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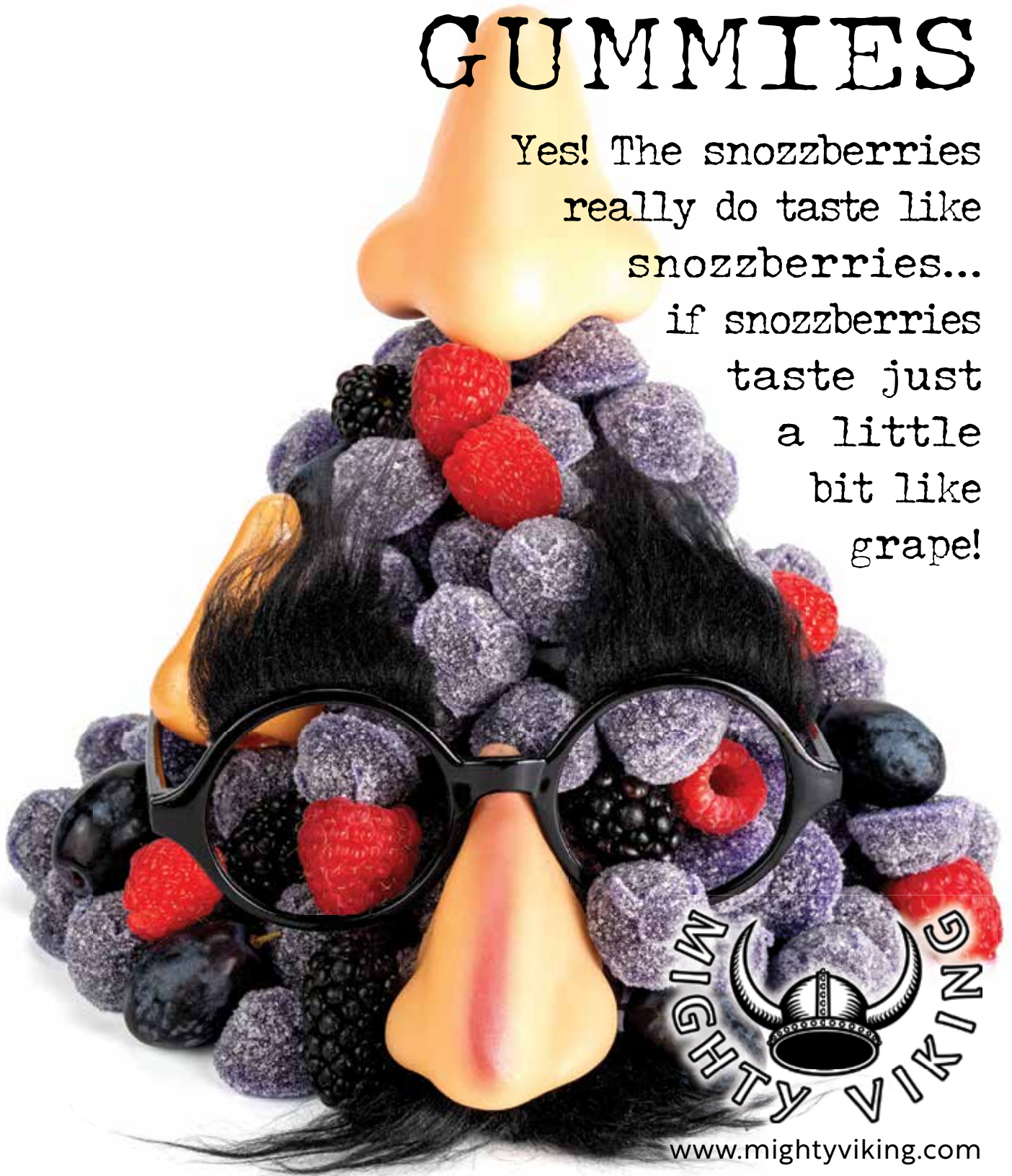
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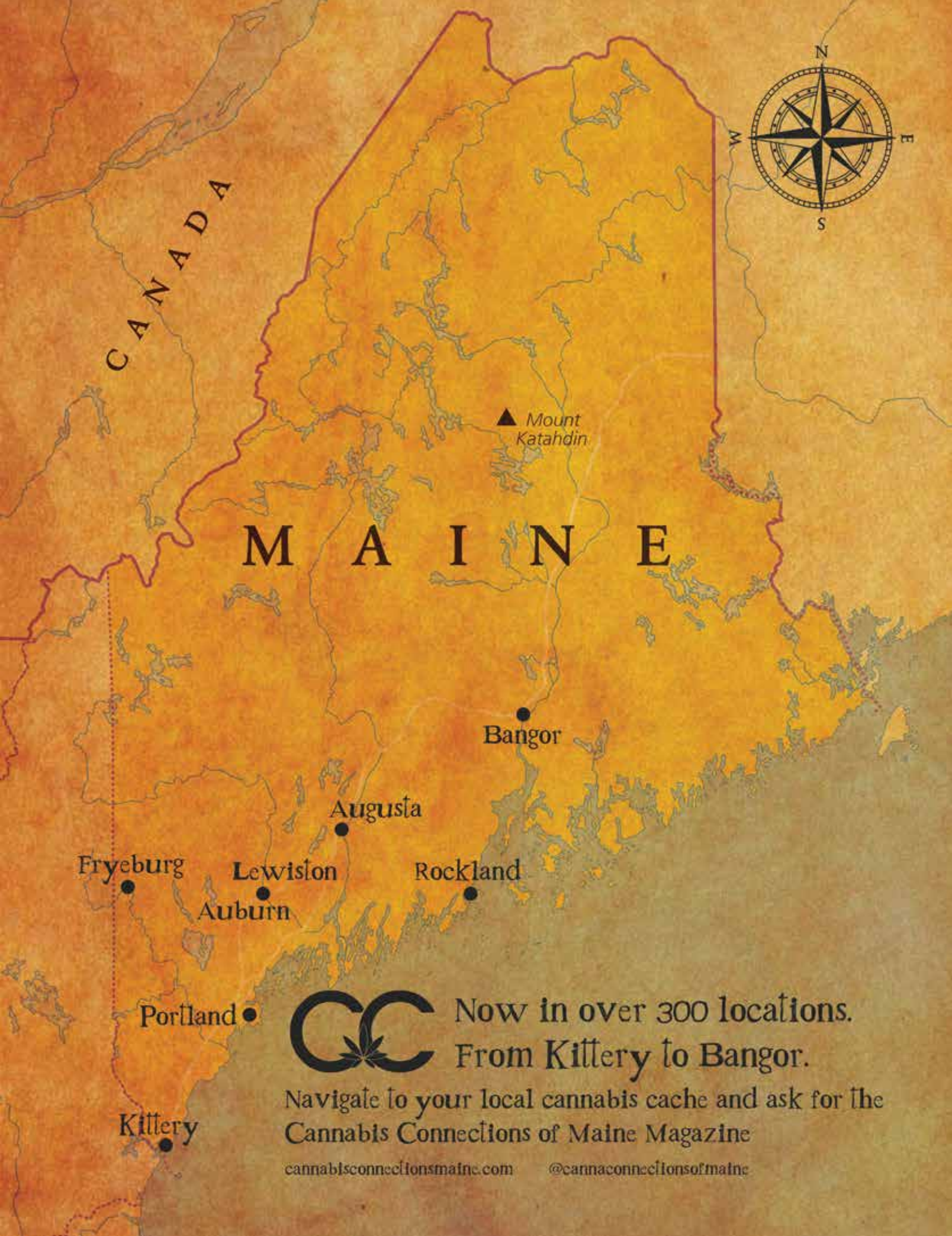
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Blowin' SMOKE

With Jeff Cutler

Winter Bites: *Edibles and the Cold*

By Jeff Cutler



There's a guy I talk to about pot from time to time. I'm going to tell you a story about his guidance and a little peek into my first edible journey. Then I'll give you a few tips to keep your edible journey on the rails. But first, my friend...

This guy and I talk a lot. At least monthly, maybe more. We discuss the intricacies of marijuana in its various forms. We discuss potency and our goals. In fact, we discuss the various reasons for imbibing weed.

This guy, let's call him Geo, has a lot of experience in the acquisition and use of marijuana. He's what we call olde skool,

but he brings a lot of experience to the table if you're looking to delve into a different form of cannabis.

He's generally a pipe guy, but he sees the benefit of edibles when it comes to a season when you're indoors most of the time. That's probably what it's like to smoke weed in Alaska. No place to go to hide the smell and it's far colder there during February and March than it is here in Vacationland.

So, he suggests using whatever is most convenient and accepted. It's information from people like Geo that helps everyone understand cannabis and its proliferation in Maine. In fact, without people like Geo, users would be flying blind when

choosing their pot.

What's in this joint?

Think about it. Have you seen any in-depth ingredient lists on the tube of your most recent preroll? What about on the jar of badder? Or even down the front of the dual tank vape you just picked up?

Hardly. So far, if you're taking a 'trip' in Maine, you really have to struggle to evaluate the strength of your weed. Flower can be tricky as everyone knows, but the stuff in a lab should be easy to test and label. So, are they doing this yet?

Nope, nope, nope!

As a friend from Phippsburg laments, "You can't compare apples to apples because there's no consistent potency labeling in the state. At least with alcohol they print the proof on the bottle. They should at least have ingredients and potency for medical marijuana, right?"

I think my friend is right, and this is experience talking because I think everyone wins if they know what they're eating/vaping/smoking/dabbing. You see, I wasn't always a vapey mcgee, I started out using edibles. I figured form factor and clear labeling was the biggest benefit.

Now, I could treat my anxiety and my Crohn's Disease with natural formulations and the magic of marijuana. You see, I hadn't even puffed a joint in my life — and I was 50 when I tried my first edible.

Wow. The experience was both phenomenal and puzzling. I was riding the wave of cannabis legality in Maine and the first entry point for medical cannabis was edibles.

So I took a bite.

I don't know what your first edible — or pot — experience was like. I just know my first was enlightening, scary, fun and exhausting. All those emotions/feelings from just 5mg in a raspberry-flavored hard candy.

The first treats came in little blocks. Perhaps the size of a Fun-Size Milky-Way bar. Perhaps a smidgen smaller. These edible blocks were being given away (pot stores had just opened and they were trying to draw clients) and they were individually wrapped.





Unlike some of today's packaging for cannabis gummies or candy bars, the original stuff was sold in perfect doses. Wrapped like the Werthers or coffee-flavored candy your gramma carried around, each edible was the 'right' dose.

But they really weren't one-size-fits-most. Once you started to develop a tolerance, you would need to up the dose. Simply taking two was too much, and who has the discipline to stop sucking a piece of candy when it's half gone?

Broken candy.

If you needed to adjust dosage with early edibles, that was a minefield. With a knife, as you can imagine you would create chips of hard candy all over the place. With a rock or a hammer or shoe, you could smash the candy. Then you'd have unmeasured shards in the wrapper.

This was my problem. As I mentioned earlier, my first edible experience didn't go well. Allow me to set the scene. Then I'll share some of the best ways I've learned to use and enjoy edibles here in Maine. First, to the country club....

That's right, the country club.

Not THE Country Club in Brookline, MA, but a country club with hoity-toity people and a dress code and no cash allowed. If you have not been to an establishment where they don't allow you to use US currency, it's a little jarring. And it can make you feel a bit powerless.

Regardless, I had been invited to a country club. I was to play golf with some wealthy investment people. The reason I had been invited was because I was related to one of these investment people. Though I wasn't on the same plane financially, I wasn't bothered.

What got me all aflutter was that I am, and was, a mediocre golfer. I'm fun to play with, I play quickly, I know the rules, and I don't throw clubs. Yet I definitely feel some angst when I'm in the spotlight on the tee box or on the green. Or pretty much anywhere else on the course too.

To help alleviate that anxious feeling, I decided to place my trust in an edible. Flash back to where I explained how edibles can be challenging to divide or segment. Well, I decided to also place my trust in my physiology and its capacity to metabolize cannabis.

I was wrong on every single count.



Not only was I unable to swing a club and make contact with the golf ball, I was patently unable to even put the ball on the tee for a period of three holes. If I were more aware, I'd have to say I embarrassed myself and my entire lineage...but I wasn't aware.

What a mess. The most I can recall is the drive to the course (I was a passenger), the drive home (also a passenger), and holes 4 through 14. I brought a second Smg edible with me and took that on hole 13 for good measure.

Ultimately, you gain experience in a number of ways when it comes to cannabis. My advice is to pay attention — careful attention — when you're first starting out. You could even benefit from keeping a notebook and tracking your tolerance and how much you ingest. With this info, you'll definitely have a more predictable experience, and you won't embarrass yourself on the golf course.

Oh, yes, enjoying edibles in Maine -Five Top Tips

I promised five ways to really enjoy edibles in Maine. These are both common-sense and perhaps hidden, local knowledge. Your mileage may vary, but your enjoyment will be high.

5 - Packaging is primary. Which means, pay attention to how you pack your cannabis. Edibles are pretty easy to care for in the winter as cool temps work best for edibles. Just make sure you don't freeze edible foodstuffs solid, it can ruin the texture and taste — even though it shouldn't affect the potency.

4 - Ziplocks are like gold. Gooney, gummy and melty edibles exist. These are mostly homemade — and the best tasting — treats you can find. To ensure you keep this stuff ready for your pie hole, store them in zipper plastic bags. Individually wrapping them might be overkill, but you can decide...it'll make them easier to share.



3 - Bring enough to share. Similar to being thoughtful enough to pass a joint or vape pen around, edibles should be shared. The challenge in sharing edibles is having multiple people bite the same thing. Solve this by bringing a larger quantity of edibles. If this gets expensive, you can bring more edibles with less THC for the same cost.

2 - Document your experience. Figure out what works for you and then you'll always be prepared. This will allow you to pack better for parties, trips, overnights, events, and more.

And you should realize, edibles travel better than a lot of marijuana forms. So some people swear by the edible form for longer travel and for trips on public transit and aircraft. Again,

only you can decide what you bring with you.

1 - February/Chocolate/Cannabis. Surely that has reminded you that VALENTINE'S DAY falls right in the middle of this 'edible winter'. While there's not a lot of romance behind a nicely wrapped box of dog-walker prerolls, candy is the way to your partner's heart. And if they like pot, then it's a double win when you give them chocolate edibles.

Just a few more ways to love and taste cannabis this winter. All I can say is you should make Maine your source when you're taking an edible 'trip'. Even without intricate and precise labeling, you can make this entire season taste great with a little local knowledge. See you on 4/20! 🌿



HERBALIST

Corner

Photo by HelloAethe

The Sweet Alchemy of Winter: *Memories of an Herbalist's Kitchen*

By Beverly Ann Soucy



By the time January settles into Maine for a long cold winter, life slows down in that particular way that only those of us who live here truly understand. The roads get a little smaller as the snowbanks get taller. The rivers are covered with ice and by the time winter settles in, the world changes both in color and in mood. When the days dip below zero degrees life takes on a tone you can feel deep in your bones. People from other parts of the country start talking about weekend getaways online and sharing their photos of flip-flops and sunshine, while we are over here putting on wool socks, stacking another arm-load of wood for the fire, and getting ready to settle in for the long months ahead that ask all of us every year to be very patient. Some people head out onto the ice before the sun comes up with their traps and thermoses for a day of ice

fishing, some fire up snowmobiles and call it recreation or sanity, depending on the day, and then there are people like me; the herbalists, the kitchen alchemists, the home-brewers of soups and ointments and edibles, who spend their days in the kitchen creating magic. Not just for comfort, but because the body and spirit need a little extra tending to at this time of year. We are the ones who turn jars of dried leaves and flowers into potions when the garden is sleeping and the wind won't stop reminding us exactly where we live.

Winter is when I move back into the kitchen and start crafting edibles, not as a hobby or a novelty, but as a practical piece of how we all get through this season in one piece. Not just for our bodies, but for our moods and our nervous systems and for simple

relief. For me, cannabis in winter isn't only about comfort. And it is certainly not about getting high, although there are days where that is most welcome. It's all about medicine with a little sense of humor thrown in. It's for stiff backs after shoveling snow, for restless nights when the mind will not quiet down and for those long evenings when you can either complain about January or make a batch of brownies that take the edge off instead. Herbal work in winter is heartwarming and plain ole good. If you are gonna ride out a long Maine winter you might as well do it with a smile surrounded by warm kitchens and a well stocked apothecary.

I always tell people that make cannabis edibles in winter that it is as much a ritual as it is a recipe. It's a way of passing time when it gets dark long before supper time. It's the simple rhythm of chopping, grinding and the gentle warming of those infused oils and the scent of cocoa melting on the stove. It involves choosing strains the way people choose tea leaves; one for laughter, one for rest, and one for those evenings when the world feels like it's wrapped in a giant snowy blanket and you just wanna sit and be still.

In classic Maine fashion, it's also a way to remind ourselves that even in the deep cold, we are all pretty crafty and very resourceful, and that winters were made for putting good things in little jars. Every winter my own kitchen becomes a kind of herbalist workshop, part apothecary, part chocolate shop, part Sage-in-training laboratory, that smells like cocoa powder, roasted nuts, and the Earth with smells that whisper of dried medicinal plants. Outside, the wind might be rattling branches against the house like bones on the porch, but inside the kettle sings, the mixing bowls are everywhere, and every counter is filled with little bowls of dried ingredients and more often than not the floor is covered with bits and pieces of plant matter. This is wintertime where everything is slow brewed, slow cooked and soulful in a kind of kitchen therapy. The best part is anything chocolate. Specifically, chocolate edibles. I have always said that chocolate is winters' love language. Add in a small thoughtful infusion from a favorite small-batch strain and you'll have something even better; a handcrafted edible that carries intention in that flavor and a sense of humor all its own.

When I am recreating those old handwritten recipes, I like to make them into boxes of chocolates and sweets. You know the ones, the kind your grandmother might have kept for holiday occasions, only instead of caramels and toffee and maple cream these little nuggets are infused.

The little insert card reads with things like:





“Blueberry Drift” for a mellow evening melt-away.

“Sunrise Tea” for laughing while you are out shoveling.

“Cedar Lake Indigo” perfect for mid-day naps.

“Snow Day Hybrid” which pairs well with a good pair of wool socks and old movies.

Each hand-crafted chocolate carries not only its own flavor, but an individual winter mood. Here in Maine, those moods shift much like the weather fronts. Some chocolates are made with darker cocoa and just a bit of espresso for days when you still must feed the wood stove after you shovel the walkway and the driveway and then pretend you’re a fully functioning adult human being. The sweet, creamy, white-chocolate bites infused with a lighter extract, are meant for evenings wrapped up in a thick wool blanket with a good book, listening to the wind rattle around the eaves, while the old house creaks and you don’t have a care in the world. The beauty of small-batch cannabis extracts is that each infusion becomes a little story all its own.

As a fourth generation herbalist, I’ve been working with medicinal plants for a very long time and very clearly remember standing at my grandmother’s side when I was a very little girl watching her put together batches of wellness teas in old tins and make cough medicines for the winter ahead. To this day, if you were to open the medicine cabinet at the family camp, I’m betting that you would still find a glass bottle or two of horehound and honey still sitting on a shelf in a back corner as a reminder of those long ago days.

Cannabis, like any medicinal plant ally, deserves mindfulness and patience when it comes to making medicine. Wintertime is the perfect season for that because there is no rush, no hurry to get it done; instead, the process becomes meditative. I tend to always work with small singular batches that are harvested mindfully with intention. Enough to use. Enough to share with a friend or two, and enough to keep for extra on the shelf for those unexpected visits, but not too much that it loses its intimacy. Each batch for me has a personality. The process, without turning this into a technical manual, feels a little like kitchen alchemy and never fails to put a smile on my face. It begins with the dried flower, always chosen with intention, from hundreds of jars that have been harvested, labeled and put-up for exactly these moments from the last season’s grow. The cannabis buds that I choose are purposeful; with some of those terpenes smelling of pine, intoxicatingly scented and resinous, which always reminds me of snowmobiling through the forest, or the live Christmas trees of my childhood. Others tend to lean



fruity or floral, which never fails to remind me of summertime and my flower gardens.

When using cannabis, something I've learned is, it needs to be gently awakened, and warmed. Coaxed not scorched and then introduced to a carrier oil like coconut oil or cocoa butter, which is the kind of wholesome fat that pairs beautifully with chocolate later on. The infusions need to rest and macerate for a time so that it pulls the spirit character out of that flower and into the mixture. That is where time is your friend. Outside the snow could be fallen all around you while inside your favorite little pots quietly simmer. The whole room smells like a wonderful conversation between the forest and the kitchen cupboard and by the time your infusion is strained and poured into little glass jars, winter has already passed a few hours by. Each of those jars

labeled and put back on a shelf for future use. When you live in Maine, passing a few winter hours is most definitely an art form in and of itself.

Some of those small batches head straight towards the days' chocolate-making, while others become a base for sweets, the likes of caramel, maple sugar candy and old-fashioned fudge that taste exactly like something you're great aunt made back in the day if she'd also been just a tiny bit mischievous back in her day for using cannabis.

The intention is always the same; it is for a day spent crafting potions and recreating old recipes in the kitchen and for passing time through the long winter months.



There's something magical about lining up homemade chocolates on parchment paper on the table and on all of the counters. I like to imagine my winter chocolate box as a wonderful story in 12 pieces, each one slightly infused but not overloaded. Each of them labeled with caution and each created for a different kind of winter day. One dark chocolate square might be infused with a cheerful, talkative strain that pairs beautifully with great conversations at the kitchen table while the wind howls. Another might be a milk chocolate truffle filled with hazelnut cream made for those quiet nights when the snow muffles every outside sound and the world feels like it's wrapped in a giant cotton ball. Then there's peppermint bark cluster infused ever so slightly with your special peppermint/cannabis extract from the mint that grew in the side garden last summer and the best milk chocolate that money could buy. And there

is always one bold dark chocolate piece, lightly infused, that makes you laugh right out loud and say, "that one's for staying outside" because if winter and Maine teaches you anything, it teaches you how to balance your responsibilities with the fine art of enjoyment.

Over the years I've gifted these boxes to friends, some of them infused with cannabis and others just good old-fashioned chocolates. Each chocolate sitting in a tiny little gold paper wrapping. Those recipes handed down to me from my grandmother where I spent most weekends at her house, making chocolates in my youth. The reaction from my friends is always one of laughter and delight for being gifted these sacred chocolate goodies. Being on the receiving end of a box of cannabis infused chocolates feels less like a gift and more like



a knowing gesture between great friends. The kind that says, “I see your winter and I wanna make it a little easier” and in our world, that kind of thoughtfulness is its own medicine wrapped in chocolate and friendship.

On the very best winter days when life seems like it’s at its coldest, candy-making becomes a spectator sport for the weather. There’s a special kind of feeling that only happens when you’re standing over a saucepan, watching sugar and chocolate and maple syrup swirl together, while outside the snow falls sideways, like someone shook a giant snowglobe over the entire state. The wind rattles the windows, and as you glance out where the world is wild and white, there’s a real comfort in standing there on the inside, in your toasty kitchen, in your favorite slippers, stirring circles in the chocolate, like a wizard of sweetness.

Now, lest anyone assume winter herbalists simply lock themselves in their houses with chocolate and blankets, rest assured we do venture out, sometimes. There’s nothing quite like taking a winter hike through the fresh snow, the kind that squeaks under your boots like it’s alive, where the air smells like pine needles and woodsmoke, and the world feels very big and very quiet. Every time you exhale, it turns into a little silver cloud in front of your face. I’ve trudged along many a frozen trail in my community in winter after a good storm, feeling like the last person on earth until a little chickadee appears and reminds me I’m really just an extra in a bird story. There’s real joy in those rituals. Joy and knowing that while the world outside is frozen solid, we still know how to create warmth in small meaningful ways. Sometimes that is in a form of a great soup or



stew. Sometimes it's a wonderful chicken pie with a homemade crust, your grandmother's recipe, and at other times it's a box of chocolates. Come March, when the snowbanks begin to sag and melt, I look at my little rows of jars and chocolates and feel immensely grateful for the knowledge of my ancestors. I love that wintertime forces us all to slow down and take a pause. As an herbalist I am so incredibly grateful for the herbs and medicinal plants that grow all around me here in western Maine. Even in the coldest months, I have access to it all for harvesting and foraging all year round. Maine is very blessed for the amount of medicinal plants and trees that grow all around us. I'm also incredibly grateful for the small-batch extracts that carry that memory of those harvest times into the stillness of January.

Because the winters here are so long and the nights cold

and dark, as Mainers we've learned to make our own comfort. And just sometimes that comfort looks like a box of handmade chocolates.

I don't treat those chocolates like a novelty party ingredient. My conscience just wouldn't let me as those strains of cannabis sit on the same shelves as the Arnica, the Yarrow, and the Comfrey, Chamomile, Ginger, and Valerian. It is a plant with medicinal qualities that has a job to do. Some days it's for sore backs after shoveling the same driveway three times and on other days, it's for a restless mind that refuses to accept that winter nights are designed for sleeping. Every so often it is simply for the pleasure of making something with your own two hands; something small and a little bit magical.

Here are a few of my winter recipes that have earned their permanent place in my apothecary, that are simply meant to be shared.

“Infused Chocolate drops” for easing aches and pains. These are simple, no-nonsense chocolates, the kind you put in a little tin and pretend will last the week.

You’ll need:

1 cup of dark chocolate chips or chopped chocolate,

2 tablespoons of coconut oil,

1 to 2 teaspoons of cannabis, infused butter or coconut oil,

a pinch of sea salt and a little bit of ginger and cinnamon to add some warmth

Gently melt the chocolate and your oil in a double boiler. Don’t rush it and definitely don’t boil it. Just heat it enough to bring everything together in one lovely melt, stirring your infused oil into the mixture slowly. Keep that dose modest, a little goes a long way in the winter, especially when the goal is relief rather than fireworks. When the chocolate is melted, pour it immediately into small molds, silicon trays, or even a spoon size dollup on a piece of parchment paper. Add a little sprinkle of the sea salt, because life is better with chocolate and salt and then let them sit in a cool corner where you have to remind yourself to definitely not test them every 15 minutes. These chocolates are the kind you keep for nights when your back reminds you that you stacked the wood the old-fashioned way or didn’t lift with your knees when you were shoveling.

A Gentle Winter Tea for getting a good night’s sleep. For this tea, I make it when the house is quiet and the wind sounds like it’s thinking over old stories outside my window.

Blend together:

1 tablespoon of chamomile flower,

1 tablespoon of the lovely lemon balm that you grew over in the corner of your garden this past summer

1 tablespoon of either lavender or skull cap, fresh or dried

and lastly, a bit of dried cannabis bud. You only need a small supportive amount of cannabis for this cup of tea.





Pour hot water over those herbs and let them sit for 15 minutes or so.

This isn't the kind of tea you rush. It works best when you've given a fair amount of time to let it sit. It's also not a knockout kind of sleep aid. It's the sigh in your nervous system, dim the lights, let your mind stop narrating everything kind. The kind of tea that reminds you winter isn't a punishment. It's an invitation to rest a little bit more than you're used to. Go ahead and add some local honey if you like. Both the tea and the honey are medicinal in their own right.

For general aches and pains in the wintertime, I like to keep this specific tincture on hand for all of it:

Arctic Muscle Recovery Tincture

There are no real measurements with this one. It is equal parts of each in a clean jar covered in a high proof alcohol.

Cannabis, flower or leaf that is dried

Willow bark

Wintergreen

Arnica and dry or fresh Ginger root

Cover those herbs with a high proof alcohol in a clean sterilized jar, label it and give it a shake every time you walk by. Let it sit for several weeks. If winter teaches us anything it teaches us patience, whether we ask for it or not. This tincture is best as a topical for massaging into aching shoulders and lower backs at the end of a long day. It will warm and loosen the pain of the day and it will remind your body that it doesn't have to hold every snowstorm in its muscles. This jar of tincture is like an old friend.

By the time I've bottled up the tinctures, wrapped the jars, labeled and stacked the tins of chocolates and tucked tea blends back into their rightful places, my kitchen looks a little like an old-time apothecary shop, with measuring spoons and cups, bowls, and teacups everywhere. This little house of mine carries winter well. The shelves hold memories and possibilities of summertime, with roots, leaves, and flowers drying in every available space for putting up into big glass jars in anticipation for use in their second life. My floors creek in all the familiar places and somewhere in the corner sits a giant notebook full of recipes scribbled between chocolate stains and little reminder



notes for what worked best. It's not fancy nor is it dramatic. It's a working winter apothecary, part kitchen, part sanctuary, and part reminder that all of your hard work through the spring and summer has its own rewards and that tending to ourselves is its own kind of resilience. Cannabis takes its rightful place beside the other medicinal plants on those shelves. It is respected always, and it is never used as an escape. It's all about support. It's about easing aches and pains and for nights when sleep is elusive.

As the wind rattles my windows against the siding and the snow continues to pileup I am able to take a moment to look around and think "yes, this is gonna carry me through" as I sit

here with my mug of hot chocolate and my well-stocked-pantry and my apothecary jars stacked floor to ceiling. I am ever grateful for being surrounded by the quiet company of those medicinal plants. For me, winter becomes less of a challenge and more of a season for slowing down and for paying homage to the many months it takes for growing and tilling the gardens, for foraging and for being out on the trails here in the mountains. Winter shifts from endurance and cold, to gratitude and a thankful heart. Every year, January turns into a well-loved time for honoring the knowledge and recipes handed down from my ancestors, and it keeps me close to those connections of the past. I can't think of a better way to spend the winter. 🌿



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**REACTIVE
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BY JONATHAN STRIEFF



Getting Baked: *One Recipe at A Time*

By Jonathan Strieff



Cooking and eating delicious food is a daily pleasure in my life; and cooking and eating delicious food with weed in it elevates that delight in all the best ways. Cannabis not only helps us savor and enjoy the depths and complexities of tastes and aromas, but also imparts its own. A studied gourmand might seek out a particular strain or terpene profile to pair with a certain recipe, but anyone with enough stovetop talent to melt butter can add cannabis infused cooking to their figurative pantry stores.

It's been said that, "If you can read, you can cook," but as someone who has personally witnessed plenty of culinary disasters unfold while I thought I was carefully following a recipe, I know it's not always that simple. Add in the desire to prepare something

that's not only tasty, but also infused with cannabis, and the stakes at play for getting every measurement correct instantly escalate. Adding a little too much salt to a dish can be disappointing, but mismeasured cannabis concentrate can transform your cooking project into dizzying and disorienting mayhem.

Anyone who's ever taken too much of an edible can recount in detail how all the enjoyable feelings of being high become excruciating when cranked up beyond the threshold. Too much of a good thing. Cooking with cannabis can be trickier to manage dosage than smoking. Each batch will be different from one another and the delayed onset of the effects can be a trial in patience. But, like all things in the kitchen, just a little trial and error can provide the experience necessary to yield reliable and



satisfying results.

While it may sound patronizing, anyone nervous about starting to explore the culinary arts might benefit from dedicating some effort to mastering the ultimate cooking 101 confection: the peanut butter sandwich. Even if you've already slopped innumerable dollops of Skippy or Peter Pan across flaccid slices of Wonder Bread over the years, slowing down and concentrating on doing it perfectly can teach a lot of the fundamentals that go into careful cooking.

The peanut butter sandwich also offers the perfect introduction for someone new to cooking with cannabis. Rather than fussing with measuring herb to infuse in butter or oil and hoping for the best, all that's necessary is to eyeball a bowl pack, sandwich that between two peanut butter smothered crackers, and bake it in the oven until the kitchen smells like weed.

The peanut butter sandwich crackers make a great edible for someone with no cooking experience and no patience for planning

ahead. With just a minimal amount of practice, some basic kitchen gadgets, and forethought, anyone can prepare a stockpile of delicious edibles for fresh eating or freezing to enjoy later.

My go-to recipe for edibles originally came from the New York Times. For 45 years, the cooking section of the newspaper has celebrated the end of summer by reprinting the iconic Plum Torte recipe. The torte is a rich, egg based sweet that rises around the plums or whatever fresh fruit its baked with. I can't remember the "Eureka" moment that inspired me to dose the recipe with cannabutter and divide it into mini cupcake tins, but since that day I've practically never been without them in my kitchen.

The recipe is beginner level simple and can be adapted to fit a wide variety of needs, but one piece of kitchen equipment is nonnegotiable. Presumably, cooks have been creaming butter and sugar together long before the invention of the electric hand mixer, but having attempted it once, take my advice that there is no need to exhaust your forearms and bend all your forks to compensate for a tool you can find for \$10 at just about any Goodwill or yard sale.



The recipe combines butter and sugar, eggs, and just a little flour to hold everything together. It is as much like a frittata as it is a cake. In recent years, I've started cutting the recipe with $\frac{1}{2}$ regular butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ cannabutter, and even then I'll only eat a whole one if I have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Maybe it has more to do with the years of trial and error I've spent at it than the torte recipe itself, but I've never found another edible that I could dial in the desired dosage so perfectly.

In college, a good friend of mine found himself with pounds of cannabutter just before Thanksgiving break. The only reasonable thing to do at the time was to host a few dozen of our closest friends for a Danksgiving feast before leaving campus. Turkey, potatoes, stuffing, pies, all drenched in earthy cannabis oils. All of us in attendance seemed to experience a similar flight trajectory as the evening wore on; first we were giddy, then nervous, then higher than any of us had ever been, then just as we were all verging on comatose, something turned and a second wind breathed new life into everyone. Floating away after helping to clean up, the night seemed to hold everything to make a holiday meal special.

Marijuana is most certainly a gateway drug. Ideally, it opens doors to new creative pursuits and experimentation. If the question, "Could I add weed to this?" gets someone excited about trying something new in the kitchen, I see that as a benefit to both cooking and cannabis. I just hope I'm lucky enough to try a bite.

Mini Torte Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 Stick of Butter (room temperature)
- 1 Cup of Sugar
- 2 Large Eggs
- 1 Cup of Flour
- 1 teaspoon Baking Powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 and line two mini cupcake trays with paper or foil wrappers.
2. Cream together butter and sugar using an electric mixer until combined.
3. Add eggs one at a time until incorporated.
4. In a separate bowl, mix flour, baking powder, and salt then add to egg mixture.
5. Spoon about 1 tablespoon of batter into each cupcake tin and bake for about 15 minutes or until edges just start to brown.
6. Eat or freeze within 3 days. 🌿



New Visibility of the Cannabis Plant:

Cannabis Plant Medicine Getting the Administrative Spotlight

By Eric I. Mitchell



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AAPL is president and medical director of Hemp Commodity Industries, LLC.

New Visibility of the Cannabis Plant – Cannabis Plant Medicine Getting the Administrative Spotlight

You know how everyone talks about plant-based protein when they want an alternative to meat like burgers and chicken? It's that same kind of switch. The idea works for medicine too. Instead of pills made in big factories, some cures come straight from plants—leaves, flowers, roots, and stems. This is called Plant-Based

Medicine (PBM).

At the heart of this story is one special plant: cannabis. For many years, it has been a challenge for huge pharmaceutical companies. Those companies make synthetic drugs and don't always like natural options taking their place. But times are changing, and visibility for cannabis as medicine is growing fast.

Let's go back in time to understand why. Cannabis has a long, rich history that stretches thousands of years, as a medicinal. It didn't start in modern labs—it began with ancient people discovering its power.

Around 2700 B.C., in ancient China, people were already using cannabis. One of the world's oldest medical books, written by Emperor Shen Nung, mentions it. He said cannabis helped with pain, rheumatism (stiff joints), malaria, and other problems. People then brewed the flowers and leaves into tea or made pastes to rub on sore skin.

Knowledge spread along old trade routes like the Silk Road. In India, cannabis became important in religion and healing. Ancient holy texts called it a sacred plant. It was one of five holy herbs that could bring joy, calm the mind, and relieve suffering. People mixed it with milk, sugar, and spices to make a drink called bhang for special occasions.

In Central Asia, nomadic warriors known as the Scythians used cannabis in unique ways. These horse-riding fighters built small tent-like structures, heated stones, and threw cannabis seeds on

them. The smoke filled the tent, and they inhaled it to relax after fights or during funerals. Archaeologists have dug up their ancient graves and found burnt seeds and smoking tools to prove it.

From there, cannabis traveled further. During the Middle Ages, it reached the Middle East and North Africa. Arab doctors wrote detailed books about its uses for headaches, stomach aches, swelling, and infections. Families shared recipes generation after generation.

By the 1800s in Europe and America, cannabis exploded in popularity for modern medicine. Scientists learned to make concentrated extracts called tinctures. These were small bottles of liquid drops taken under the tongue for quick relief. Almost every pharmacy and apothecary shop carried them.

Doctors prescribed cannabis tinctures for many common issues: severe muscle cramps, asthma that made breathing hard, insomnia keeping people awake, and even pain during childbirth. It was seen as gentle and effective. Cannabis was part of America's Pharmacopeia (Formulary) from 1827 until 1940 when it was politically removed.

A famous example involves Queen Victoria of England. Her personal physician, Sir J. Russell Reynolds, treated her monthly cramps with cannabis. He later wrote articles saying it was one of the most valuable medicines available, especially when used carefully. It wasn't hidden—even royalty used it openly.

New Beginnings

Medical journals printed success stories. Parents shared how a few drops calmed fussy, teething babies. Farmers gave it to livestock for pain. It was normal, everyday medicine—trusted and safe in the eyes of most people.

One of the biggest supporters was Dr. William Osler, a Canadian physician often called the Father of Modern Medicine. In the late 1800s, he wrote the most important textbook for doctors, called "The Principles and Practice of Medicine." In it, he praised cannabis tincture as the best option for treating migraines. He explained it calmed overactive nerves and stopped severe headaches better than other treatments. Small medical studies at the time supported him—patients reported fast relief with few side effects.

Doctors back then carried cannabis in their medical bags alongside tools like thermometers. It was as standard as any basic drug.

Sadly, this golden era didn't last. In the early 1900s, things shifted. New synthetic drugs, like aspirin and stronger opium-based painkillers, became cheaper to produce and easier to control doses for. Big drug companies promoted them heavily. At the same time, misleading stories spread, wrongly linking cannabis to crime, violence, or laziness. These fears were often aimed at immigrants from Mexico and other places, The Marijuana Tax Act.

Politicians passed strict laws. In the United States, by the end of the 1930s, cannabis was banned nationwide. Doctors could no longer prescribe it. Research halted. The plant's long medical history was pushed aside and forgotten. Visibility vanished, and for decades, possession meant heavy punishment, including jail time. Patients lost a helpful option.

Many turned to riskier drugs.

New Demand

But good ideas don't stay hidden forever. In the late 20th century, change started. People with tough illnesses began speaking up. Cancer patients said cannabis reduced nausea from chemotherapy and helped them eat again. Those with HIV/AIDS found it eased pain. Parents of children with severe epilepsy shared how it stopped dangerous seizures when regular medicines failed.

In 1996, California became the first state to legalize medical cannabis through a voter ballot, Proposition 215. Soon, many others joined. Scientists could finally study it properly again. Their findings echoed ancient and 19th-century knowledge: chemicals like THC help with pain and nausea, while CBD reduces inflammation and seizures without causing a "high."

As of January 2026, over 30 countries worldwide allow medical cannabis. In the U.S., nearly all states have programs, and more than half permit adult recreational use with regulations. Doctors now recommend it for conditions like chronic pain, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), multiple sclerosis, and glaucoma.

Special cases touch hearts—like children with Dravet syndrome getting the first FDA-approved CBD medicine that dramatically cuts seizures.

Even big pharma has come around. Companies now grow controlled cannabis crops, extract pure compounds, and sell government-approved products. Examples include Epidiolex for Dravet Syndrome for epilepsy and Sativex for muscle stiffness in MS patients. They patent new strains and formulations. Walk into many pharmacies today, and you'll see cannabis products next to traditional meds, complete with lab testing, clear dosing info, and safety labels.

Visibility is now everywhere: billboards, TV commercials, bright storefronts, and online delivery. Patients use apps to log effects and find what works best. Thousands of studies show the "entourage effect"—how whole-plant cannabis often outperforms isolated chemicals because everything works together.

The future looks even brighter. Cannabis has made an incredible journey—from a plant that could land someone







in prison to one that could soon qualify as a Medicare-covered benefit in the U.S.

Federal officials are actively discussing full rescheduling, potentially removing it from the most restricted category by 2027. If approved, health insurance—including Medicare for seniors—could pay for cannabinoid prescriptions. That means older adults with arthritis or neuropathy get affordable relief without draining savings.

Costs would drop across the board. More medical schools would teach about cannabinoids. Hospitals might open specialized clinics where experts match strains to needs low-THC/high-CBD for daytime inflammation, balanced blends for better sleep, or higher THC for breakthrough pain.

New Economics

Entire economies could grow. Farmers in rural areas shift to high-value hemp and cannabis crops. Labs employ scientists refining genetics. Pharmacists get new training. Public schools teach balanced, evidence-based lessons—no outdated scare stories.

By the 2030s, imagine safe, regulated shops in neighborhoods nationwide, welcoming like any health store. Opioid overdoses decline as people choose plant options. Communities heal!

Challenges exist, of course. Protecting youth means strong age verification, secure packaging, and education. Preventing overuse involves clear guidelines and monitoring. Some underground sales continue, but legal markets make them less appealing.

When Medicare and insurance widely cover it—as experts increasingly predict—access becomes fair. No one chooses between food and medicine. Suffering decreases.

This is a remarkable turnaround: from sacred, ancient herb to respected 19th-century remedy used by queens and top doctors, to banned substance with harsh penalties, and now emerging as mainstream medicine once more.

Plant-based medicine, led by cannabis, has earned its full visibility. After thousands of years of helping people, the truth is shining through.

Conclusion

This is not a fairy tale but the real thing that needs nationwide support, which it has, some element of political consensus willing to vote this plant out of its wrongful incarceration, and the final and critical piece to its renaissance arrival is to get the Bank Bill passed.

Eric I. Mitchell MD 🌿



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Medicare Coverage For CBD Advances— But Federal Hemp Ban Looms

By AJ Harrington

A key federal health agency recently revealed that it would authorize insurance coverage for CBD products under some Medicare programs. Under the new policy from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), cannabis products that are legal under applicable federal and state laws would be eligible for coverage under Medicare Advantage programs, Marijuana Moment reported last week.

CMS, an agency of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, published the proposed rule change in the Federal Register on November 28.

In April, CMS implemented a previously announced final rule for 2026 that prohibits Medicare coverage for any “cannabis products.” The new policy would prohibit Medicare coverage only for “cannabis products that are illegal under applicable state or federal law, including the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.” The change would allow patients to file insurance claims for CBD products legal under federal and state law.

Patient Advocates Support Medicare Coverage For CBD

Sasha Kalcheff-Korn, executive director of Realm of Caring, a Colorado-based nonprofit dedicated to sharing information about cannabinoid therapies with patients and their families, says that the policy change is a significant development for seniors.

“The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ proposed rule is an important acknowledgment that evidence-based cannabinoid therapies play a meaningful role in the health, comfort, and longevity of older adults,” Kalcheff-Korn writes in an emailed statement. “For more than a decade, Realm of Caring’s research has shown that full-spectrum CBD products can improve quality of life for seniors managing pain, sleep issues, and inflammation.”

The Suncoast chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) also applauded the new policy.

“This potential Medicare-CBD breakthrough affirms what Suncoast NORML has long believed: hemp-derived

cannabinoids are not fringe curiosities — they belong in conversations about public health, regulation, and social equity. We’ll be watching the Federal Register closely and mobilizing our community to ensure this opportunity doesn’t slip through the cracks.”

Federal Hemp THC Ban Threatens Most CBD Products

While the new ruling is a step forward for cannabis policy reform, many of the CBD products available today will be illegal starting next year. Under the budget deal Congress passed in November to reopen the federal government following the longest shutdown ever, hemp products with even negligible amounts of THC or other cannabinoids will be prohibited. The legislation, which is slated to go into effect one year after the budget law was enacted, changes the definition of hemp, which currently permits cannabis with no more than 0.3% THC by weight.

Cannabis and hemp advocates say the change will make the production of compliant CBD products next to impossible, threatening a \$28 billion industry. Kalcheff-Korn says that “this moment also underscores a critical urgency — without a clear federal regulatory pathway for these products within the next 11 months, millions of Americans who rely on them could lose access.”

“We hope this signals a future where safe, regulated, research-backed cannabinoid options are available and affordable for the most medically fragile in our population,” she writes.

CMS said in the proposed rule change published last week that “hemp and hemp-derived cannabis products that meet the current 2018 definition are not federally controlled substances through November 11th, 2026, and those that meet the amended definition beginning on November 12th, 2026, will remain not federally controlled substances as of that date.”

“If such products comply with all other applicable federal laws, including any future changes to the definition of hemp and applicable provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA), then they are not illegal under federal law,” the proposed rule change states.

Cannabis Industry Execs Share Predictions for 2026

By AJ Harrington



Cannabis industry leaders expect 2026 to bring major regulatory shifts, market corrections, and rapid technological adoption as federal and state policymakers revisit hemp rules and rescheduling gains new momentum. Executives from across the sector say the year ahead will be defined by intensified scrutiny of intoxicating hemp products, uneven consumer demand, continued price pressure in maturing markets, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence on retail operations.

Ali Garawi, CEO and co-founder of Los Angeles-based Muha Meds, said that the ban on intoxicating hemp products

included in a federal appropriations bill will have a significant effect on the cannabis and hemp industries nationwide.

“The hemp ban conversation will intensify—and reshape the market. States are already reconsidering the loopholes that allowed intoxicating hemp products to scale without the same regulatory oversight as licensed cannabis,” Garawi writes in a statement. “In 2026, we’ll likely see either tighter restrictions or a harmonized regulatory structure that treats intoxicating hemp and cannabis more consistently.”

Ryan Hunter, chief revenue officer for cannabis vape brand



Spherex, says, “As always, expect the unexpected. 2026 is going to bring some fresh energy to the industry through rescheduling.”

“The Trump administration is highly incentivized to act as they are facing declining approval ratings among young voters, so I think rescheduling will finally happen,” he writes in a year-end statement.

“On the other hand, the cannabis beverage sector will disappoint investors and operators and not just because of the hemp ban. Most economic forecasters expect cannabis beverages to account for a tiny portion of the overall cannabis market, but many market participants are exhibiting unbridled enthusiasm in hopes that cannabis beverages will be a direct replacement for alcohol.”

“Fortunately for humans but unfortunately for retailers, people do not experience cannabinoid intoxication in the same way that they experience alcohol intoxication, and their consumption habits reflect that,” Hunter adds. “The liquor industry, cannabis beverage companies, and investors will all be disappointed when cannabis beverages fail to live up to the hype.”

Kim Sanchez Rael, CEO and co-founder of cannabis emulsions innovator Azuca, says that companies that are prepared for an uncertain environment are most likely to succeed in the next year and beyond.

“In 2026, chaos and uncertainty will remain the defining banners in the industry,” Sanchez Real writes in a statement. “This means that teams who can move forward without a map will be at an advantage. Chaos doesn’t reward the loudest players. It rewards the most prepared, the most agile, and the most committed to doing it right.”

Harrison Bard, co-founder of rolling paper solutions brands Custom Cones USA and DaySavers, says that maturing cannabis markets will continue to see falling prices and a wave of mergers and acquisitions.

“Price compression is real and coming for less mature markets. Newly legalized states are enjoying high prices, but it never lasts — and 2026 will be the year many of them feel that shift,” Bard writes. “Expect to see the average price per pre-roll and gram fall significantly as markets stabilize and supply catches up. That pressure will ripple outward, setting the tone for how operators reposition themselves in the year ahead.

“As those prices fall, consolidation will accelerate. Smaller operators will continue to struggle, and in markets that allow it, bigger chains will start to gobble up smaller operators,” he adds. “You’ll also see smaller MSOs expand into new states by acquiring local chains, using price compression as both leverage and opportunity.”

Rocco Del Priore, co-founder of cannabis retail management platform Sweed, says that AI will influence 40-60% of cannabis transactions by the end of 2026. His prediction is based on Sweed platform data combined with consumer survey results that found that 86% of cannabis customers would return to dispensaries offering personalized recommendations and 45% would visit more often with personalized offers.

“The biggest digital transformation happening in cannabis retail is about intelligence. Consumers have always wanted fast, frictionless recommendations that actually make sense for them. AI makes that possible at scale,” Del Priore writes in a statement. “For the first time, dispensaries can provide the same personalized 1:1 experience from every touchpoint - that’s becoming the new standard. The retailers who embrace AI-driven operations in 2026 and beyond will see exponential gains in loyalty, efficiency, and revenue.”



Trump Issues Executive Order To Reschedule Cannabis

By AJ Harrington

President Donald Trump last month issued an executive order to reclassify cannabis under federal drug laws, making good on a four-month-old assertion that his administration was considering the matter. The executive order directs the Department of Justice to issue a final rule on a proposal initiated by the Biden administration that would move marijuana from Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act and place it in the less restrictive Schedule III.

Trump signed the executive order on December 18 at an Oval Office ceremony attended by cannabis policy reform supporters, patient advocates, leaders of veterans service organizations, and others. Notable attendees included Paige Figi, Charlotte Figi's mother. Charlotte, who died in 2020, opened the world's eyes to the potential of medical cannabis when CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta shared her struggle with severe epilepsy.

"This action has been requested by American patients suffering from extreme pain, incurable diseases, aggressive cancers, seizure disorders, neurological problems, and more, including numerous veterans with service-related injuries and older Americans who live with chronic medical problems that severely degrade their quality of life," Trump said before signing the executive order.

Trump's executive order directs the attorney general to accelerate rescheduling cannabis to Schedule III of the CSA and tasks the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with creating research models that leverage real-world evidence to guide standards of care.

Claiming that he is the "president of common sense," Trump noted that his executive order does not permit the recreational use of cannabis.

"I want to emphasize that the order I am about to sign is not the legalization or does it legalize marijuana in any way, shape or form, and in no way sanctions its use as a recreational drug," Trump said at the signing ceremony.

"This reclassification order will make it far easier to

conduct marijuana related medical research, allowing us to study benefits, potential dangers and future treatments," the president added. "It's going to have a tremendously positive impact."

President Supports CBD and Hemp with Executive Order

Also on hand for the signing were HHS Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Mehmet Oz, who spoke about the potential health impacts of CBD.

The executive order also directs administration leaders to work with Congress to give patients access to full-spectrum CBD products, "while still restricting the sale and access to products that cause serious and potentially life threatening health risks," Marijuana Moment reported, citing a transcript of a White House briefing on the executive order.

The order also calls on Congress to reexamine the federal definition of hemp to ensure that patients can obtain full-spectrum CBD products. Additionally, the president's order directs HHS to "develop research methods and models, to utilize real world evidence [and] to improve access to hemp-derived CBD products in accordance with federal law" while informing "standards of care."

Paul Armentano, deputy director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), noted the historic nature of Trump's action.

"The Administration's order calling to remove the cannabis plant from its Schedule I classification validates the experiences of tens of millions of Americans, as well as those of tens of thousands of physicians, who have long recognized that cannabis possesses legitimate medical utility," Armentano said in a statement from the cannabis policy reform advocacy group. "It wasn't long ago that federal officials were threatening to seize doctors' medical licenses just for discussing medical cannabis with their patients. This directive certainly marks a long overdue change in direction."



Cheech and Chong Pitch Cannabis Dispensary Partnership Program

By AJ Harrington

Cheech and Chong's Cannabis Company recently announced a new foray into the regulated cannabis market through a reverse licensing system with independent dispensary owners. Under the new program, the iconic weed duo's enterprise will give its independent partners access to branding, products, market data and unique retail design, helping them stand out in a crowded marketplace.

"Cannabis operators are fighting uphill battles with ever-changing regulations, fierce competition, and constant pressure from multi-state operators," Jonathan Black, CEO of Cheech and Chong's Cannabis Co., said in a December 2 statement from the company. "We listened to our buyers and were inspired to build something that truly supports them. This model gives local cannabis stores the freedom to stay independent while gaining the gravitas and name recognition of a national brand along with the trust that's been built over five decades. There's no doubt that, with our partners, we're stronger together as one unified national brand."

Cheech and Chong's Weed Empire

The iconic weed duo Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong launched Cheech and Chong's Cannabis Company in 2020, licensing its brand, genetics, formulas and retail designs to regulated cannabis companies. The reverse partnership program allows independent dispensary owners to upgrade all or part of their current store footprint to Cheech & Chong's unique Dispensoria retail concept. A creation of creative director Jasmine Marin, Cheech's daughter, the Dispensoria concept incorporates the "bright colors and upbeat flair of traditional Chicano culture to create an inviting, high-energy space that customers love."

Business owners can choose to transform their existing shop with a full rebrand to the Cheech and Chong's Dispensoria concept, taking advantage of brand recognition and customer loyalty. Or operators who want to maintain their existing brand identity can opt for a co-branded Flowered by Cheech & Chong partnership.

"Consumers know exactly what the Cheech and Chong name

stands for. It has always represented trust, humor, and a genuine love for the plant," Black writes in an emailed statement. "The Partner Network extends that legacy into the retail experience by pairing local ownership with a brand people feel comfortable walking into. When patients or shoppers see the Cheech and Chong name on a storefront, they know they're entering a place that is safe, welcoming, and built around their needs."

New Partnerships Help Independent Businesses Compete

Traditional celebrity licensing arrangements can make it difficult for small, independent cannabis retailers to compete with large, multistate operators (MSOs). The reverse partnership agreements allow small business owners to maintain full ownership and operational control of their business while taking advantage of the Cheech and Chong brand.

"Small operators don't lack passion or expertise. What they lack are the resources MSOs use to dominate the industry," says Brandon Harshbarger, president of Cheech & Chong's Cannabis Co. "By partnering with us, dispensary owners gain instant brand recognition, national marketing support, and the trust consumers associate with Cheech and Chong."

Participating dispensaries don't pay traditional royalties. Instead, they join the Cheech & Chong Partner Network, a connected ecosystem designed to support independent ownership while expanding the brand's reach, visibility, and shared success. All Dispensoria partners also automatically gain access to the proprietary Headset Retailer platform, an advanced tool that turns sales, inventory and demographic data into real-time insights to support growth.

"At Headset, our mission is to make data useful, not overwhelming," Cy Scott, CEO and co-founder of Headset, said when the new partnership was announced in September. "Retailers can track sales velocity, optimize inventory, understand staffing needs, and measure the true ROI of promotions. Partnering with a cultural force like Cheech & Chong brings these capabilities to even more partners – helping them grow, stay competitive, and better serve their customers." 🌿

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