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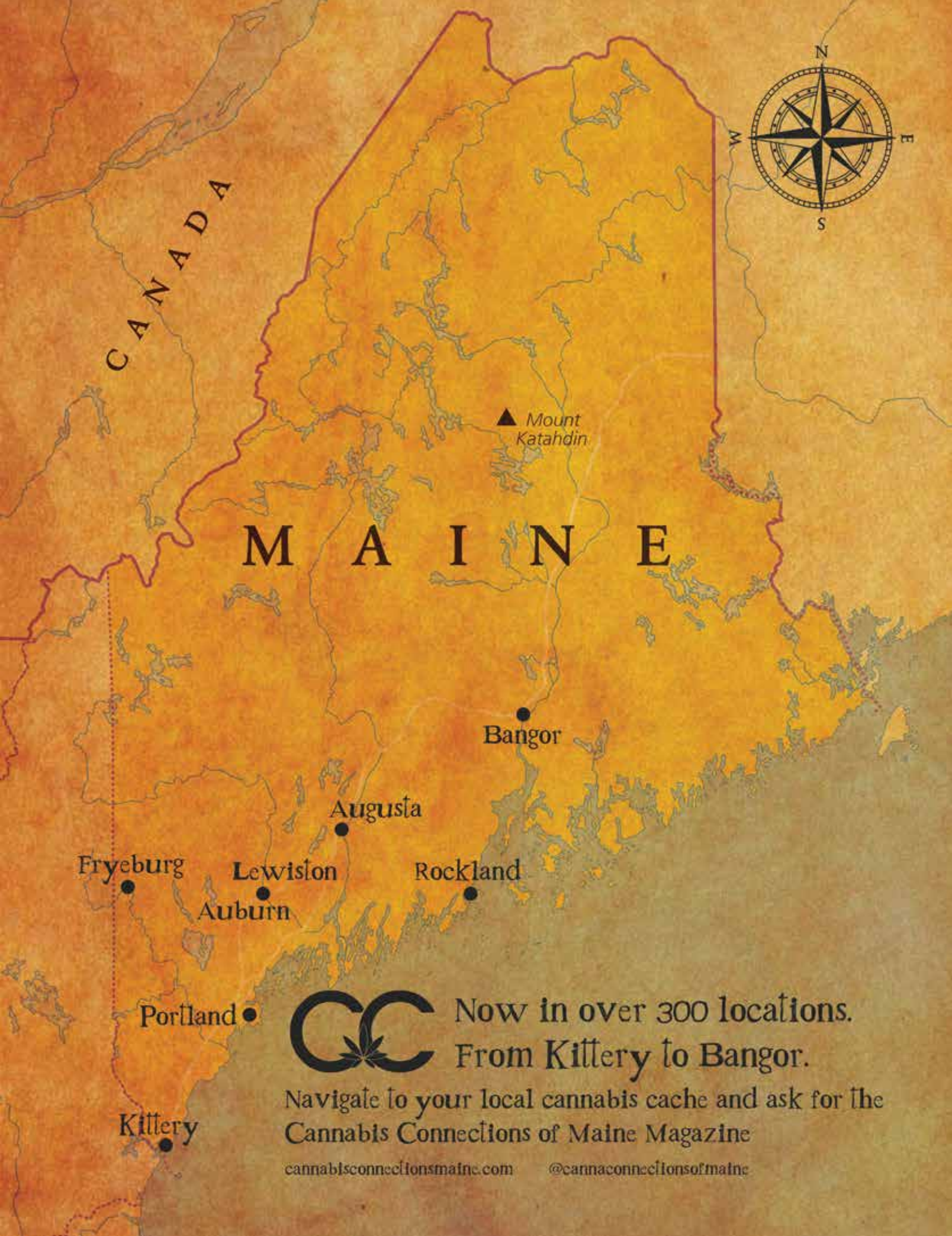
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Blowin' SMOKE

With Jeff Cutler

THE
420
EDITION

Spring 4-Ward



Do you know the answer to life, the universe, and everything?

Not a Douglas Adams fan? No worries. The answer is 42.

Do you know the magic number in the cannabis world? That's right, it's 420!

But do you know why?

Here's the legend AS I UNDERSTAND IT.

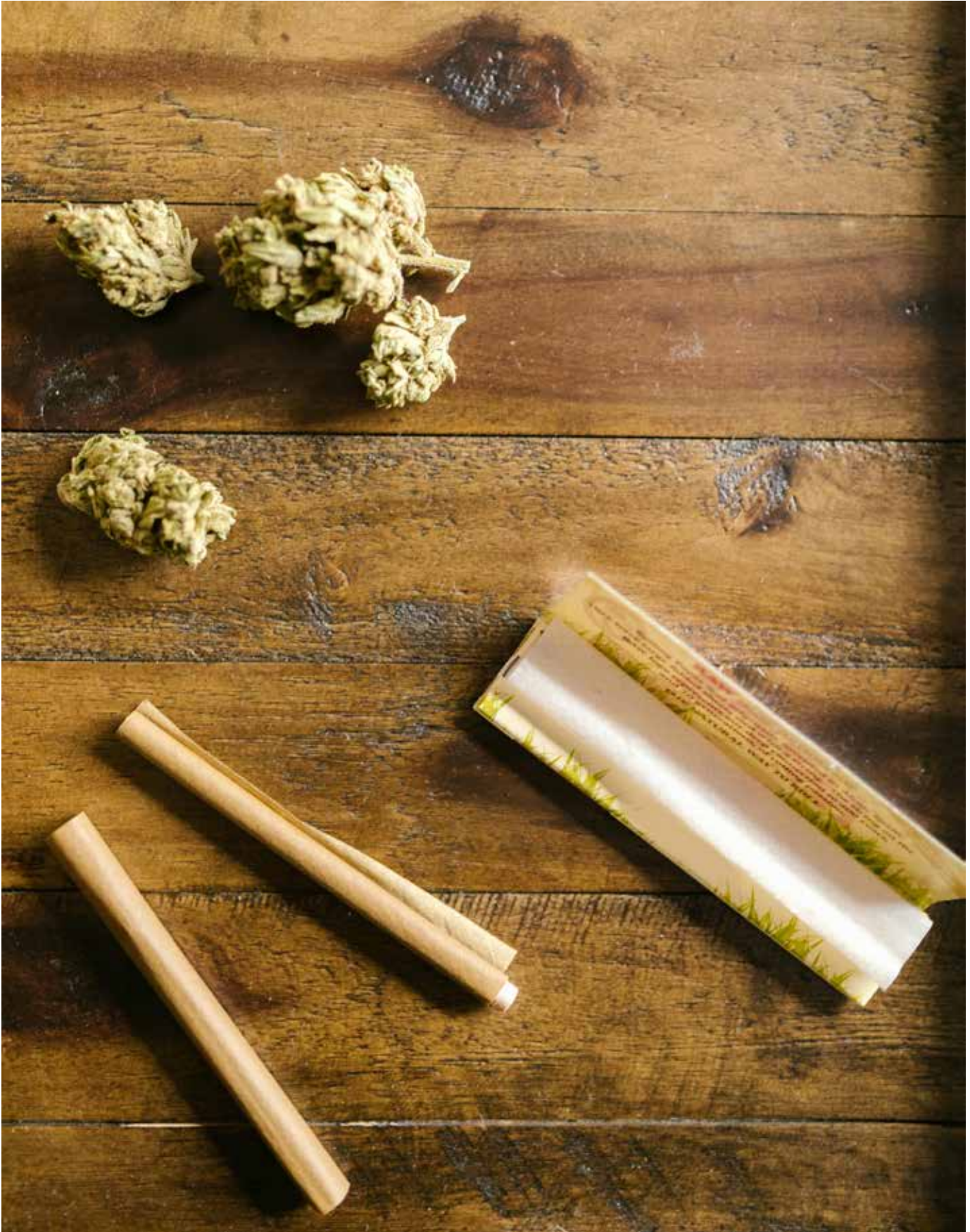
In the early 1970s, a group of high-school-age kids in California started a routine of getting high after sports practice, at around 4:20 every day. There's no doubt this was happening at 80,000 other schools across the United States simultaneously, but Cali gets the props.

High school typically ends in the 2:00-3:00 pm window. That gives students a period of time in which to complete other tasks. Sometimes teacher meetings happen in that window. Tutoring, too. Even drama and music practices start in that window. It's the same for athletics. Books in the locker, change in the locker room, report to the field. Wrap up by 4:15.

So, when school and practice ended, the high school student athletes in California assembled at precisely 4:20 to recreate with cannabis before heading home.

It was a broad success and smokers across the country jumped on the 420 bandwagon.... slowly.

Because it was the 1970s, the practice didn't go viral the way it





might today. But it spread by word of mouth. Now, if you ask anyone what 420 means, you might get answers all over the map.

I asked at a bar the other day and got these answers. Suffice it to say it was around the last call, so the information gleaned might be a little suspect.

“420? Is that the weight limit on linebackers in the NFL?”

“I think that’s how much the \$5 bill is worth now.”

“That’s one of them snowboard moves, isn’t it?”

“Token’ time, right?”

“Is that your number?”

(That last one from someone who clearly needed, and got, a taxi home that evening.)

Regardless, the numbers game around cannabis is way broader than the time when people get together to smoke. When you look at numbers, you can start with prices, weights, potency, and about a dozen other measurements.

Do the numbers matter?

I’m not sure. When you’re starting out, as I am, you want to know if you’re going to be blasted onto your a\$\$ and be barely functional for half a day. And you want to know which strains relieve anxiety. And which ones help your sex drive. And which ones make you hungry? And and, and, and, and...

It’s akin to any other important practice in your life. I don’t want to harsh your buzz, but getting the benefits of pot can be a challenge. Crunching the numbers can help, but there’s so much more.

For example, the reactions we all have to different potencies and strains are all over the map. My wife takes a quarter of a 20mg



gummy to assist her sleep. More than that gives her couch lock. My friend Bob (name changed to protect his reputation) takes 50mg and it barely affects him.

Hypothetically, I'm in that same boat. We covered it last issue, but I'm a noob when it comes to pot. I only started about six years ago and I started with 5mg edibles. From there I went to a dry vape, then to distillate vapes.

The journey's been interesting because each derivative of cannabis has delivered a different effect. I'm currently trying to wean myself a little from the high THC carts and spend more time and money on the purer concoctions.

I think, and we'll get back to numbers in a sec, that I slipped into a world of decadence because I started my marijuana journey so late. A 5mg eddy turned into a 10mg and then a 15% flower in the dry

vape. Then 22% if I could find it. And then onward to distillate and sugar and shatter and badder.

OMG, the variations and strengths were myriad, and I was just cannabis curious. What does this have to do with 420? The original joint jockeys did the same thing. They were forging a path to legality while building a huge database of pot's anecdotal benefits.

And when they met behind the school to start this tradition, they had no idea that people like Beverly Ann Soucy would be sharing their escapades on the pages of international magazines.

As Bev tells it in an earlier Cannabis Connections, the 420 tradition has created "a real brotherhood – a secret society of sorts – in lighting up when you feel a connection and a sense of community with people from all over the globe."



She's spot on. Too often, people focus on the numbers of a situation. Maybe we get lost in that when we're weighing potency, price, and amount, when what we could be focused on is more important.

If you're getting what you want from the recreation you choose, then who's to say what's too much? If it's worth it to you — financial, time or other cost — then isn't it simply worth it?

Maybe the hypothetical questions are unfair. Maybe the questions we ask should be based more on reality and concrete figures. But when has that been a characteristic of

the marijuana industry?

The numbers are morphing as people measure things differently. What I'd like to posit is that we can choose how we measure our cannabis experiences...and I'm not sure that it comes down to numbers.

How about you? What numbers dictate your activities? And why?

Let's chat next issue! Thanks for reading.

Jeff 🌿



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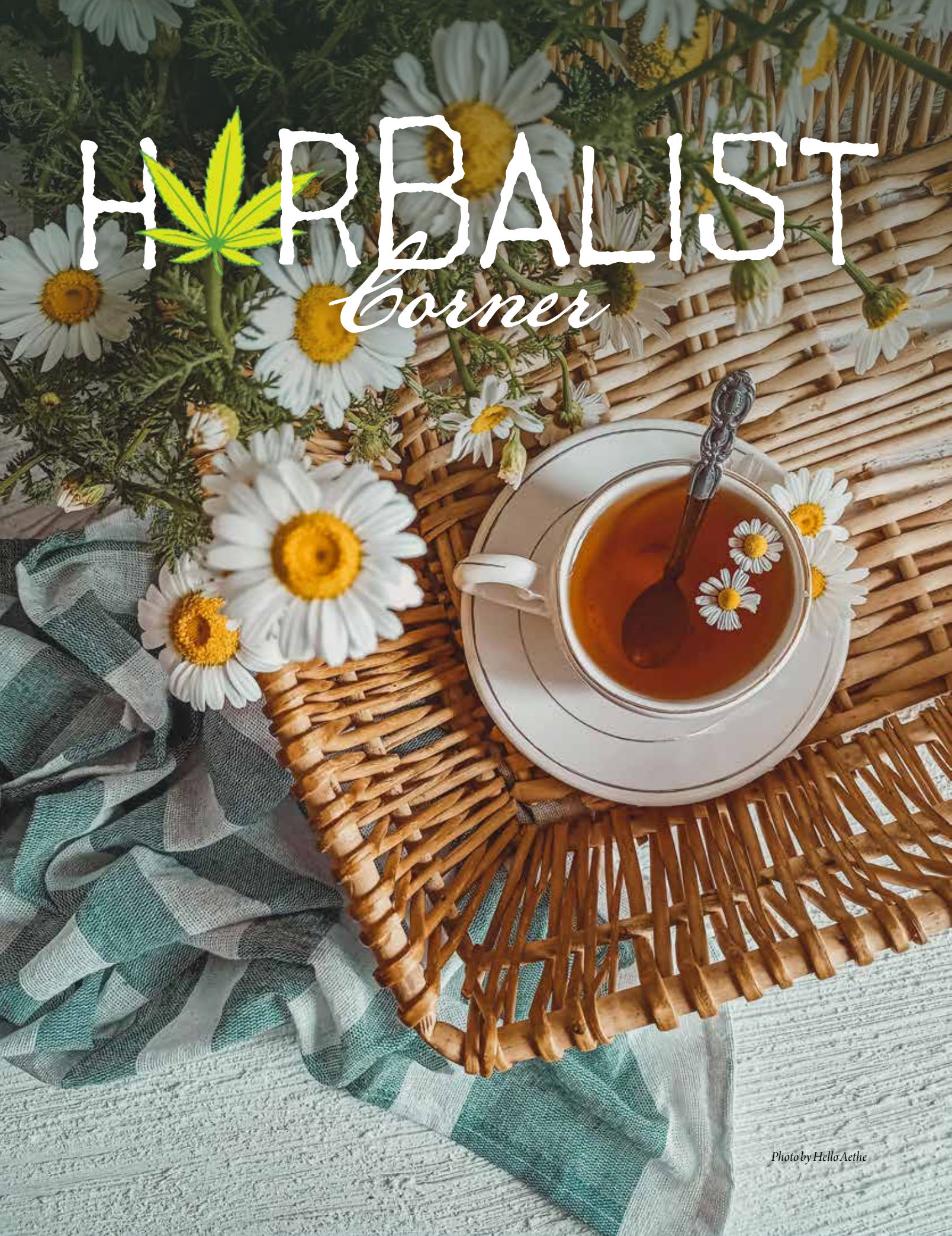
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Embracing April in Rural Western Maine

Cannabis Edibles, 420 Celebrations, and the Dance of Seasons

By Beverly Ann Soucy



The Liminal Space of April

In rural western Maine, April is a month of whispered promises and lingering frost. It is a study in contradictions. Winters grip loosens slightly but springtime remains elusive while our landscape hovers in a purgatory known as “mud season.” The snow retreats reluctantly, revealing patches of earth eager to breathe and grow again. Rivers swell with melted winter, and the air carries the scent of damp pine and thawing soil. Here, between the grip of winter and the blush of spring, lies a quiet magic. For rural Mainers, this time tests our patience and ingenuity. We are ready to get going on the next season but forced to go slow in the event that April plays tricks on us and shows us that winter is not yet quite done with us.

It is a time for reflection and renewal. Tax deadlines loom adding financial stress to the seasonal slog that we all feel when April rolls around. Mud season is more than an inconvenience, it’s a shared trial. Driveways disappear under standing water, trucks get stuck in mud, and isolation drives us all just a little bit nutty. Add to it all when tax season hits it hits hard as we are a state of seasonal jobs that rely on trades the likes of logging and the fishing industry and tourism where the weight of having to “make hay while the sun is shining” weighs heavily and the weight of paperwork and dependency on good weather comes into play. April is the month of in-betweenness.

Enter April 20th or 420. This is a day for some that offers a reprieve. In Maine, where recreational and medicinal cannabis

is legal, the date has evolved into a low key communal exhale. For locals, it’s less about counterculture and more about marking survival.

It is a collective pause after filing your taxes, and before the frenzy of spring planting, or tourism preparations for getting ready for the next big season.

Rural Mainers are experts at embracing limbo. We have learned how to roll with the proverbial punches that are dependent on Mother Nature for their success. And we do it with pride every single year. It is the very definition of being a Mainer or frankly living and working in New England.

As the world stirs awake and the taxes are finished once again, cannabis edibles, infused with the wisdom of medicinal herbs, offer solace and joy during this transitional dance and help to fill the time between seasons when Mother Nature turns to a dull brown as the last of winter melts away.

This is a story of mud-season resilience, the warmth of community, with a few recipes thrown in to ease the pain, that marry the earth’s bounty with intentional living.

This heartfelt article weaves the rugged beauty of western Maine with the therapeutic power of cannabis, surrounding a month of in-between and for celebrating 420 as well as offering readers a

roadmap to navigate April's liminal space with stress relief, a reward for patience, and joy.

420 in the Heart of Maine's Wilderness

April 20th arrives like a mischievous breeze in the woods. It is a day when cannabis enthusiasts worldwide celebrate the plant's cultural and healing legacy. In rural Maine, far from urban smoke-outs, 420 is marked by intimate gatherings. Neighbors share stories over slow-cooked stews and homemade edibles and pastry. Against snow-dusted hills they commiserate about the long winter months and the trials and tribulations that come from it all. This year, as frost clings to the shadows, and the temperatures get warmer, consider honoring 420 as not just a party but as a ritual of gratitude: for the land, the longer days, and for celebrating the resiliency of having made it through another late winter season.

In a region where winters are long and spring arrives fashionably late, and the in-between season is one of mud, edibles provide a diversion. Unlike smoking, which flickers like a match, edibles simmer a slow burn that mirrors April's patient thaw. Paired with herbs like chamomile or lemon balm, they become tools for both celebration and introspection.

April in western Maine really should be renamed "Mud Month." It is a time when dirt roads turn to sludge and boots sink ankle-deep in the mud and the mountains are spotted with mud trails amidst the last patches of snow on the ski hills. The only glimmer of better days coming is the longer days where the sun sets just a little later in the day. Yet within this messiness lies beauty: the first robins come to visit, sap buckets with their blue lines start showing on maple trees, and the stubborn green of emerging crocuses peeking up through the last bits of snow. Emotionally, this month can feel unmoored. A kind of gap between hibernation and rebirth. For many, cannabis offers a bridge between the seasons. A low-dose edible can soften the edges of seasonal affective disorder, while uplifting strains infuse hope as daylight stretches on. Paired with adaptogens like ashwagandha or calming herbs, it becomes a literal balm for the soul.

Recipes Rooted in Earth and Intention

Infusion Basics:

Begin with a cannabis-infused butter or oil. We have talked about this recipe in past issues. Decarboxylate your cannabis (low heat to activate THC/CBD), then simmer with butter/oil on low heat. Strain, and use in any of your favorite baking recipes. There really are no rules. Make it in abundance and keep a backup in the freezer

for exactly these moments. Always label doses clearly and remember to start low with your dosage (5-10mg THC per serving) and go slow, spacing them out so as not to overload your senses. That is the tricky part of edibles, the dosage. Which is why it is important to keep detailed notes for future recipes. And if I may, in the words of Canna Grammy, "Do not go to the emergency room if you are overwhelmed by your dosage." Just eat a little something, drink some juice and wait it out. You are not going to die...

What a better way to pass the mud season month of April or to celebrate April's favorite 420 holiday then to craft a little cannabis blend for your morning pancakes or to pour onto your end-of-day bowl of ice cream for an evening of staying home, accompanied by a great movie.



Maple-Cannabis Chamomile Honey

- Simmer 1 cup local honey with 2 tbsp decarbed cannabis-infused coconut oil.
- Add 1/4 cup dried chamomile flowers (harvested last summer from your herb garden or if you haven't added this incredible plant to your garden you can find it online or at your local health food



store or herb shop. Every pantry should have a jar of chamomile for its healing and calming properties).

- Stir on low heat for 20 minutes. Strain into a glass jar.

*Drizzle into tea or over oatmeal or put it on your pancakes. Chamomile's gentle sedative properties meld with cannabis's relaxation, perfect for April's restless nights.

Wild Violet & Cannabis-Infused Maple Syrup

- Collect fresh wild violets from around your yard and steep 1 cup in 2 cups boiling water for 24 hours. Strain, reserving violet tea.

- Simmer 1 cup Maine maple syrup with 1/4 cup cannabis-infused coconut oil and 1/2 cup violet tea until thickened.

- Add a squeeze of fresh lemon to brighten. A perfectly poetic start to any morning. Drizzle over pancakes or stir into a pot of tea. Violets are rich in antioxidants, while maple grounds the spirit—perfect for foggy April dawns. And for those leisurely afternoons of staring out the window there is nothing lovelier than a plate of cookies and little infused tea.

Lavender-Canna Shortbread Cookies

- Cream 1 cup cannabis butter with 1/2 cup sugar. Mix in 2 cups flour, 1 tsp dried lavender, and a pinch of salt.

- Roll into logs, chill, slice, and bake at 325°F for 12-15 minutes.

*Lavender eases anxiety, while THC sparks creativity—ideal for rainy-day art projects or for your creative inspiration

Nettle & Lemon Cannabis Tonic

- Steep 1 cup fresh nettles "a springtime cleansing herb" and 1 tsp lemon zest in 2 cups hot water.

- Add 1 tbsp cannabis-infused honey and a squeeze of lemon.

*Nettles grow everywhere around us and are plentiful. They are known to detoxify and energize; lemon uplifts. Sip as a morning ritual to greet lengthening days. This is an easy recipe for adding spring vitality to your day.

Herbal infusions aren't limited to pasties and teas. You can prep ahead for keeping your pantry stocked for impromptu dinners with



friends and it can be as simple as keeping a bottle of infused oil to sauté with.

Savory Herb Cannabis Oil to keep in the pantry

- Infuse olive oil with cannabis and rosemary/thyme.

*Drizzle over roasted root vegetables or stir into mashed potatoes. Rosemary enhances memory, grounding you in the present, and it adds a savory comfort to the last of your late winter meals.

Smoked Salmon & Cannabis-Dill Butter

- Blend 1/2 cup softened cannabis butter with 2 tbsp fresh dill, 1 tsp lemon zest, and a pinch of sea salt. Easy Peasy.
- Spread over locally smoked salmon or roasted asparagus.

*Dill aids digestion, and salmon's omega-3s uplift any mood—a nod to Maine's coastal heritage and it adds a savory indulgence to a

great Sunday Brunch.

And lastly, a great medicinal for staving off cold and flu is a healthy Fire Cider Tonic, with or without cannabis. It is so good for your immunity, for inflammation, for digestion, for your circulatory system and so much more. And you are not limited to my recipe below. I make this every year for family and friends and add additional medicinal herbs to the recipe. You are only limited by your imagination and your access to medicinal plants. But here is a basics easy recipe where the ingredients can be found at your local grocery.

Cannabis-Infused Fire Cider Tonic — A powerful remedy for immunity

- In a large glass jar, 32 ounce works best, combine apple cider vinegar, chopped fresh ginger root, slices of orange and lemons, quartered onions and apples, hot peppers of any kind, horseradish, sprigs of rosemary, garlic cloves, dried mustard, turmeric root, and a little chili pepper. Add 2-3 tbsp cannabis honey

- Steep for 4 -6 weeks, shaking daily. Strain and mix with 1/4 cup local honey.

*Take 1 tbsp daily. Fire cider's spicy warmth pairs with cannabis to combat April's lingering chills and it helps to ward off sickness. It can be stored for up to a year.

And lastly, you are not limited to flavorful smoke. There are so many herb blends that you can add to your smoke that will compliment any terpene or strain. Something as simple as dried mint or pine will compliment that experience in a surprising way.

Pine Needle & Mullein Leaf & Cannabis Smokable Blend

- Dry and finely chop fresh pine needles (white pine is ideal) and mix with ground mullein leaf and cannabis flower (1:1:1 ratio).

- Roll into joints or pack into a pipe.

*Pine and Mullein clears respiratory pathways and Mullein smoke alone is a wonderful remedy for cleaning your congested lungs. Pine is high in vitamin C as well as beneficial for your immune system when it comes to allergies and evokes the lovely scent of Maine's woods making it ideal for meditative hikes and a little forest therapy.

Your Mud-Season Survival Guide — A few simple ideas for passing the time in between

Embrace Hygge (the concept of coziness and contentment in enjoying life's simple pleasures) Light beeswax candles, wrap in a hand-stitched quilt or a crocheted blanket, and journal with a cuppa cannabis tea. Write letters to your future self about your dreams for spring. Spend an afternoon planning a garden or an entire day cooking baked goods.

And if getting outside is important to you, you only need a good pair of waterproof mud boots and a basket for foraging springtime medicinal plants, the likes of *prunella vulgaris*, that lovely purple cone with its tiny purple flowers that pops up in your yard in early spring. It's nickname: self heal. Pick it and put it in a tea to help get rid of the stagnant winter blues from your system.

Get on out and hunt for the first dandelion greens (rich in vitamins) and throw them in a salad. Tapping into white birch for birch water can be a family activity and is so good for your vitality. Forage for birch twigs for marking into tea. Even in the bleakest months, the earth provides.

Movement is medicine as well. Snowshoe through slushy trails or



dance wildly in your kitchen or hey, practice yoga or two-stepping in the living room. Pair with a micro-dose edible to deepen mind-body connection and to add a little wild abandonment to your dancing.

If you are starved for human connection but don't want to leave the house? Host a "stone soup" potluck, where your guests bring



veggies, you provide broth and bones (and cannabis-infused olive oil) and share stories, connect with friends, share last years seeds, along with stories of wintertime mishaps.

And while we are speaking edibles and ways to get on through the last of the season I would be remiss if I didn't speak to a few added tidbits that are relevant to it all.

Specifically rural paraphernalia and a remedy. In rural Maine, where self-reliance is a way of life, smoking paraphernalia often reflects the landscape: functional, handcrafted, and imbued with history and ingenuity.

Such as the art of a good hand carved pipe. Every generation has a tale of a good hand carve pipe, fashioned by a grand parent out of simple need, from maple, birch, or cherry wood, often sourced from fallen trees. These pieces are rugged yet elegant, with natural grain patterns that tell stories of the forest and of ingenuity for the person carving. They are carved over time with symbols and given as gifts to be treasured. They were often packed with homegrown tobacco, a blend of cannabis and a few herbs the likes of mugwort or mint. They were lit slowly and smoked even slower for savoring the earthy flavors.

And when the ritual was finished they were often cleaned with a whisper of whiskey and a pipe cleaner for future use and tucked back into the pocket of a wool jacket.

And lastly, with the many months of winter behind us all, a useful moisturizing ointment for winter hands is necessary knowledge for all. Especially after the long winter of chopping kindling and hauling wood and for being out of doors in any capacity.

A simple recipe:

DIY Canna-ointment for dry hands:

- Melt 1/4 cup beeswax with 1/2 cup cannabis-infused coconut oil, and a bit of coco butter.
- Add several drops of lavender oil, pine resin oil, rose essential oil or all three into the melt and pour it into glass jars or into tins for your pocket.

Apply to cracked hands nightly and again in the morning before starting your day.



Long before legalization, Maine's backwoods cultivators honored cannabis as "the people's medicine." Stories linger of elders treating arthritis with cannabis salves or sharing joints during sugaring season. Today, dispensaries blend tradition with innovation, offering heirloom strains and workshops on edible crafting.

This 420, visit a local grow shop for early blooming seedlings, get your planters ready for this year's crops and shop for a new pair mud boots as you prepare for Spring.

Mud season is about so much more than mud. As we move on through the month of April, we deepen the connections between Maine's natural rugged beauty, the cannabis culture, and the tools that make April's transitions sacred. From smokeable herbal blends to homesteader hacks, it's a love-letter to everyone for living slowly, rooted in a place we call home and to each season. An homage to all Mainers.

April in western Maine teaches us to find grace in the in-between. The alchemy of patience is ever present as the seasons change into

the next. As cannabis edibles meld with herbs from last summer's harvest, we're reminded that growth is cyclical, never linear.

This 420, as you bite into a lavender cookie or sip nettle tonic, go ahead, give honor to the mud, honor your own resilience, honor the melting of winter and the return of longer days, sunshine and warmth. And pat yourself on the backs for making through to another year!

Spring comes on its own terms, but until then, let the earth's remedies, and the warmth of shared stories, carry you on through. May your April be soft, your heart steady, and your pantry stocked with kindness along with a few carefully dosed treats for whiling away the last of winter and for celebrating 420.

Author's Note: Always consult local laws and a healthcare provider before consuming cannabis. Start with low doses, especially when combining with herbs. Maine's medical cannabis program supports safe access; cultivate mindfully. And remember to always make notes for future reference. 🌿



How to Concentrate

By Jonathan Strieff

The gradual rollback of prohibition in medical and recreational markets across the country in recent years has enabled high tech leaps forward in the art and science of processing, extracting, and concentrating cannabis oil. But before dabs, wax, and shatter came along and obliterated previous expectations about just how high a person could get, the original concentrate, hashish, already enjoyed a centuries long reputation for melting psyches. Different growing regions around the world developed unique processing techniques based on local environment and cultural factors; the ones we know today all had to survive various waves of drug war repression over the years, preserved faithfully by farmers taking the practice underground.

Like vinyl records and print media, old-fashioned artisanal produced hash is finding new enthusiastic supporters amid the abundant ultra-processed concentrates now available, and for good reason. While the butane solvent powered super expeller presses out there can wring out 99.9% of usable THC from your buds at the digitally preordained temperature to maximize and optimize the full spectrum of flavor terpenes, the finished product can end up feeling sterile, like an AI generated playlist. Not to mention needing an engineering degree and high-tech rig just to use the stuff, forget about trying to make it at home.

Old school hash is practically wholesome by comparison. Made by hand, the entire act reeks of intimacy. Processors lovingly coax the oils out of the living plant and the plant, swayed by the show of affection, gives up its oil like a gift.

Unless you happen to have your own laboratory down cellar, it's unlikely you'll be making your own shatter or rosin at home. However, anyone with a free afternoon can easily turn their own



homegrown cannabis plants into potent, delicious hashish and, in the process, take part in a global tradition dating back to the earliest days of civilization.

Marijuana buds do not get a person high. This may sound controversial, but it is true. The psychoactive properties in the plant are found in the resinous oil glands, called trichomes, that cover the buds. Making hash, or other concentrates, extracts the oil and collects it into a usable form while discarding the spent plant matter, like brewing coffee and tossing the grounds.

According to Martin Booth's *Cannabis: A History*, the first recorded mention of hashish use comes from a pamphlet published in Egypt around 1100 CE intended to slander a certain sect of Shia Muslims. Interestingly, the other countries with the oldest history of hashish use also lay along the 30th parallel line including Morocco, Afghanistan, and, significantly, the Himalayan foothills of north India.

Evidence suggests that human cultivation of cannabis began with the domestication of wild plants native to the river valleys of the Hindu-Kush mountains. The uses for fiber, biofuel, and food and feedstock have made cannabis immensely valuable throughout the history of agriculture, but the plants medicinal and intoxicating properties have long driven the selective breeding that has evolved cannabis into the plant we know today.

In India, the process of gathering the resinous oils by hand from living cannabis plants is an ancient tradition with connections to certain devout sects of Hinduism. To this day, Sadhu holy men roam the cities and countryside of India with their wooden chillums smoking “charas” as a way of feeling the presence of Lord Shiva.

Unlike other forms of hash, charas is collected from living or freshly harvested plants, undried and uncured. The only thing needed for the extraction process is two clean hands and saint-like patience. Producers release the oils by simply rubbing fresh buds gently between their hands until they are covered with the sticky, tarlike substance and then scrape it off and roll it into balls. Depending on the quality of the starting material, an hour of meticulous rubbing will yield between 1-2 grams of usable charas, hardly an economic enterprise for commercial production but a worthwhile endeavor any home grower can attempt.

In more arid regions like Morocco and Afghanistan, hash has traditionally been made from dried and cured flowers, not live plants. Starting with dried material improves the shelf life of the hash produced and reduces the risk of mold and other spoilage. The plant material is collected and sifted through a fine screen,





traditionally a silk scarf but today custom screens with exactly measured mesh are available allowing the oil glands to pass through to a collection surface beneath while separating out the leaf matter. Gland heads are measured in microns (one one millionth of a meter) and range between 75- 125 microns in size, on average. After the trichomes are gathered, they are pressed and gently heated to condense the glands into a solid mass.

In the modern West, water hash, bubble hash, ice hash all refers to the same process of mechanical separation using ice water, agitation, and a series of increasingly fine mesh screens to filter and grade the sifted trichomes. Dumping the harvest from an entire growing seasons worth of hard work and care into a bucket of ice water can feel nerve racking to a first timer but, as water and oil don't mix, the risk of loss is far outweighed by the reward of the finished product.

The low temperature or the ice water causes the oil glands to become brittle and drop off the plant material more easily during agitation. Vigorously mixing the slurry around with a wooden spoon or electric kitchen mixer allows the trichomes to separate and settle on each subsequent screen. The coarser screens can still let some pulverized particulates of leaf material through, giving the hash a greenish tint and slightly grassy taste, but sift gathered at the bottom of the finest mesh bag should contain nothing but the pure resin crystals from the buds, golden tan in color and super aromatic. One of the most challenging things about this technique is finding the patience to let the hash dry completely before sampling it. Depending on the quality of the starting material, the process yields between 1-4 grams of high-quality hash for every ounce of buds used.

My personal favorite technique for making hash is a variation on ice water method but utilizes dry ice as a way to streamline the process. Rather than sifting the trichomes through increasingly finer screens, by using dry ice to instantly freeze the oil glands off the buds they can be shaken directly onto a smooth collection surface through a 75- or 120-micron screen bag. Many people will grind their herb before agitating it with the dry ice, but in my experience, the extreme cold will actually turn untrimmed buds into powder during the agitation process. Simply mix your buds with dry ice in a clean 5-gallon bucket and stir it around until it looks like the dry ice has had its effect, about 3-4 minutes. Then dump the mixture into your screen bag and shake. Pure THC oil glands will erupt from the bottom of the screen in a cloud of dust. Shake until your arms are too tired to continue or until you stop seeing resin raining down from the bag. Use a straightedge like a credit card or razor blade to gather up the collected material, and you're done.

Certain precautions do need to be taken when handling dry ice. The most important is, wear gloves. Dry ice will turn from a solid to a gas when it gets above -190 degrees F so, while you're handling it, it will be cold enough to cause frost bite before you realize it's happening. It's also possible that the extreme cold can pulverize your plant material so that it's fine enough to pass through the mesh screen. If the powder coming out starts to look green, you're going for too long. Similarly, dry ice will wreck your screen bags if you leave them in contact for too long.

Hashish might very well be civilization's first value added product. Some intuitive genius wandering in the fields of wild marijuana plants

millennia ago had the insight, "Why don't I rub some of these flowers between my hands and smoke whatever comes out?" and inadvertently changed the course of human history for the better. Every stoner owes a debt of gratitude, not only to the farmers and breeders who domesticated the plant through years of careful cultivation, but also to the enterprising individuals who recognized the essential value of the oils hidden within the plant and pioneered techniques to draw out and refine it. What better way to repay that debt than by carrying on the old traditions while continuing to experiment, innovate, and appreciate the gifts that the plant has to offer. 🌿





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207_FIRE CUP 2025 "DANK GAS"



FIRST PLACE

DG#4. EAST COAST HIDDEN JUGNLE

"BANANA CONDA #4" *Pictured

675.5 POINTS



SECOND PLACE

DG#1. BRAZEN EARTHWORX

"ORCHARD LADDER"

649.8 POINTS



THIRD PLACE

DG#7. BEST FRIEND FARM

"GAS MASQUE"

629 POINTS

*Pictured: "Bananaconda #4 - East Coast
Hidden Jungle. Photo by @TheCuratorCo

**MORE RESULTS
ON PAGE 34**

Celebrating Unity and Excellence

Third Annual 207_Fire Cup Competition Honors: "Dank Gas" Category and the Community Spirit of this Industry

By Beverly Ann Soucy

The air was electric with anticipation as cultivators, connoisseurs, and cannabis enthusiasts waited in anticipation for the winners of Detroit, Maine's iconic Minerva Medicinals third annual "207_Fire Cup Competition". This year's event, held in March 2025, marked a milestone not just for its growing prestige for this coveted cup, but for its celebration of a community that has redefined what it means to thrive collectively. At the heart of it all was this year's category "Dank Gas," a pioneering cannabis category whose inclusion in this elite competition underscored by its legacy of top shelf quality and its commitment to uplifting the industry. For participants and attendees alike, the 207_Fire Cup is more than a contest, it is a testament to the power of unity and recognition in an industry often misunderstood by the outside world.

The 207_Fire Cup Leaves a Legacy of Innovation and Inclusion

Since its inception, the 207_Fire Cup has carved a niche as one of the Northeast's most respected cannabis competitions. Founded by Kirk Small and Detroit's very own version of Vanna White, Amber Crocker, Small's wife and partner. Together with their son they have proven to be passionate cannabis advocates for health and wellness and are driven to give back to their ever-growing community. The mission of this 207_Fire Cup has always been twofold: to spotlight exceptional cannabis cultivars in and around the surrounding area of Detroit, Maine, and to foster a culture of collaboration for what it means for all the growers and caregivers in rural Maine communities. Unlike traditional contests that pit participants against one another, the unique nature of the 207_Fire Cup emphasizes

shared growth and shared knowledge. Judging criteria is based on aroma, flavor, potency, and aesthetic. While the competition is fierce and rigorous, right down to the voting process for picking the judges of this competition, the event's soul lies in its participation for the growers, breeders and caregivers, for networking opportunities, and advocacy. And yes, the culmination of these small-batch growers' lifelong work.

"The 207_Fire Cup isn't just about who takes home the trophy," says Kirk Small, founder of the competition. "It's about creating a space where growers can exchange knowledge, where activists can strategize, where healing is the foundation and where newcomers feel welcomed. This industry rises together, or not at all."

This ethos resonates deeply within the Dank Gas Category for growers throughout Maine both seasoned and newbies on the scene and the cultivators who are known for their innovative strains and community driven ideology. It's become synonymous with small-batch excellence, earning accolades for strains like "Bananaconda#4" and "Tricho Jordan". But for all of the participants, inclusion with the Fire Cup's elite cultivators this year was a particularly poignant honor between peers.

"Being recognized by the 207_Fire Cup is like receiving a nod from your mentors and peers all at once," says Small. "This community raised us all. To stand among them now, it is a humbling experience."

The Honor of Participation is more than a trophy. For many that are recipients of the limited 56 sample boxes, 28 of which go out

to the general public and 28 that stay in-house and are given out in a lottery for complete fairness, the 207_Fire Cup's selection process is as meaningful as the event itself. Out of hundreds of applicants, only a handful of cultivars earn a spot in the competition's final rounds. Judges, comprised of industry veterans and voted-in volunteers, blind-sample the products submitted and grade each sample based on the criteria of each category. They evaluate blind entries over weeks, ensuring fairness and transparency. Because state regulations only allow 70 grams or 2.5 ounces in each box, these boxes have become highly coveted for the price point and the elusiveness of the lottery for getting access. As for the entrants, they earn the right to enter and then based on their entries are offered optional shelf space inside the shop, again creating a very well-oiled process for anyone breaking into the industry and for seasoned professionals alike. Every penny of this competition goes back to the growers and to the community with recognition being the real prize for Minerva. "Amber and I are driven by a real purpose and a zest for life. We had to chisel our way into this industry that we are so passionate about back in the day. It took a lot of hard work in an industry who at the time didn't welcome newcomers with open arms. We learned through life-lessons and the hard way and are finally seeing the fruit of our labor. For us, we are not driven by monetary gains. And while that is a small piece of it, this is so much more! This is about connections and for creating a family of people who walk through the world with like minds. We are the healers, the creators, and the caregivers that thrive on those meaningful connections as well as using our knowledge for a pathway to anyone seeking wellness."

Dank Gas's 2025 entry, "Bananaconda#4" a terpene-rich hybrid bred for treating chronic stress and cerebral clarity, a mix of snakecake, a rare sativa strain bred out of York, Maine, known to be exceptionally potent and full of trichomes, and the indica dominant DUAL OG#4 where it gets its potent strength. For the cultivator, Matt Markey the real victory was the opportunity to the 207_Fire Cup legacy. "When you're part of this event, you're adding to a narrative much bigger than any one brand. Every sample submitted, every workshop hosted, every technique shared, it all pushes the industry forward. We're here to set a standard not just meet it."

This sentiment echoes across the competition. Last year's winner spent months after their victory mentoring first-time entrants on sustainable growing techniques and teaching the novice cultivators new and better practices. Such stories are common at Minerva Medicinals and are not trickling over to the other dispensaries around the state, where accolades come with an unspoken responsibility: to lift others as you climb.

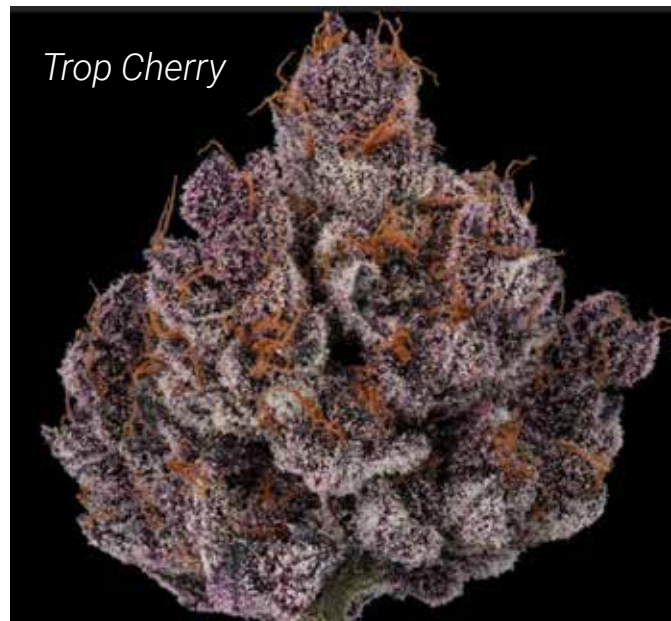
The small community of Detroit, Maine, and its surrounding areas are rooted in support. The cannabis industry's journey from prohibition to acceptance has been fraught with challenges. Decades of stigma, regulatory hurdles, and corporate encroachment have made solidarity essential. Nowhere is this solidarity more evident than at Minerva's and for this three times a year anticipated competition, where the term "community" is woven into every interaction.

"I've seen growers share their proprietary techniques with competitors," says Small. "I've watched brands collaborate on advocacy campaigns mid-event. That's the magic of this space—we are allies, not adversaries. And we hold this competition each year to show our support for each other out of respect for the cultivators and for all of the small little-known grows which in turn creates a family atmosphere where we are truly brothers and sisters in solidarity, all with a common goal."

For this year's "Dank Gas" theme, community support extends beyond the competition. The company partners with local dispensaries to provide products to low-income patients. "This plant is a lifeline for so many," Small says. "Giving back isn't optional, it's our duty."

Highlights from the 2025 207_Fire Cup

The event's climax, with the announcement of the best of the best, is a celebration of both individual achievement and collective pride. Matt Markey of EAST COAST HIDDEN JUNGLE, whose "Bananaconda#4" took first in the "Dank Gas Category" shared his love of this plant family as a delivery-based grow based out of Farmington, Maine. Markey's unique grow with his use of a Deep-Water Culture System is one of only a few using hydroponics here in Maine. He grows all of his plants using a unique recirculating





deep-water system that uses liquid nutrients that let the plants feed around the clock. Markey partners with a Maine born and bred breeder company called HoneySticks that works closely with their grow for the genetics and pays tribute and respect to the original founder and the fact that "HoneySticks" is Maine based breeder.

Brazen Earthworx took home second place in the hybrid "Dank Gas" category for their hard work, and all of the competitors cheered loudly when Funky Fuel CC won not one but two category's for "Best Indica" and "Best Sativa" two years in a row!

Scotty Ouellette, owner of Golden Road Extracts LL, proudly took first and third place in the BHO category of the competition. Scotty prides himself for having passion for wellness and for anyone seeking a better quality of life over at his shop in Bowdoinham. His sister facility, "Upta Camp Edible Company" is gaining momentum in the industry specializing in extractions for tinctures, topicals, concentrates and edibles.

Funky Fuel's very own Jordon Gilman has a lot to be proud of. He has only been in business since 2018 and is considered to be "a newbie" by the industry's standards at the youthful age of 32. Self-taught and driven by a competitive spirit, Gilman enjoys learning from the seasoned caregivers he is surrounded by in order to be a better version of himself and for excelling at his business every single day! He along with his best friend and partner Kyle Elwell stand out in the industry for being determined, for not being afraid of making mistakes, and for a deep desire to be better within the cannabis community. "My personal goal is to just keep growing, not just in the industry but personally. I am not afraid to take the gamble to succeed. We started out with one store front and now we are sought out across the state for our quality. We are growing daily, often selling out of certain strains the likes of this year's winner "Trop Cherry."

"We are a small-batch craft grow with 3x8-light grow rooms. Small, precise, and focused on quality," says Gilman with enthusiasm. "I love competition, have two degrees in a completely different industry that have taught me time management and what it takes for success in business. But at the end of the day, I just want to be a better version of myself. This community now sees my business's consistency and I am thrilled to be recognized by my elders who have a lifetime of experience and knowledge. They are the ones I am paying attention to and learning from. This industry is ever evolving and ever-growing and I just want to excel at it all. It is my brand solely based on hard work and determination. As a younger entrepreneur, I never want to stop learning from our industry leaders!"

"That's what this is all about," Small remarked, grinning as he calculated the final bonus-paid totals for the winners.

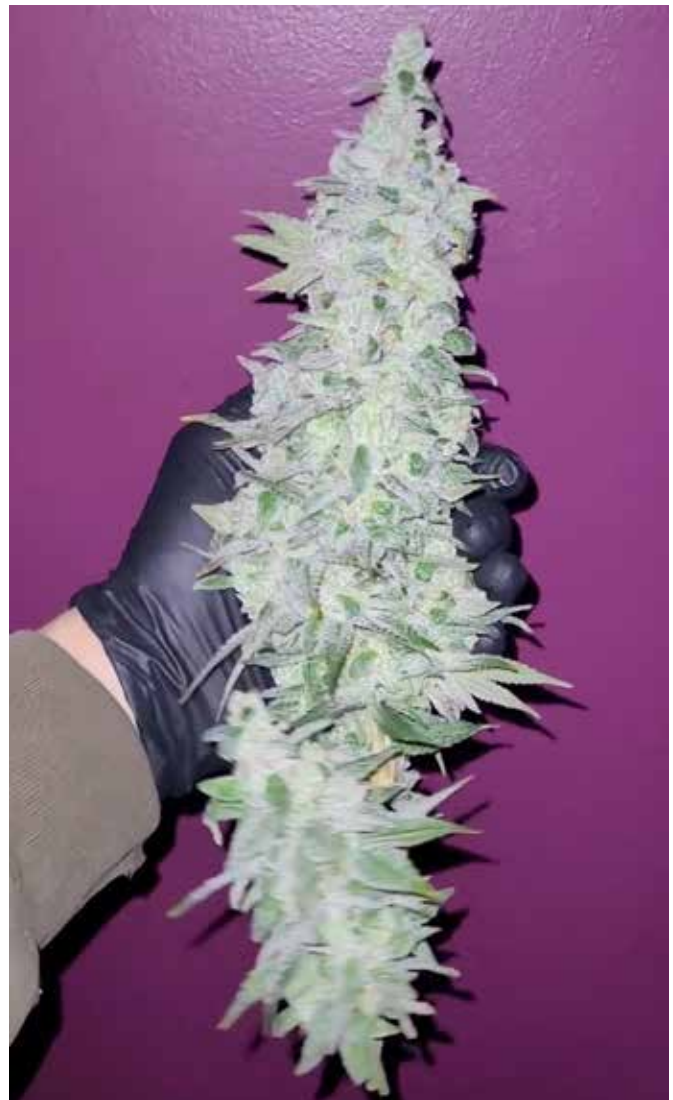


"Their win is ours here at Minerva's because our patients have rated these products as being the best of the best." The criteria for having these products on the shelves at Minerva's is based solely on that input as Small's way of showing respect for his patient's guidance in helping him to select the right products for their demand.

Bryon Fortin, proprietor on a personal mission from "Best Friend Farm" over in Mt. Vernon, was the first-place winner in the "Solvent-less Category" also placing third in this same category that he has continued to win in the past. Fortin is well known in the industry across the country for his solvent-less hash rosin and his proprietary hash "Bubble Cream" Piattella is highly coveted far and wide.

Piattella is a term that was coined in Barcelona, Spain, where the regulations in this industry are minimal, as an artisanal from of exceptional hash. It is the name given to very high-end hash and is considered top-shelf and the "best of the best" among the industry's experts. Fortin's expertise for remaining true to the plant and for his personal mission has devoted a proprietary method for standing true to its solventless organic origins, that worksymbiotically to preserve the natural terpene profiles and aromas, using mindful earth-based extraction techniques. That technique uses an ice water and freeze-dry method to separate the trichomes in such a way as to preserve the plants potency and the flavour profiles and compounds and as a way to minimize any outside exposures that may compromise the end product. Fortin sees this process as an extension of his personal journey and his life's work. "This is a calling that I am answering because it stays true to my own life's purpose and rings true for remaining in my divine work and my own journey for personal growth," says Fortin. "It is the evolution of my life's work and my connection to Mother Earth with the sole purpose of fostering and adapting a daily protocol for well-being, not just for myself but for anyone who is seeking a better quality of life."

Fortin, also a self-made man with a big heart and an equally larger-than-life perspective, is rooted deeply in his family history and connected deeply to his own ancestors. He returned back to his roots here in rural Maine after a lifetime journey of discovery a little over 8 years ago and settled on 77 acres in Mt. Vernon to pursue his dream. His perfection of traditional hash rosin is the evolution of his life's accumulation of knowledge based rich in history and rich in wisdom. The name "Best Friend Farm" is an homage to his best friend Travis as the result of a serious diagnosis for that friend that opened his eyes to plant medicine for healing and for fostering and refining a sustainable and healthy alternative and for creating a microbiome habitat using proprietary and intellectual





property techniques and equipment that counter health and disease issues organically. His main focus has been for creating community with people of like mind and for constantly revisiting his ultimate purpose on life's journey. "I simply answered the call."

Lastly, let's give the guys at Fish Meadows, along with one of their partners Tommy Blunts, a big hometown shout-out for winning all three positions in "The Best Pre-Roll Category".

As the 2025 207_Fire Cup concluded, attendees left with more than new connections, they carried a renewed sense of purpose. In an era where cannabis is increasingly commodified, events like the 207_Fire Cup safeguard the industry's heart: its people. "The 207_Fire Cup reminds us that cannabis isn't just a product; it's a movement," says Small. Every seed planted, every policy changed, is driven by respect for each other within the industry and

its community. For Minerva's, the road ahead is clear. "We'll keep innovating, but we'll never stop giving back," Small vows. "Our industry's strength is in its roots. And we are tasked to blazing the trail."

As the third annual "207_Fire Cup Competition" winds down, it was evident that this was more than a showcase of Dank Gas's excellence. It was a mirror reflecting the best of the cannabis world in small-town rural Maine and for highlighting all of the smaller craft growers, and the pride and quality of what they bring to the table through hard work and perseverance. In a world where success is measured not in profits alone, but in a shared purpose, there is real dignity. Where inclusion is an honor, and community is the ultimate prize.

As the sun sets on Detroit, Maine, and on the roof of this building, a community hub, Minerva stands strong in their mission for uniting the community

with one simple fitting phrase. "We grow together!" That says it all. In this little corner of rural Maine, the future of cannabis is bright, bold, and unwaveringly united. And the future of cannabis is in good hands!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE COMPETITORS IN THIS YEAR'S COMPETITION!

Writers Note:

You can find the winners: East Coast Hidden Jungle, Best Friend Farm, Funky Fuel, and Fish Meadows and all of this year's competitors on Instagram. And you can find their locations for products on Instagram by following: Minervas:@207_fire_crew, Best Friend Farm @bestfriendfarm, East Coast Hidden Jungle @eastcoadthiddenjungle, Funky Fuel @Funkyfuelcc, Fish Meadows @fish_meadow_chris @goldnroadextracts2.0 @brazenearthworx @cliffhousecannabisllc @hybridfarms @secretstash 🌿

FINAL RESULTS:

207_FIRE CUP 2025 INDOOR FLOWER - SATIVA



FIRST PLACE
S#2. FUNKY FUEL CC
"TROP CHERRY"
874.3 POINTS



SECOND PLACE
S#3. EAST COAST
HIDDEN JUNGLE
"SOAP"
867.8 POINTS



THIRD PLACE
S#1. SECRET STASH
"SUPER BOOF"
864 POINTS

207_FIRE CUP 2025 INDOOR FLOWER - INDICA



FIRST PLACE
I#5. FUNKY FUEL CC
"TRICHO JORDAN #3"
890.5 POINTS



SECOND PLACE
I#6. CLIFFHOUSE
CANNABIS LLC
"GARLIC COCKTAIL"
882.4 POINTS



THIRD PLACE
I#7. BRAZEN EARTHWORX
"LEZ BLUE RADO"
868.5 POINTS

207_FIRE CUP 2025 SOLVENTLESS



FIRST PLACE
R#2. BEST FRIEND FARMS
"GSL"
531.9 POINTS



SECOND PLACE
R#1. HYBRID FARMS
"TROP PIE EYES"
522 POINTS



THIRD PLACE
R#3. BEST FRIEND FARMS
"GAS-MO"
520 POINTS

207_FIRE CUP 2025 BEST PRE ROLL



FIRST PLACE
PR#6. FISH MEADOW
"\$OUR APPLE KILLER"
872.4 POINTS



SECOND PLACE
PR#5. FISH MEADOW
"BISCOTTI"
838.7 POINTS



THIRD PLACE
PR#3. TOMMY BLUNTS
"SUPER BOOF/ALIEN 1"
838.3 POINTS



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- George M.



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Boomer Alert: Two-Prong Approach to MCI

Managing Oxidative Stress and Boosting Neuroplasticity

By Eric I. Mitchell



*Eric I. Mitchell, MD MA FACP
AAPL is president and medical
director of Hemp Commodity In-
dustries, LLC.*

The Coming Epidemic

Here is the problem we need to solve! As of November 2024, there are around 830 million people aged 65 and older in the world. There are 64 million seniors over 65 in America at the time of this writing. 378,117 Mainers are enrolled in Medicare in Maine. This constitutes nearly 1/4 of Maine's total population, who are over 65 and rapidly growing. Dementia is growing with this population of seniors at an epidemic level and starts with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI).

There is growing evidence that suggests that a healthy Endocannabinoid System (ECS) can help prevent and treat a range of health conditions, including dementia related to age. The ECS is a complex neurotransmission regulatory system that is involved in a



wide range of physiological processes, including mood, appetite, pain sensation, and immune function. It is activated by cannabinoids, which are compounds which are made by the mammalian body and similar phytonutrients found in Cannabis and other plants.

One of the principal cannabinoids of the Cannabis sativa L plant is a phytocannabinoid known as cannabidiol (CBD) which comes from the cannabis plant. Most of us know this plant well as CBD is making the news every day as research continues to find more scientific relevance in this age-old plant. THC is the cannabinoid which has gotten most of the attention during this "cannabis renaissance."

The science community research of this plant restricted for over 50 years is now in warp-speed toward unlocking the science behind the myths. CBD has been denoted to promote an increase in neuroplasticity

as an (external) exogenous source regulating the ECS. Science has a lot of catch-up to do. The ECS primarily depends on two exogenous cannabinoids (made by our body's) which the body does not store but makes on demand. The reaction to stressors oftentimes requires supplementation from external (exogenous) sources to help the brain and body's ability to form new neural connections and adapt to changes. In this case, a ready supplement of CBD can serve as a strategic reserve. Having a ready supply is needed like we need daily vitamins supplied by dietary fruits and vegetables every day to meet our body's requirements. I would say that this is a pretty good reason to use CBD as a preventive disease modality, just like Vitamins A, B, C, etc.

Oxidative Stress

The human brain is a highly complex and active organ that is responsible for controlling virtually all bodily functions


and is essential for life. The brain's extensive neuron network and unique structure makes it one of the most energy consuming organs in the body, using about 20% of the body's energy even though it accounts for only 2% of the body's weight. This makes the brain an energy HOG!

As we strive to improve and maintain our cognitive health, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive strategy that addresses both the challenges of oxidative stress and the natural aging processes that impact our brain health. In this article, we will explore a two-prong approach to managing Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), focusing on detoxifying the brain from daily oxidative stress and enhancing neuroplasticity to slow down the aging cognitive process which is age related.

First Prong

The first prong of this





approach involves the effective management of oxidative stress, which is known to contribute significantly to cognitive decline. Oxidative stress occurs when there is an imbalance between the production of free radicals and the body's ability to neutralize them as a byproduct of energy production down to the foods we eat to run the brain. The approach to neutralize free radicals with antioxidants should be changed into prevention of free radical formation in the first place. Reducing the free radical formation should be more efficient than trying to neutralize free radicals after they have been produced. This approach of 'closing the barn door after the cow gets out' should be scientifically driven to a feasible solution. I will have more to say about this in the future as we attempt to reduce this coming dementia epidemic.

One promising solution to combating oxidative stress and promoting brain health is the daily intake of CBD. After my intense study of the whole concept of a vitamin and the need for the body to have this organic substance in order to perpetuate the efficacy of a biological system, the ECS, I named it as a Vitamin, 'VitaminCBD™' (VCBD). VCBD is a powerful antioxidant derived from cannabis, that has been shown to have neuroprotective properties and the potential to mitigate the damaging effects of oxidative stress on the brain. US Patent 6630507B1 spells out the National Institute of Health (NIH) research done by four government scientists, one a Nobel Laureate of Medicine back in 1999 to prove this point.

By incorporating VCBD as a vitamin into our daily routine, we can support our brain's natural defense mechanisms against oxidative stress and potentially reduce the risk of cognitive decline associated with MCI which leads to dementia. This simple yet effective step can help to cleanse the brain of harmful free radicals and create a more optimal environment for cognitive function. This above Patent that is held by Health and Human Services since 2003 also speaks to the neuroproliferation of brain connection with the use of this cannabinoid, VCBD.

Second Prong

The second prong of our approach involves enhancing neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. Neuroplasticity plays a crucial role in learning, memory, and overall cognitive function. To promote neuroplasticity and slow down the brain's aging process, we recommend taking part in a proven neuroplastic program, which is covered by Medicare and administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). You must be 65 years old and on Medicare to benefit from this program.



Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity, also known as brain plasticity, refers to the brain's ability to change and adapt throughout a person's life. This involves the reorganization of neural pathways, the formation of new connections, and sometimes the generation of new neurons. Neuroplasticity allows the brain to recover from injuries, adapt to new experiences, learn new information, and compensate for lost functions.

Yes, neuroplasticity can also be encouraged through various activities and therapies. Here are just a few: Engaging in new learning activities, such as reading, taking up a new hobby, or learning a new language stimulates the brain and encourages the formation of new neural connections. Regular physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, releases growth-promoting hormones, and enhances mood, all of which contribute to neuroplastic changes.

These are fundamental properties of the nervous system, enabling learning and memory formation. Engaging in social activities can stimulate brain activity and keep the brain adaptable and resilient. That 1999 research, mentioned above, spoke to the neuroproliferative function that CBD plays in the brain in the formation of glial cells in the brain to make these changes possible.

By incorporating these activities and therapies into daily routines, individuals can enhance their brain's plasticity, leading to improved cognitive abilities and overall brain health which also controls body balance to protect against falls.

Many people consume synthetic antioxidants in order to decrease oxidative stress and increase neuroplasticity, helping to modulate the aging process, and to extend our cognitive health-span. In the USA, supplements represent a market of over \$7 billion/year and exceed \$30 billion worldwide. This article will not discuss the consumer market for synthetic medications to reduce MCI but focus on a natural occurring plant-based additive like CBD and a Medicare program that you have paid into and have earned over your 65 years on Mother Earth!

Conclusion

This is where the old adage 'if you don't use it, you lose it' will prevail. One promising solution is this two-prong attack on reducing oxidative stress and secondly promoting brain health with the daily utilization of this Medicare program called CereSkills. Click on QR code to learn more.

Eric I. Mitchell, MD MA FAPE AAPL 



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New Hampshire House Passes Cannabis Legalization Bill

By AJ Harrington

The New Hampshire House of Representatives recently passed a bill to legalize the personal possession and use of recreational marijuana, although the measure does not legalize sales of cannabis. The measure, HB 75 from Republican Rep. Kevin Verville, was passed by a voice vote in the House on February 20, online cannabis news source Marijuana Moment reported. If passed, the bill would remove criminal penalties for possessing and using cannabis by adults aged 21 and older. The bill would not create a regulated cannabis industry or legalize sales of recreational marijuana. Public consumption of cannabis would remain illegal.

Cannabis would still be illegal for those under age 21. Those under age 21 caught using or possessing marijuana would be guilty of a violation. Minors found to be possessing or using cannabis would be referred for substance use disorders screening.

House Lawmakers Rally Colleagues For Votes

Prior to the vote on the bill, Democratic state Rep. Jodi Newell spoke in favor of the legislation, saying “the overwhelming majority of Granite Staters who implore this body to end the criminalization of cannabis, to end the fear of unnecessary disruption to people’s lives in the event that they find cannabis to be their nighttime sleep aid, their mood enhancer or their morning pick-me-up.”

“I stand asking you once again to pass legislation that would entrust our citizens over the age of 21 with the responsibility to consume cannabis, if they so choose, without fear of retribution from the state,” she said.

Newell told her colleagues that her husband died of a heroin overdose and that alcohol killed her brother, “but somehow we still maintain that our citizens cannot be trusted to consume cannabis responsibly, even as we know that it is virtually impossible to consume a lethal amount, and even as we know that cannabis is a much safer alternative to the substances that have taken the lives of my loved ones and likely many of yours.”

At a legislative hearing in early February, Democratic state Rep. Jared Sullivan noted that New Hampshire would not be the first state to legalize cannabis possession and use without legalizing sales

of marijuana. “There is precedent for this,” said Sullivan, according to a report from WMUR television news. “That’s exactly what Vermont did. They legalized it, and a few years later, they came back with a model on how they’re going to actually regulate the sale of it within the state.”

Final Passage Of New Hampshire Weed Legalization Bill Seems Unlikely

Republican state Rep. Terry Roy spoke against the bill, saying “if we decide to legalize marijuana, then we should do it correctly, in an orderly way.”

“I know we’ve tried in 50 different bills over the last few years. Nothing seems to go through, and let me tell you, this one ain’t gonna go through, either,” he added. “Let’s do it smart and do something that takes care of children, has guard rails and protections, not just throw it out there.” Last year, the New Hampshire Senate passed a bill to legalize cannabis, despite a vow from then-governor Chris Sununu to veto a marijuana legalization bill. His replacement, Republican Gov. Kelly Ayotte, has similarly indicated her opposition to legalizing recreational marijuana, making a veto of HB 75 likely if the measure makes it to her desk.





DEA Judge Pauses Cannabis Rescheduling Process

By AJ Harrington

A Drug Enforcement Administration judge has put on hold the proposal to reclassify cannabis under the nation's drug laws while supporters of rescheduling marijuana pursue an appeal of the agency's handling of the process. Administrative Law Judge John Mulrooney canceled a scheduled hearing on the Biden administration's plan to reschedule cannabis under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), effectively handing the process over to the new Trump administration.

Some advocates of the proposal to move marijuana from Schedule I of the CSA to Schedule III alleged in a motion filed with the administrative court that representatives of the DEA had colluded with opponents of the plan. In the filing, Village Farms International, Hemp for Victory and the Connecticut Office of the Cannabis Ombudsman asked that DEA Administrator Anne Milgram be removed as a supporter of rescheduling in the hearing process.

The organizations alleged in their filing that a high-ranking DEA had made improper communications with a group opposed to cannabis policy reform to help the group be chosen to participate in the process. Although Mulrooney denied the motion, he canceled a hearing scheduled for January 21 so that the cannabis rescheduling supporters could appeal his decision.

"I can no more remove or re-designate the Administrator than I can hold parties in contempt and fine them," Mulrooney wrote in his decision. "The strangeness of this unsupported approach is amplified by the fact that the appointment of a new DEA Administrator by a different political party is imminent."

Mulrooney added that if the allegations are true, at best, they would represent "a puzzling and grotesque lack of understanding and poor judgment from high-level officials at a major federal agency with a wealth of prior experience with the [Administrative Procedure Act]."

Under DEA regulations, Village Farms International and the others behind the filing are permitted to appeal Mulrooney's

denial of the motion to exclude Milgram. Mulrooney found in his ruling that allowing the parties to appeal before hearings proceed could "potentially avoid exceptional delay, expense or prejudice to the [designated participants] and the Government by injecting appellate certainty into the equation at this stage of proceedings."

Appeal Pauses Rescheduling Process

The rescheduling process is now paused pending the appeal. The DEA declined to comment on the delay when reached by reporters.

Pausing the rescheduling process is concerning to some supporters of the change, including many cannabis business owners, who stand to gain significant tax advantages if cannabis is rescheduled. Under current federal laws, businesses involved in selling Schedule I substances are denied most standard business tax deductions.

Jordan Tritt, founder and CEO of cannabis merchant bank and advisory firm the Panther Group, told The Hill that unexpected delays in the process were expected.

"We're not surprised by this," he said. "Ultimately, I do think that rescheduling will happen, and I think it's probably a good thing that a new administration is coming in."

Karen O'Keefe, director of state policies at the cannabis reform advocacy group the Marijuana Policy Project, said that the Trump administration could present a fresh start for cannabis legalization efforts.

"For the first time in decades, we have an incoming U.S. president who believes cannabis should be legal," O'Keefe said. "More than two-thirds of Americans support legalization, and most live in a legal cannabis state. Yet every cannabis consumer and every worker that serves them remains a federal criminal. If President Trump makes federal reform a priority, we could be at the cusp of historic progress."



Florida Activists File New Cannabis Legalization Initiative

By AJ Harrington

Cannabis activists in Florida have submitted a new initiative to legalize recreational marijuana, just two months after a similar measure failed to garner the super-majority of votes needed to pass in the November election. If approved for the ballot, voters will decide on the new initiative to legalize cannabis for adults in 2026. The group Smart & Safe Florida filed the initiative proposal with the state Division of Elections on Tuesday. If passed, the measure would legalize marijuana for adults aged 21 and older and establish a regulatory framework for the production and sale of recreational cannabis. Adults would be permitted to possess up to two ounces of cannabis and up to five grams of marijuana concentrates.

New Initiative Includes Changes To 2024 Legalization Measure
The new initiative includes several changes compared to the 2024 ballot measure that are designed to address criticisms of the failed initiative. In one such criticism, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis argued that the measure would block the state legislature from passing laws about where cannabis can be consumed. Under the new initiative, “smoking and vaping of marijuana in any public place is prohibited,” CBS News reported on January 16. The new measure also prohibits “marketing and packaging of marijuana in a manner attractive to children.”

“I think this is good news,” Paula Savchenko, an attorney who specializes in cannabis law, said Wednesday during a phone interview with the Florida News Service. “I think it’s really smart that they did address the issues that he did have, and so hopefully he’s more receptive to something like this in the future.”

The new measure also states that nothing in the initiative would “prohibit the legislature from providing for the home growing of marijuana by adults for their personal use and the reasonable regulation thereof,” according to a report from online cannabis news source Marijuana Moment. Some advocates of cannabis policy reform criticized last year’s ballot measure for failing to include a provision that would allow adults to grow cannabis at home. Nearly 56% of voters supported Amendment 3, the cannabis legalization initiative that appeared on Florida ballots in the November general election. However, the measure fell short of the 60% of votes needed to pass under Florida state law. The measure was largely supported by Trulieve, the state’s biggest supplier of medical marijuana.

Like Amendment 3, the new initiative allows Florida’s current

medical cannabis operators to sell recreational weed products to adults aged 21 and older. The proposal also requires the legislature to license new cannabis businesses that only sell recreational marijuana.

Proponents To Begin Collecting Signatures

Smart & Safe Florida plans to begin gathering the nearly 900,000 signatures from registered voters needed to place the measure on the ballot. If enough signatures are gathered and the state Supreme Court approves the language in the initiative, voters will decide on the proposal next year.

“When enough signatures are gathered to put this measure on the 2026 ballot, and upon Supreme Court approval, Floridians will have the opportunity to vote for adults over the age of 21 to have the ability to access the same freedom enjoyed by over half the country in consuming safe, lab-tested cannabis products in their own homes,” Smart & Safe Florida said in an emailed statement cited by the Tallahassee Democrat.





House Lawmaker Files Bill To Protect VA Benefits of Medical Cannabis Patients

By AJ Harrington



A House lawmaker recently filed the first cannabis bill of the new Congress with the introduction of legislation to protect the veterans benefits of medical marijuana patients. The measure, H.R. 966, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 4 by Republican Rep. Greg Steube of Florida.

Also known as the “Veterans Cannabis Use for Safe Healing Act,” Steube has introduced different versions of the bill during the last several Congresses. The new bill, which is identical to the last two versions of the measure, would protect military veterans from losing government benefits because of their use of medical cannabis in compliance with state law. The legislation would also codify that doctors with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are permitted to discuss the potential benefits and risks of medical cannabis.

Under current VA policy, physicians are permitted to discuss medical cannabis with patients and document their use in patient medical records. Veterans are also protected by agency policy from losing their benefits based on their use of cannabis. The legislation, however, would give these policies the power of law and protect the benefits of cannabis patients from any potential future changes of VA policy.

“As a veteran, I’m committed to ensuring that veterans receive the care they deserve, and I know that sometimes that care can include medical marijuana,” Steube said in a statement to Marijuana Moment when he filed the last version of the legislation. “Receiving the appropriate treatment to address your health care needs—using products that are legal in the state in which you live—should not preclude you from your

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.”

Bill Omits Earlier Provision Allowing VA Doctors To Write MMJ Recommendations

Earlier versions of Steube’s bill were more comprehensive in their scope and included a provision specifically allowing VA physicians to write medical cannabis recommendations for their patients. But recent versions of the legislation including this year’s bill do not include this provision, maintaining the need for veterans to seek a recommendation to use medical cannabis from an outside medical provider. This requirement for a non-VA physician to write medical cannabis recommendations can be a barrier to access for some patients, who must usually bear the cost of such consultations.

Steube’s office previously indicated that the provision allowing VA doctors to write medical cannabis recommendations was removed from an earlier version of the bill in 2020 in order to advance the legislation as an amendment to another bill through a House committee.

Research has shown that most military veterans support expanding access to medical cannabis. Survey data compiled by researchers at Ohio State University and published in 2023 explored the views of 315 active and veteran military personnel and 426 military family members. An analysis of the data found that 79% of veteran respondents and 92% of their families said that said, “Veterans Administration doctors should be legally allowed to recommend marijuana to veterans if the doctor believes the patient could benefit from [it.]” 🌿



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