the guesses by the three shoppers can be mapped to the trigrams as summarized in the table on the following page:

Grocery (color in red)	Trigram	Cliff's guess	Mark's guess	Jay's guess
Blanched Almond flour	TEL	100	20	30
Brown rice	ALE	15	30	20
Chocolate bar	ELO	20	30	45
Lemon chiffon cake	ATE	15	100	20
Lime leaves	STA	5	100	15
Mint cream cookies	MAT	65	15	100
Olive oil	EMA	20	65	15
Orange juice	OMS	45	65	5
Plum wine	OOM	45	45	65
Salmon fillet	LOO	30	45	45
Tomato sauce	LEM	30	20	65
Wheat bread	TAL	100	15	30

These trigrams share a number of common letters and bigram substrings. The ending bigram for each trigram is replicated as the starting bigram for another trigram, so all the trigrams could form a chain in this way –
STA-TAL-ALE-LEM-EMA-MAT-ATE-TEL-ELO-LOO-OOM-OMS
This forms the answer for this puzzle **STALEMATE LOOMS**.

Constructor's notes:
The initial ideas for this answer and marketing themed puzzle are similarly themed game shows such as "The Price is Right", "Supermarket Sweep", and in particular "Deal or No Deal", which has a negotiation element that fit the answer better. However, after exploring possible mechanics around the other game shows, I realized they would involve more online lookup and identification, which was less ideal. So I ended up using a simpler puzzle mechanic whose format would use elements from "The Price is Right".