Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)

Water opens the door to organolithium and Grignard reagents: exploring and comparing the reactivity of highly polar organometallic compounds in unconventional reaction media towards the synthesis of tetrahydrofurans

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1. General Methods

Tetrahydrofuran (THF), was freshly distilled. under a nitrogen atmosphere, over sodium/benzophenone ketyl. Eutectic mixtures of solvents [choline chloride (ChCl)–glycerol (Gly) (1:2 mol/mol); D-fructose-ChCl (2:1 mol/mol); L-tartaric acid-ChCl (1:2 mol/mol); L-lactic acid-L-alanine (9:1 mol/mol)] and the low melting mixture of D-fructose-urea (3:2 weight/weight) were prepared by heating under stirring up to 90 °C for 10–30 min the corresponding individual components until a clear solution was obtained. For ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra (¹H NMR 400, 500 or 600 MHz; ¹³C NMR 100, 125 or 150 MHz), CDCl₃ was used as the solvent. GC-MS spectrometry analyses were performed on a gas chromatograph (dimethylsilicon capillary column, 30 m, 0.25 mm i.d.) equipped with a mass selective detector operating at 70 eV (EI). Elemental analyses were performed by using a Carlo Erba CHNS-O EA1108-Elemental Analyzer. Analytical thin layer chromatography (TLC) was carried out on precoated 0.25 mm thick plates of Kieselgel 60 F254; visualization was accomplished by UV light (254 nm) or by spraying with a solution of 5 % (w/v) ammonium molybdate and 0.2 % (w/v) cerium(III) sulfate in 100 ml 17.6 % (w/v) aq. sulfuric acid and heating to 473 K for some time until blue spots appear. Some reactions involving air-sensitive reagents were performed under argon in oven-dried glassware using syringe-septum cap technique. The following solutions of Grignard reagents and organolithium reagents were commercially available and were used with the following concentration: MeMgCl 3.0 M in THF, EtMgCl 2.0 M in THF, *i*-PrMgCl 2.0 M in THF, allylMgCl 2.0 M in THF, 4-MeOC₆H₄MgBr 0.5 M in THF, 4-ClC₆H₄MgBr 1.0 M in 2-MeTHF, 4-FC₆H₄MgBr 2.0 M in Et₂O, MeLi 1.6 M in Et₂O, EtLi 0.5 M in benzene/cyclohexane, *i*-PrLi 0.7 M in pentane, *n*-BuLi 2.5 M in hexanes, PhLi 1.8 M in dibutyl ether. Spectroscopic data of compounds $3a_1^{1} 3b_2^{2} 3c_3^{3} 3d_4e_3^{4} 3f_5^{5} 3g_3^{3} 3j_5^{6} 3k_7^{7} 3l_4^{4} 3n^8$ and $4a^9$ are in agreement with the literature. γ -Chloroketones **1a-d** and cyclopropyl phenyl ketone **4a** are commercially available. Fully characterization data, including elemental analysis and copies of ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra, have been reported for the new compounds 2a, 3h, 3i and 3m.

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2. Experimental Procedures

2.1 Preparation of 5-chloro-2-phenylpentan-2-ol (2a) and 2-methyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran(3a) in THF. Typical Procedure.



To an anhydrous THF solution (1 mL) of the ketone **1a** (0.5 mmol), 0.94 mL of the commercially available MeLi (1.5 mmol in 1.6 M Et₂O solution) were added dropwise, under argon, at -40 °C. After 12 h stirring at RT, the reaction mixture was treated with 10% aq. NaOH for 3 h (or quenched with H₂O to isolate chlorohydrin **2a**), and then extracted with Et₂O (3 × 20 mL). The combined organic phases were dried over Na₂SO₄ and the solvent was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude product was purified by flash-chromatography (silica gel, hexane/Et₂O 80:20, Et₃N 2%), to give **3a** in 70% yield. Spectroscopic data are in accord with the literature.¹ The chlorohydrin **2a** could be purified by flash-chromatography on silica gel with hexane/AcOEt 80:20 as the eluent in 38% yield (see Table 1 of the main text).

2.2 Preparation of 2-ethyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3c) in deep eutectic solvents. Typical procedure.



To a mixture of the ketone **1a** (0.5 mmol) in 1 g of ChCl–Gly (1:2), 0.75 mL of the commercially available EtMgCl (1.5 mmol in 2.0 M THF solution), handled under argon using conventional Schlenk techniques, were quickly spread out at RT, under air, and vigorous stirring. After 10 min, 10 mL of 10% aq. NaOH were added and the mixture was stirred for additional 3 h, and then extracted with Et_2O (3 × 10 mL). The combined organic phases were dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and the solvent was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude product was purified by flash-chromatography to give **3c** in 75% yield.

2.3 Preparation of 2-methyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3a) in water. Typical procedure.



To a suspension of the ketone **1a** (0.5 mmol) in 1 mL of water, 0.94 mL of the commercially available MeLi (1.5 mmol in 1.6 M Et₂O solution), handled under argon using conventional Schlenk techniques, were quickly spread out at RT, under air, and vigorous stirring. After 10 min, 10 mL of 10% aq. NaOH were added and the mixture was stirred for additional 3 h, and then extracted with Et₂O (3×10 mL). The combined organic phases were dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and the solvent was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude product was purified by flash-chromatography to give **3a** in 75% yield.

3. Characterization Data

5-Chloro-2-phenylpentan-2-ol (2a): colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.51 (s, 3 H); 1.54–1.61 (m, 1 H), 1.65–1.77 (m, 1 H), 1.81–1.92 (m, 2 H), 3.36–3.44 (m, 2 H); 7.15–7.19 (m, 1 H), 7.25–7.29 (m, 2 H), 7.34–7.36 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 27.4, 30.6, 41.4, 45.5, 74.4, 124.7, 126.8, 128.3, 147.3; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3436, 3058, 2956, 2925, 1601, 1445, 1028, 760, 700; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 198 (M⁺, 5), 183 (9), 147 (11), 121 (100), 105 (19), 77 (10), 43 (15). Anal. Calcd. for C₁₁H₁₅ClO: C, 66.49; H, 7.61; Found: C, 66.84; H, 7.69.



6-Chloro-3-phenylhexan-3-ol (2c): colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.76 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 3 H); 1.49–1.59 (m, 1 H), 1.77–2.01 (m, 5 H), 3.46–3.50 (m, 2 H); 7.23–7.26 (m, 1 H), 7.33–7.40 (m, 4 H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃):

δ 7.6, 27.0, 35.7, 39.9, 45.7, 76.9, 125.3, 126.5, 128.2, 145.2; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3467, 3027, 2963, 2929, 1602, 1446, 1310, 760, 701; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 212 (M⁺, 2), 194 (6) 183 (75), 147 (61), 135 (55), 105 (100), 77 (10). HRMS calcd. for C₁₂H₁₇ClO (M + Na)⁺: 235.0866. Found: 235.0860.

2-Methyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3a):¹ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.47–1.53 (m, 2 H), 1.57 (s, 3 H), 1.80–2.05 (m, 2 H), 3.55–3.65 (m, 2 H), 7.21–7.44 (m, 5 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 26.9, 30.2, 40.9, 62.5, 74.2, 124.9, 125.8, 125.9, 126.3, 127.2, 127.2, 128.0, 128.2, 128.2, 144.7, 144.8, 148.0; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3016, 2972, 2927, 2869, 1492, 1445, 1098, 1068, 1037, 763, 701; ESI-MS: 163.2 (M⁺ + 1).



2-Isopropyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3b):² colourless oil. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.82 (d, *J*=6.5 Hz, 3 H), 0.87 (d, *J*=6.5 Hz, 3 H), 1.70–1.73 (m, 1 H), 1.90–1.93 (m, 1 H), 2.00–2.04 (m, 1 H), 2.06–2.10 (m, 1 H), 2.22–2.26 (m, 1 H),

3.76–3.82 (m, 1 H), 3.93–3.97 (m, 1 H), 7.21–7.38 (m, 5 H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 17.5, 18.5, 25.7, 35.5, 37.9, 67.1, 89.5, 126.2, 126.3, 127.5, 145.0; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2965, 2873, 1489, 1469, 1445, 1382, 1364, 1055, 760, 703; ESI-MS: 189.1 (M⁻ – 1).

2-Ethyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3c):³ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.76 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 3 H), 1.86–1.74 (m, 3 H), 1.98–1.90 (m, 1 H), 2.07–2.00 (m, 1 H), 3.86–3.90 (m, 1 H), 3.94–4.00 (m, 1 H), 7.19–7.23 (m, 1 H), 7.37–7.29 (m, 4 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 8.7, 25.6, 35.0, 37.7, 67.4, 77.4, 87.1, 125.3, 127.8, 146.5; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3024, 2967, 2929, 1492, 1446, 1057, 758, 701; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 176 (M⁺, 3), 147 (100), 105 (55), 77 (16).



2-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3d):⁴ colourless oil: ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.91–1.98 (m, 2 H), 2.50–2.57 (m, 2 H), 3.76 (s, 3 H), 4.02–4.06 (m, 2 H), 6.81–6.84 (m, 2 H), 7.16–7.20 (m, 1 H), 7.27–7.36 (m, 4 H), 7.41–7.42 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (150 MHz, CDCl₃) δ:

25.5, 38.7, 55.5, 67.3, 87.8, 113.5, 125.8, 126.6, 127.1, 128.1, 138.5, 146.7, 158.4; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3059, 2953, 2876, 1610, 1509, 1250, 1055, 829; GC-MS (70eV), *m/z* (%): 254 (M⁺, 25), 223 (10), 177 (100), 135 (50).



2-(4-Chlorophenyl)-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3e):⁴ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.95–2.03 (m, 1 H), 2.07–2.14 (m, 1 H), 2.55–2.60 (m, 1 H), 3.03–3.07 (m, 1 H), 3.96–4.05 (m, 2 H), 7.20–7.23 (m, 2 H), 7.27–7.33 (m, 6 H), 7.92–7.93 (m, 1 H); ¹³C NMR (150 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 26.6, 36.3, 67.6,

87.6, 126.5, 126.8, 127.1, 127.6, 127.9, 128.4, 131.0, 132.0, 143.6, 143.8; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2918, 1492, 1459, 758, 697; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 258 (M⁺, 22), 223 (28), 181 (80), 147 (100), 105 (57).



2-Butyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3f).⁵ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.81 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3 H), 0.92–1.08 (m, 1 H), 1.18–1.29 (m, 3 H),

1.73–2.18 (m, 6 H), 3.85–3.97 (m, 2 H), 7.20–7.37 (m, 5 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 14.0, 23.1, 25.5, 26.6, 30.3, 67.4, 86.8, 125.2, 126.1, 127.9, 146.9; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2957, 2933, 2871, 1458, 1446, 1118, 1048, 763, 702; ESI-MS: 205 (M⁺ + 1).

2-Allyl-2-phenyltetrahydrofuran (3g):³ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.66–1.77 (m, 1 H), 1.85–1.92 (m, 1 H), 2.04–2.10 (m, 2 H), 2.43–2.48 (m, 1 H), 2.52–2.56 (m, 1 H), 3.81–3.85 (m, 1 H), 3.90–3.95 (m, 1 H), 4.91–4.96 (m, 2 H), 5.58–5.67 (m, 1 H), 7.12–7.17 (m, 1 H), 7.23–7.34 (m, 4 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 25.5, 37.2, 46.9, 67.7, 86.2, 117.4, 125.2, 126.3, 127.9, 134.3, 146.6; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2976, 2872, 1446, 1055, 914, 762, 703; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 188 (M+, 2), 147 (100), 105 (70), 77 (21).



2-Isopropyl-2-(4-methoxyphenyl)tetrahydrofuran (**3h**): colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.81 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 3 H), 0.82 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 3 H), 1.66–1.72 (m, 1 H), 1.85–1.91 (m, 1 H), 1.93–2.05 (m, 2 H), 2.19–2.24 (m, 1 H), 3.72–3.77 (m, 1 H), 3.80 (s, 3 H), 3.89–3.94 (m, 1 H), 6.83–6.86 (m, 2 H), 7.25–

7.28 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 17.6, 18.5, 25.6, 35.3, 38.1, 55.2, 67.0, 89.3, 112.9, 127.5, 136.7, 158.1; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2962, 2874, 1610, 1508, 1464, 1294, 1246, 1176, 1058, 1039, 826, 799; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 220 (M⁺, 13), 177 (100), 135 (30), 92 (23), 77 (14). Anal.Calcd. for C₁₄H₂₀O₂: C, 76.33; H, 9.15; Found: C, 76.40; H, 9.28.



2-Butyl-2-(4-methoxyphenyl)tetrahydrofuran (3i): colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.79 (t, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 3 H), 1.14–1.30 (m, 4 H), 1.67–1.79 (m, 3 H), 1.84–1.99 (m, 2 H), 2.10–2.16 (m, 1 H), 3.77 (s, 3 H), 3.80–3.85 (m, 1 H), 3.89–3.95 (m, 1 H), 6.81–6.84 (m, 2 H), 7.22–7.25 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100

MHz, CDCl₃): δ 14.0, 23.1, 25.5, 26.7, 38.1, 42.4, 55.2, 67.2, 86.5, 113.2, 126.3, 138.8, 157.9; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2932, 1611, 1509, 1463, 1298, 1246, 1175, 1039, 830; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 234 (M⁺, 15), 177 (100), 135 (43), 128 (12), 92 (14), 77 (5). Anal. Calcd. for C₁₅H₂₂O₂: C, 76.88; H, 9.46; Found: C, 77.11; H, 9.69.



2-Ethyl-2-(4-methoxyphenyl)tetrahydrofuran (3j):⁶ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.77 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 3 H), 1.76–1.84 (m, 3 H), 1.92–2.05 (m, 2 H), 2.13–2.18 (m, 1 H), 3.81 (s, 3 H), 3.86–3.90 (m, 1 H), 3.94–3.98 (m, 1 H), 6.87 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2 H), 7.28 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃):

δ 9.1, 25.8, 35.4, 37.9, 55.5, 67.6, 87.2, 113.5, 126.7, 138.8, 158.2; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2966, 2934, 2875, 1610, 1582, 1510, 1442, 1299, 1176, 1037, 911, 830; ESI-MS: 207 (M⁺ + 1).



2-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-2-methyltetrahydrofuran (3k):⁷ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.42 (s, 3 H), 1.87–1.93 (m, 1 H), 2.05–2.12 (m, 1 H), 3.80 (s, 3 H), 3.81–3.84 (m, 1 H) 3.89–3.94 (m, 1 H), 6.77–6.80 (m, 2H), 7.22–7.25 (m, 2H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 27.2, 30.4, 41.1, 55.3, 67.1, 87.1, 113.3,

126.8, 140.3, 158.8; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2969, 2877, 1609, 1512, 1444, 1297, 1176, 1036, 910, 830; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 193 (M⁺ + 1, 13), 177 (100), 175 (13), 151 (32), 135 (84) 77 (20).



2,2-Bis(4-fluorophenyl)tetrahydrofuran (3l).⁴ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (600 MHz; CDCl₃): δ 1.93–2.00 (m, 2 H), 2.50–2.54 (m, 2 H), 4.03–4.06 (m, 2 H), 6.96–7.01 (m, 4 H), 7.36–7.40 (m, 4 H); ¹³C NMR (150 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 25.4, 38.8, 67.4, 87.2, 114.9 (d, ²*J*_{C-F} = 21.2 Hz), 127.4 (d, ³*J*_{C-F} = 8.0 Hz), 141.9 (d,

 ${}^{4}J_{C-F} = 3.3 \text{ Hz}$), 161.6 (d, ${}^{1}J_{C-F} = 240 \text{ Hz}$); FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3055, 2959, 1598, 1506, 1266, 743; GC-MS (70eV), m/z (%): 260 (3), 219 (100), 123 (60). Anal. Calcd. for C₁₆H₁₄F₂O: C, 73.83; H, 5.42. Found: C, 74.02; H, 5.55.



2-(4-Fluorophenyl)-2-methyltetrahydrofuran (3m): colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.47 (s, 3 H), 1.72–1.80 (m, 1 H), 1.91–2.01 (m, 2 H), 2.08–2.15 (m, 1 H), 3.83–3.89 (m, 1 H), 3.94–3.99 (m, 1 H), 6.93–6.98 (m, 2 H), 7.08–7.13 (m, 1 H), 7.30–7.33 (m, 1 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 17.0, 25.7, 39.5, 67.5,

83.9, 115.5 (d, ${}^{2}J_{C-F} = 21.4 \text{ Hz}$), 126.2 (d, ${}^{3}J_{C-F} = 7.5 \text{ Hz}$), 141.8, 161.3 (d, ${}^{1}J_{C-F} = 243.0 \text{ Hz}$); FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3055, 2959, 1600, 1590, 1266, 1176, 912, 831; GC-MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%): 180 (M⁺,6), 165 (100), 135 (7), 123 (77). Anal. Calcd. for C₁₁H₁₃FO: C, 73.31; H, 7.27. Found: C, 73.58; H, 7.51.

2,2-Dimethyltetrahydrofuran (3n):⁸ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.24 (s, 6 H), 1.71 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 2 H), 1.91–2.00 (m, 2 H), 3.84 (t, J = 6.9 Hz, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 25.9, 27.7, 38.1, 67.1, 81.4; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 2962, 1467, 1140, 609; ESI-MS: 100 (M⁺).



Cyclopropyl(phenyl)methanone (4a):⁹ colourless oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.02 (ddd, J = 8.0, 7.0, 3.5 Hz, 2 H), 1.22 (ddd, J = 7.0, 4.5, 3.5 Hz, 2 H), 2.60–2.70 (m, 1 H), 7.43–7.47 (m, 2 H), 7.49–7.55 (m, 1 H), 7.96–8.02 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 11.6, 17.1, 127.9, 128.3, 132.7, 138.0, 200.5; FT-IR (film, cm⁻¹): 3031,

2960, 1668, 1597, 1579, 752, 700; ESI-MS: 146 (M⁺).

¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of 2a



¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of 2c





 $^{\rm 13}{\rm C}$ NMR 125 MHz, ${\rm CDCl}_{\rm 3}$



¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of 3h



¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of 3i





¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of 3m



