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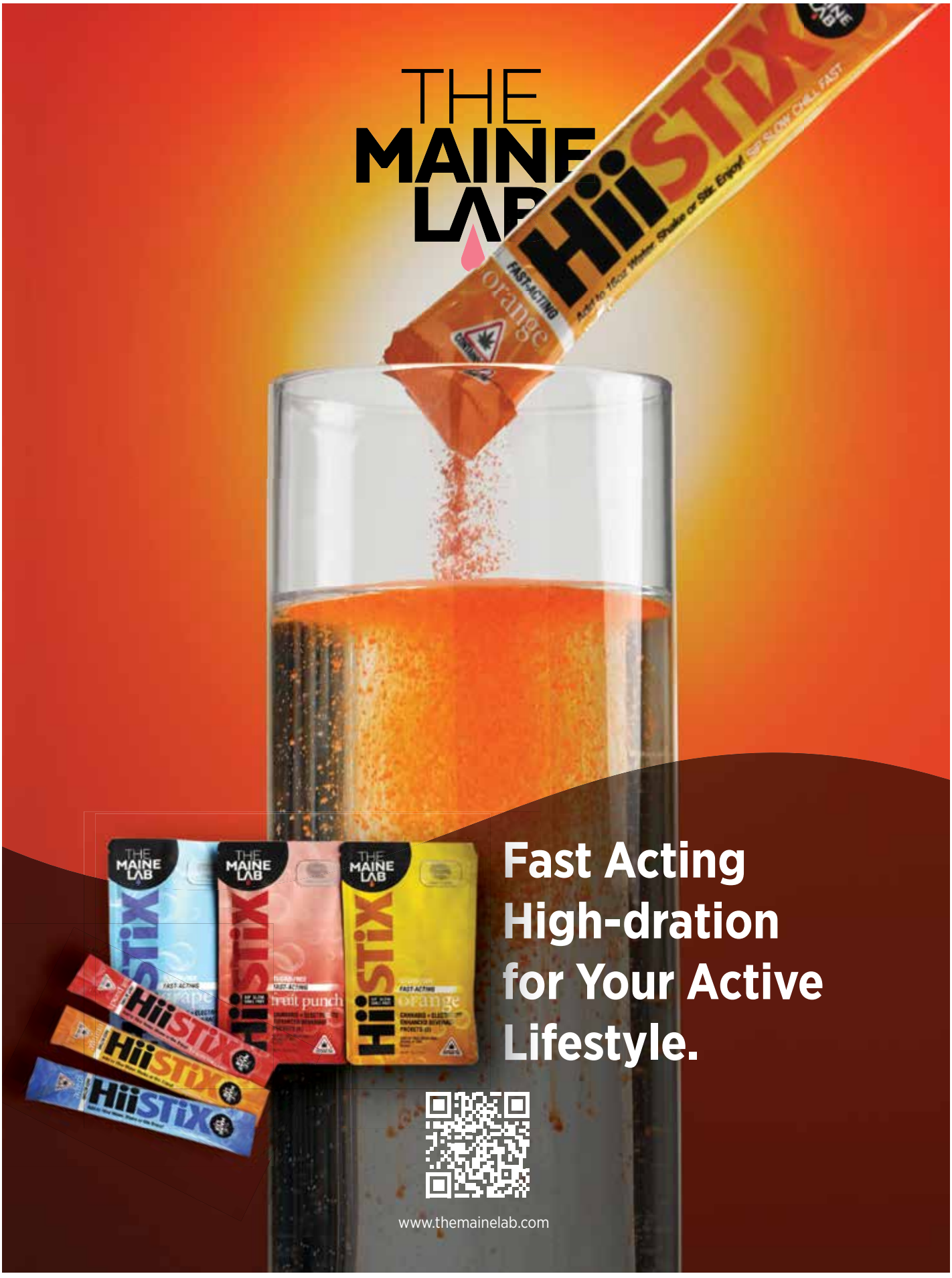
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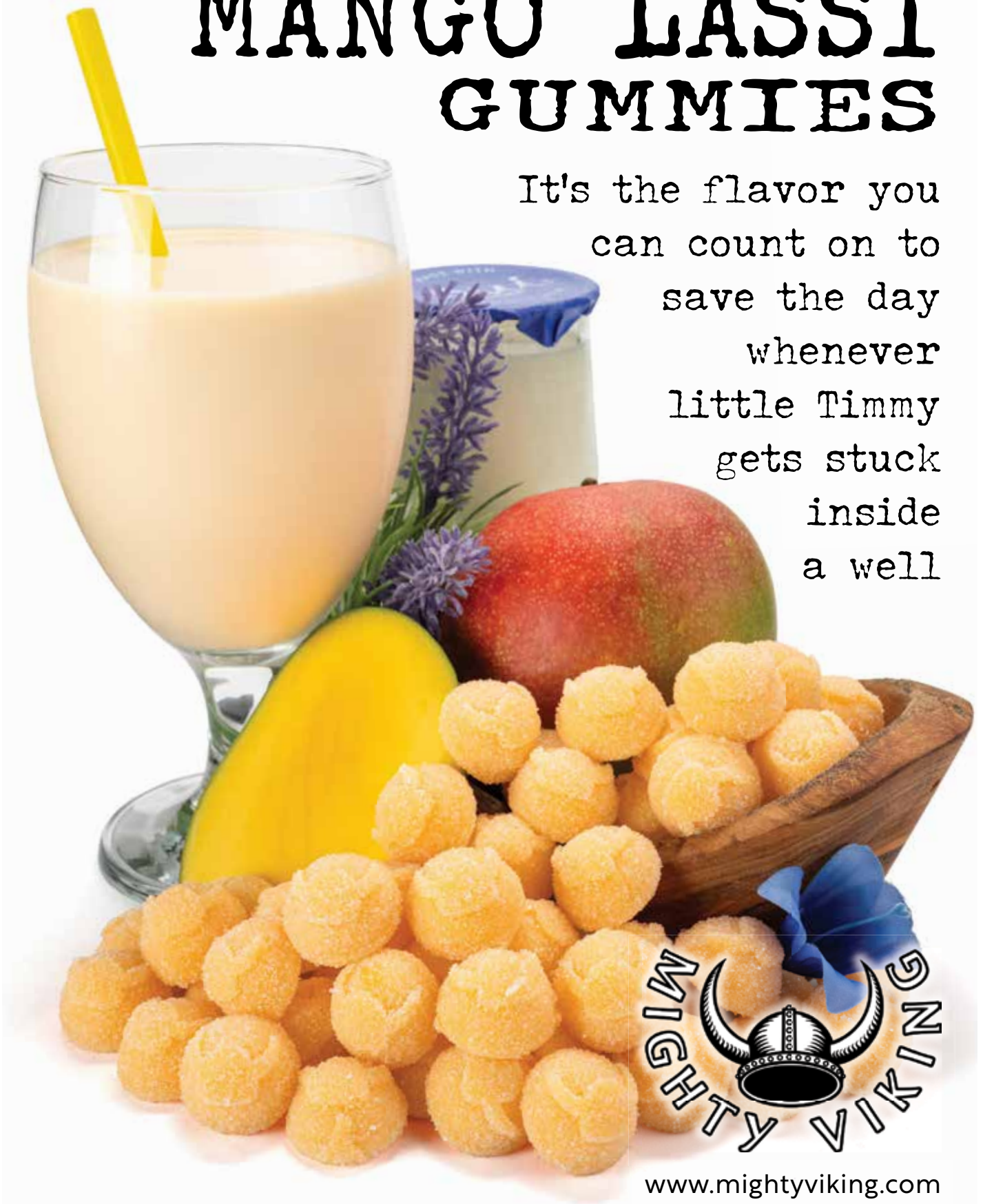

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FEATURES

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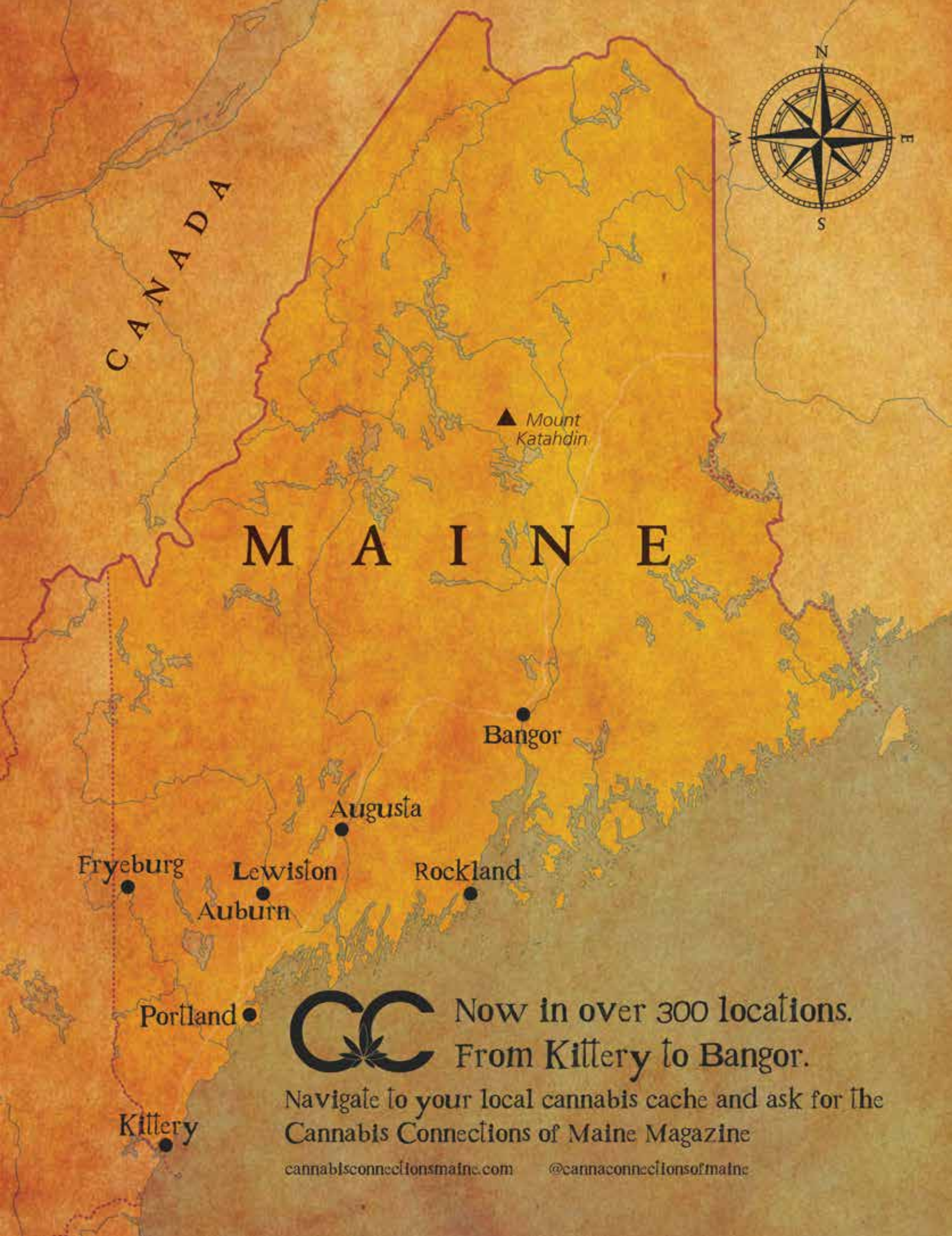


Blowin' SMOKE

With Jeff Cutler

Harvesting Co-Tokers

When I moved to my new home thirty—eight months ago, I enthusiastically embraced everything around me. Although the city was 2/3 smaller than my previous hometown, it offered a sense of solace and belonging immediately.

People were, and are, friendly and fun. The shoppes are quaint, and the availability of cannabis is pretty unmatched.

As a medical card holder, finding a nearby pot shop isn't hard. The reality is that cannabis stores now outnumber Dunkin' Donuts restaurants 5 to 1!

That last statistic should be treated as a lie because it is. But it seems as if there are more places to buy weed than places to get a donut.

So, finding pot wasn't an issue in the least. Varieties, plants, clones, shatter, sugar, distillate, joints, drinks and more were easily available. The problem I am still running into after three years in Maine is finding my toke tribe.

Seriously, even though I can drive 700 yards to the closest pot shop, I have to drive 154 miles to find a friend to enjoy a joint with.

I do not think I am deluded, but in addition to trying to break through the reserved Maine attitude I now had to locate folks who might want to split a joint from time to time.

It was not easy.

In the same way that a farmer evaluates cattle or corn or other crops, I was trying to select a group of people I could get a little high with. Nothing crazy, but as I treated my anxiety with medical marijuana, I realized a couple of things.

Marijuana is not fully legal for consumption/combustion in public places. Oh, you will smell it and almost taste it at any outdoor venue or event in Maine, but it is not 'acceptable.'

So where can you gather if you are planning to play by the rules? That is the challenge, isn't it? Even if you are growing your own and enjoying it at the firepit in your back yard, you still cannot be sure you are not 'affecting' others.

In the past, you would gather at a basketball court in the local park. You'd find a parking lot at the boat launch. The cemeteries were perfect, no live people to rat you out.

Over eight months, I spent time in nearly every restaurant within a 30—mile radius of Damariscotta, ME.

If you are not familiar, Damariscotta is on the riverbank of the Damariscotta River and is about 71 minutes from Portland, Maine if you drive the speed limit.

Searching for tokers

Following up, after perusing about 37 venues and whittling the list down to a dozen favorites, I have realized about half a dozen truths. These are not global, they are not brilliant, they are just my musings about the ways in which humans can enjoy cannabis together.

I would like people these days to be able to enjoy a joint angst—free. Not feel guilty. And not have to change your pattern or their routine every six or seven weeks. This is the way I see myself enjoying cannabis society over the next couple of months.

I want to learn more. I want to meet more people with the same interests. I want to get high.

First off, I am going to expand my horizons. Every year, cannabis farms are going further with grafts and new strain characteristics.

How much better can it get? Talk to a horticulturist focused on weed and you will see we have much further to go.

Do some learning

A friend of mine cries loudly all the time about cannabis THC percentages; the relative strengths of grass, distillate and hash derivatives; the pricing of cartridges and other products (how can one place sell a 510 cart for $10 when everyone else sells it for $40?); and the acceptance of this medicinal practice.

He wants to know why he is paying for a medical card if he is not being given the ingredients list to his pot. He thinks he's being fooled into paying for oregano. And maybe he is.

Where is the pot FDA? Should we continue on this path without protection? And if people aren't being held to a harvest or a quality or a product standard, how can we be sure we're getting the medical and social benefits of our weed?

In all, we're looking for the same thing. We want consistency across brands and harvests. We want to be able to compare apples to apples instead of doing the experimentation ourselves. Seriously.

Find your tribe

OMG. Could there be any saying triter? I mean, my tribe would have to be middle—aged men who drive electric cars, love candy, and think they should be recognized for their karaoke prowess.

So, you're probably not looking for me. But maybe you are. And that's the beauty of the toker tribe. When you find people, you can relax with and enjoy their company, you've already won.

It doesn't matter if they've got a pocket full of disposable vapes or a 10mg edible, they have your back. You are tied by similar goals

and by similar emotions and effects. It is an odd feeling. Almost like developing an unspoken language with your mate or siblings.

I mean, the people closest to you are aware of how you are feeling without even asking a question. And you need not say a word. They know you. Intimately. They know what you want and what drives you. And this is what we're all striving for in our cannabis community.

Spread a Wide Net

It is a proven fishing adage — spread a wide net for a hefty harvest. Well, the same is true in the world of developing your dabbing friends. If you want folks to vape with, puff with and ultimately get high with, you need to take a wider look.

According to a Midcoast bartender — familiar with the marijuana habits of the community — people these days need to look farther. Physically and psychologically. Essentially, he says, everything we knew about casual pot smoking and getting high was borked by Covid.

You can't share a joint as easily anymore. People are less trusting. The pursuit of a high is back to being a bit fringe. And while it is moved from the mainstream, cannabis is coming back. The challenge is finding your people — the folks who want a PBR and a dog—walker joint — because they have gotten more careful.

I am here today to tell you that this perspective is only in your mind. Even with the madness going on in this world, there is a HUGE audience of folks willing to 'get well' with you.

You will find them at the riverbanks; campgrounds; festivals; celebrations; gatherings; historical events; and everywhere in—between. The people who want to get high are constant.

The only change this fall is another harvest — and that is hardly a change. It is a good thing. We see more strains, more grafts, more distillate, more innovation. As this fall wraps up and the harvest has been captured and collected, you would best be served to find a way to enjoy.

In my eyes, the word 'FALL' is a misnomer. It is the red sheet in front of the bull. It is the quarter your uncle pulls from behind your ear. Fall is a season of standing tall, not falling.

So, when the harvest is here, take the time to breathe. Breathe in the vape, the sugar, the shatter, the joint, the entire experience. Harvest time is special, and if I can share a thought, if this whole journey with cannabis isn't special, then what is it all for?

See you out there, I hope you have found your tribe. BTW — glad to smoke with you, reach out with details. Maybe Cannabis Connections can make it happen.

Jeff

Blowin' SMOKE
With Jeff Cutler

MEDICAL MARIJUANA CAREGIVERS OF MAINE

MMCM: Building Maine's Caregiver Program Through Unity, Advocacy, and Education

Since its establishment in 2010, the Medical Marijuana Caregivers of Maine (MMCM) has stood at the heart of Maine's medical cannabis caregiver program, evolving from a grassroots trade association into a vital force in policy, education, and community empowerment. Formed in response to restrictive rules that threatened patient protections and caregiver access, MMCM united caregivers, patients, and advocates around a shared commitment to keep compassionate care accessible to Mainers that need it!

Early on, MMCM brought the community together through events like the 2011 Home Grown Maine Trade Show, one of Maine's first caregiver trade shows and introducing the state's first municipally sanctioned vaporizer tent for patients. This groundbreaking event laid the foundation for today's Maine Cannabis Expos — a place where caregivers can meet directly with patients, share knowledge, and showcase small craft growers alongside larger operators.

Through the years, MMCM has grown to serve hundreds of members, with many different board members and volunteers lending their energy and expertise. Many of these leaders have gone on to make significant contributions across Maine's cannabis industry and beyond. This evolution underscores a core truth: when people work together, great things happen.

MMCM's legislative accomplishments are among its proudest achievements. In 2011, the organization helped restore voter intent by making patient registration optional and strengthening privacy protections. In 2014, reforms expanded access by allowing nurse practitioners and physician assistants to certify patients, which was especially critical in rural Maine. But the most transformative moment came in 2018, when MMCM members themselves wrote and advanced LD 1539 and LD 238—the Patients' Bill of Rights. This landmark legislation, built directly from the input of caregivers and patients, reshaped the entire

program. LD 1539 opened up staffing, storefronts, expanded cultivation rights, and reinforced patient protections. LD 238 authorized large-scale processing, laying the groundwork for today's caregiver processors and the broader medical cannabis market. These were not simply bills MMCM supported—they were drafted in MMCM's own office by caregivers and patients, for caregivers and patients, and lobbied through the legislature by MMCM's team.

This relentless work earned Maine national recognition. Americans for Safe Access once ranked Maine's medical cannabis program the "Best in the Nation," pointing to the state's caregiver model and MMCM's advocacy as key reasons. That honor reflects years of grassroots organizing, patient-centered education, and the belief that access should be for people, not profits.

But the fight is not finished. MMCM continues to push back against proposals that would undermine the foundation of Maine's medical cannabis program. In more recent years, MMCM has consistently stood up against OCP bills that would require the medical community to adopt the Adult-Use framework of the costly and compromised Metric track and trace system, and its unsubstantiated, knowingly flawed testing protocols. One of the most urgent threats today is the push for overly strict testing formats—rules that, while framed as safety measures, are not backed by science and would cripple small caregivers and hand the industry to monopolies. Safe medicine for all patients has always been a priority of the association. MMCM continues to press for science-based, affordable standards that protect patients without destroying Maine's unique, local, small-craft growers.

At the same time, new fronts of advocacy are emerging from all across the cannabis landscape. Bills supporting veterans' rights to cannabis access seek to guarantee compassionate care for those who have served America bravely. Efforts continue to try to heal the damage that prohibition has inflicted on the lives that have been upended by the failed "drug war." And proposals for on-site consumption legislation that would finally provide safe, legal environments where patients and adults can use cannabis without stigma or penalty.

Today, as a federally recognized nonprofit, MMCM continues to provide education, training, and advocacy, while standing firm against policies that threaten caregivers or burden patients. Whether defending privacy, expanding affordable access, or advancing new reforms for veterans, equity, and on-site use, MMCM remains the backbone of Maine's caregiver program.

Supporting MMCM means honoring the hundreds of members, leaders, and volunteers, along with thousands of patients who have carried this movement forward over the years and ensures that the future of Maine's cannabis program remains in the hands of the many diverse people who built it. Together, we've proven that Maine can set the national standard. And together, with the battles ahead, we will continue to do so. If you'd like to join us, please reach out at *mmcmaine@gmail.com.*

HERBALIST *corner*

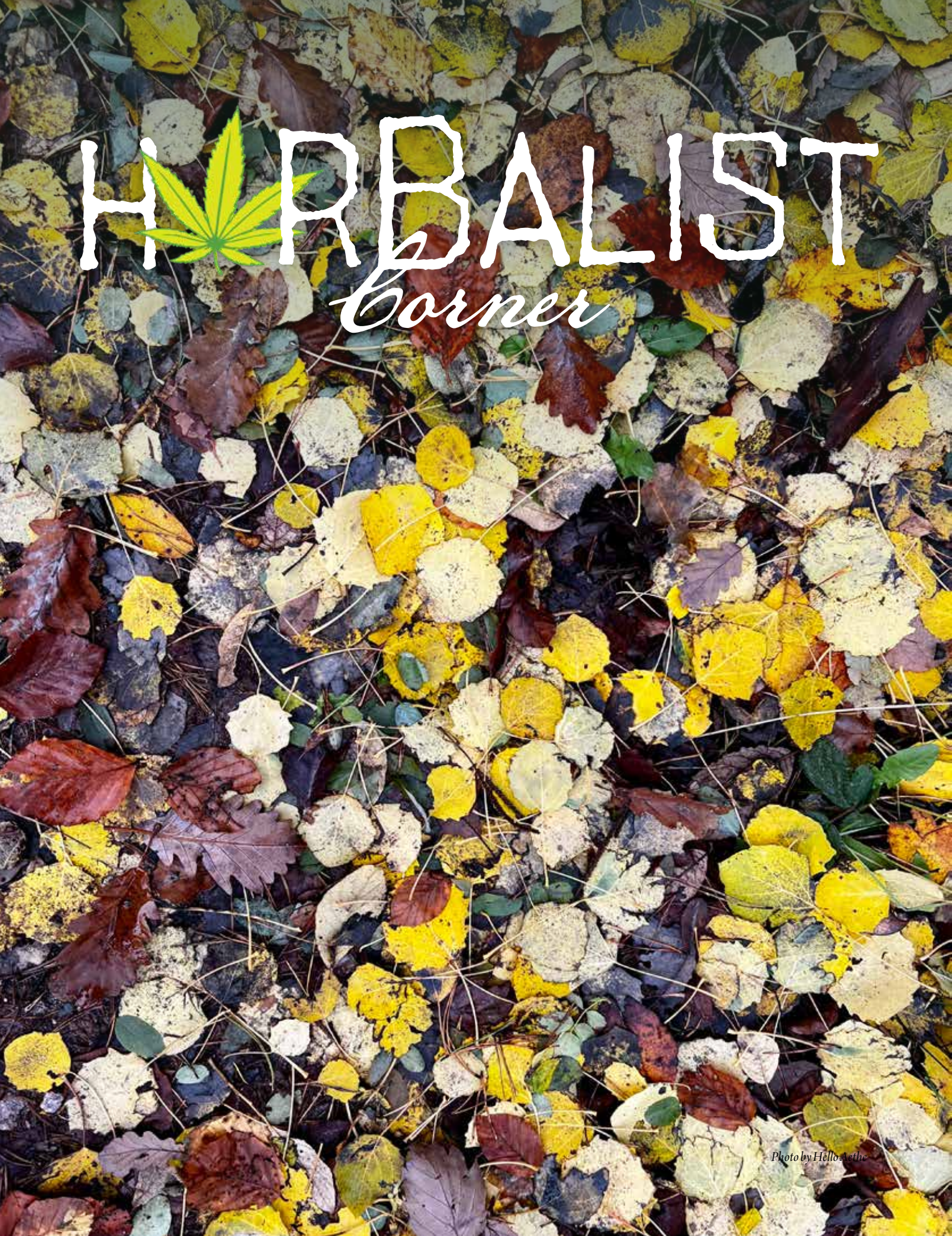


Photo by Hello Aethe

Croptober Harvest in Maine

By Beverly Ann Soucy

October in Maine is a season that feels alive in your bones. The mornings now come with frost, the maple trees start to turn scarlet and gold, and the air itself seems to hum with change, those hums a tell-tale sign of things to come. It is a month of endings and beginnings all at once. For cannabis growers, it's the moment of truth, the grand finale if you will, after months of watching over seedlings like they are your little children, coaxing them through storms, fighting off bugs, and defending each of them from long stretches of summer heat with the potential to take down all your efforts after just a few days in the hot sun. Come October, the buds get fat and heavy, the trichomes glisten, and the whole garden smells like a feast waiting to be rolled in.

Oktoberfest, at its heart, has always been about gathering, feasting, dancing, rituals and raising a glass to the harvest. So why not blend that tradition with Maine's cannabis culture. October is not just about beer it is about herbs, too. For centuries, German households brewed teas, bitters, and schnapps with herbs like valerian, chamomile, and juniper to celebrate the turning of the season. Maine's herbalists do much the same with wild-foraged plants like goldenrod, elderberry, mullein, comfrey, and yarrow. And now, cannabis finds its rightful place at that table, an herb of healing, wellbeing and yes, ritual.

Cannabis and beer actually share a family tree. Both hops (Humulus lupulus) and cannabis (Cannabis sativa) belong to the Cannabaceae family. That's why the scent of a particularly piney IPA might remind you of a jar of fresh flower. The terpenes, those aromatic compounds that give cannabis its flavor, show up in hops too. Myrcene, humulene, and pinene cross-pollinate the senses, bridging beer steins and bong bowls in one happy family reunion.

Harvest is not simply a task; it's a ritual. In Germany, they have Oktoberfest, with beer tents, sausages, music, dancing and laughter spilling into the night. In Maine, we have something much different but kindred to the timing; let's call it a "Cropktoberfest." Instead of fiddles and polka, maybe it's a Bluetooth speaker and old rock n roll. Instead of steins of beer, it's mugs of warm cider with a splash of tincture and a bud or two or a sprig of rosemary as a garnish. Instead of sausages sizzling on the grill and homemade pretzels, it's homemade pizza on a cast iron pan over a wood fire, with an herbal drizzle made from the very plants you just cut down and trimmed.

The days are long this time of year. You wake up while the frost is still clinging to the grass, your favorite mug of coffee in hand, and walk out to check your crop. Maybe the sun is breaking through, sparkling, and showing off those trichomes that you've been inspecting with your loupe every single day, waiting for that cloudy-to-amber shift that says: "Now. It's time." It feels ceremonial when you cut the first branch, sticky resin gluing your gloves, the scent so thick you can almost taste it and you do just that, breaking off a tip to chew on while you continue your inspection. Each cut is a Thanksgiving, an offering to the grow gods, the months of work behind you and the months of enjoyment ahead. At this time of year you are racing against the weather too. A hard frost can spell disaster. Moisture from rain and morning dew is the enemy, inviting botrytis (bud rot) to silently creep in and claim your prize. We watch the weather forecasts like day traders watch the stock market, our moods shifting daily with the predicted lows. The garden becomes a theatre, and we are the anxious directors, waiting for the precise moment to yell "Action!" and begin the final act.

But harvesting is only half the journey. The real work begins with trimming, and trimming is its own universe. The uninitiated imagine it as quick work, snipping leaves here and there. But anyone who has sat down at a trimming table or in the grow on folding chairs for hours and even days, knows the truth: it's tedious hours upon hours, your scissors gumming up with resin, your fingers sticking together, time itself slowing to a crawl. Yet there's something almost holy about it all. Trimming alone, it can be meditative, snip, snip, snip, each bud a little jewel in your hand. Trimming with friends, it becomes a harvest party, the air thick with laughter and smoke, with drinks and food, and the steady rhythm of scissors.

The tools matter. Sharp, spring-loaded scissors that don't cramp your hand. A bottle of isopropyl alcohol to keep the blades clean. Gloves, unless you're the kind who prefers to rub the resin into sticky finger hash. A trim bin or rolling tray to catch the sugar leaves, because nothing is wasted, those leaves will find their way into teas, edibles, or tinctures. A good lamp, so you don't miss a single sugar leaf tucked in. A playlist that keeps the energy moving. And endless snacks, both sweet and salty and yes, beverages.

While the scissors move, life moves with them. Storytelling is the main attraction. Those stories about that one time someone lost power in the middle of drying season and had to scramble with generators, or the tale of the plant that grew taller than the barn roof, or simply memories of summer afternoons when the plants were still green and full of promise or that time where you caught someone trying to break into your grow late at night and the escapade that followed. Trim parties carry the same spirit as old-fashioned barn raisings or quilting circles: work becomes lighter when shared and your harvest is richer when celebrated with friends.

Outside, the fire keeps burning. October nights in Maine call for it as the weather changes and the nights get so much cooler. Add to it all the warmth and comfort of a good fire pit. That fire is more than ambiance. Around it, food takes shape. Cast-iron pots and metal screens come out. The pots for cooking down the apples from a local orchard for canning up while you are trimming or filled with tomatoes for putting up those jars of pizza sauce for wintertime. The screens for cooking up hot dogs and burgers and corn on the cob for the trimming party. Or perhaps someone slides a pizza stone into the flames, and suddenly the air smells of roasted garlic, charred pizza crust, and melted cheese. It's an outdoor pizza party, born out of harvesting, a necessity for quick food that feeds the trimming crew but raised to an art form with the addition of herbs for flavoring. The pizzas vary by the hour: one with roasted squash and sage, another with caramelized onions and mushrooms, and always a stoner special piled high with whatever toppings are left. Drizzle a little cannabis-infused olive oil over the top, and suddenly dinner is part of the harvest itself.

It is around this fire that the trim work and the celebration blend into one big event. The trimmers take breaks, plates in hand, joints tucked behind ears. Someone puts on a rock n roll playlist and cranks it up. Laughter rises louder than the flames, and for a moment, you forget that you still have hours of sticky scissors ahead. The fire feeds the food, the food feeds the people, and the people feed the laughter and the day rolls into one big, long trim party.

Meanwhile, for some of us the alchemy of tincture-making begins. Glass jars are sterilized then filled with fresh flower, covered in high-proof alcohol or vegetable glycerin. Cinnamon sticks, cloves, maybe a slice of ginger or star anise gets thrown in, turning each tincture into a little potion of goodness. The jars are labeled, sealed, and set aside, medicine in the making, preparation for the months ahead. Some will become drops slipped under the tongue, others blended into cider or tea, and a few poured into cocktails that create warmth for those winter months the likes of mulled wine or hot chocolate on a cold snowy night.

Teas take their place too. Cannabis mingled with chamomile, valerian, lavender, peppermint, or goldenrod. A splash of cream or coconut oil to help the cannabinoids bind. Steam rising from mugs as hands warm around them. Tea at harvest isn't just about consumption; it's about comfort, and wellbeing and most of all about grounding. Every sip says: "Rest now. You've earned this."

And through it all, the drying rooms fill fast. Drying is the quiet, patient part of harvest, the waiting game if you will, that determines whether the months of labor will truly shine. The branches hang in the dark, cool space, air gently moving but never too much as to skew cure that precious bud, humidity held steady around 55%. You resist the urge to rush, even though the jars on the shelf are calling your name. Seven days, ten days, sometimes fourteen. You wait until stems snap instead of bend. You learn patience all over again, the same patience you practiced while waiting for summer to ripen the plants. The same patience you had for all of the trimming. And when the day comes that the buds move from branch to jar, you know you've done right by them.

There is a rhythm to it all. Mornings inevitably start with frost, afternoons are filled with scissors and smoke, evenings filled with fire and food, and late nights end with jars lined up like trophies on the counter to be revered. It's the cycle of October in Maine. The work is endless, yes, but it's also very satisfying. Because every bud trimmed, every tincture bottled up, every pizza slice eaten and shared by the fire is part of a much bigger picture. It's not just about cannabis. It's about community and accomplishments!

And that is why this time of year deserves its own kind of holiday "Cropktoberfest." The Germans knew it long ago that harvest needs celebration. That we must feast, sing and dance, raise our glasses, and give thanks. Mainers know it as well. Ony here in Maine, we simply shift the details. Our steins may be filled with cider instead of beer and our feast may include infused pretzels and roasted vegetables or a great pizza over an open fire, our music may be on a Bluetooth speaker instead of fiddle players, but the heart of it all is the same. It is an homage of sorts to the land, to the plants, to the sun and rain, and most of all to the people who share the work and the reward.

Imagine it: a barn strung with lights, shelves lined with jars of flower and tinctures, platters of food steaming, a fire roaring outside, and a circle of friends trimming, laughing, singing into the night. That is Croptoberfest in Maine. Not a festival with tents and tickets, but something more intimate, more basic. A gathering of friends for tedious trimming and for all the stories told and all of the food and drinks shared. It is a community of the very best kind.

And as the season ends and as the last leaves fall and the first true cold snaps arrive, the pantry shelves are full, the jars sealed, all of us weary but so satisfied. Winter will inevitably come, but you're ready. You have the medicine, the food, the memories of firepit nights and time spent with friends. The harvest is in, the work is done, and for the long months ahead all of it will carry you through the tediousness long forgotten as you light up on a cold winter night in your favorite slippers remembering it all.

So, this October, by all means, raise a glass. Or a joint. Or your favorite glass bong. Or a steaming mug of cannabis-infused apple cider that's going to hit you right in the soul. Celebrate the season with the gusto of a German festival, or with the wild, grateful abandonment we Mainers specialize in. Or maybe you are celebrating quietly and with appreciation. No mater your choice, most of all, celebrate like a cannabis grower: with a back that's finally stopped aching, a heart full of pride for the work completed and for getting through yet another season and fingers that are still slightly sticky no matter how many times you wash them. Let that sweet, earthy smell of the season's harvest cling to the air and to your favorite flannel for just a little while longer.

Cannabis-Infused Apple Cider (Mocktail or Cocktail)

Perfect for sipping on a crisp October afternoon or at any time as the weather turns colder.

Ingredients:

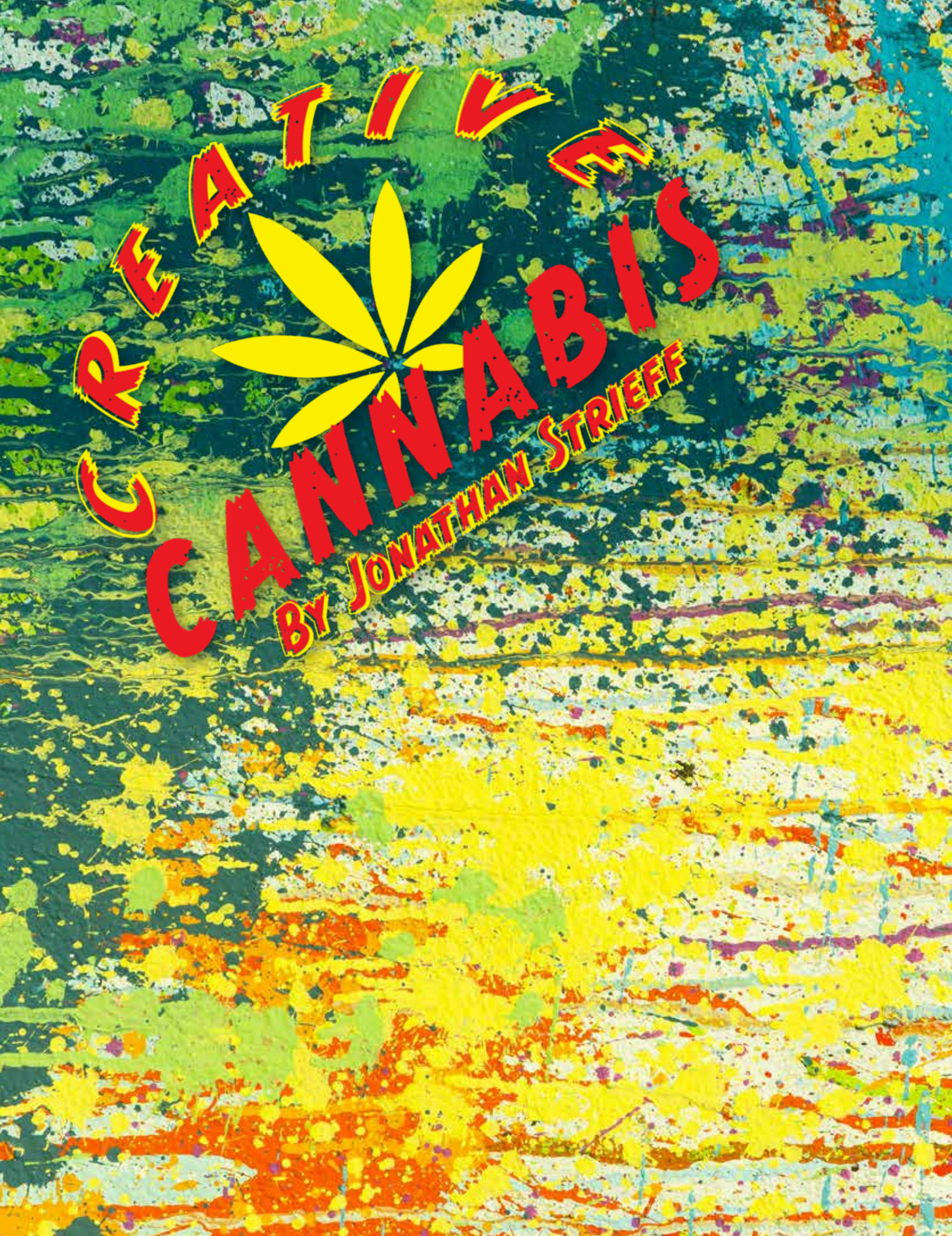
- 4 cups fresh apple cider (local orchards make the best or maybe you are making your own)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cloves
- 1 star anise
- 1 slice fresh ginger
- Cannabis tincture (alcohol or glycerin-based)
- Optional: a splash of spiced rum or bourbon

Directions:

1. Heat cider with spices until steaming (but don't boil).
2. Strain into mugs.
3. Add a dropperful of cannabis tincture to each cup, adjusting for your preferred potency.
4. For the adults who want an extra kick, add a splash of rum or the best bourbon you can afford and enjoy!

As for me? I am celebrating by doing absolutely nothing. Well, almost nothing. A single, perfect sugar leaf tucked behind my ear, a fragrant little souvenir from the past frantic weeks. I guess even when it's over, the harvest still has a way of sticking with you. And you know what? I would not have it any other way. And just maybe, as cannabis becomes more mainstream, maybe one day Maine will host its own official "Cannabis Cropktoberfest," complete with growers' competitions, infused food trucks, herbal medicine tents, demonstrations, and music that carries on until the sun comes up. Until then, each backyard harvest party, each circle of friends trimming buds and sipping cider, keeps that tradition alive and if that day ever does come you will have read all about here first!

I will leave you with a simple little recipe for using up those end-of-season apples. Cheers to your health and happiness. Go ahead and pat yourselves on the back for another great harvest. Well done! Happy Croptober, everyone.


CREATIVE
CANNABIS
By Jonathan Strieff

Edible Alchemy

By Jonathan Strieff

At the beginning of every harvest season, I'm reminded of words of wisdom that I learned while visiting a black-market grower 15 years ago in California's "Emerald Triangle."

"The first pound you trim is always fun!"

The implication being that no matter how much you love weed, how good your audiobook or the companions you trim with, after the novelty of processing fresh, beautiful buds wears off, all that's left is carpel tunnel-inducing tedium.

Fortunately, most home growers should be able to meet their annual personal use needs long before trimming starts to feel arduous. Many outdoor strains, tended well in the growing season, should reliably produce two pounds or more per plant. The question then becomes how best to preserve the rest of the harvest?

Since the relaxation of cannabis prohibition in America, countless enterprising individuals have sought out innovative techniques for infusing alternative delivery vehicles with the psychoactive oils from the plant we know and love. Anyone can toss a bag of ground up shake into a box of Betty Crocker Brownie batter, but with some simple kitchen tools and a willingness to follow a recipe, it's just as easy to prepare delicious cannabis infused dishes that will blow your mind before the effects even hit.

Cannabutter

The goal of the infusion process is simple: to transfer the resinous oils responsible for getting you high from the plant matter

into something else. Molecularly, cannabinoids are considered "hydrophobic," meaning they do not emulsify with water. But they adhere easily to the lipids present in various fats. Saturated fats that remain solid at room temperature – butter, coconut oil, lard – seem to absorb cannabis oils from the plants more completely than liquid oils, but the difference is negligible. Ingesting the oils via fat also makes them more bioavailable than smoking, giving the same amount of THC a stronger effect.

For large batches of butter or oil, a crock pot set to the lowest temperature can be used to infuse several pounds at a single time. Just set it and forget it. Two hours is typically enough to make a potent extraction without burning off the more volatile flavors in the terpenes, for smaller batches, all that's needed is a canning pot, some mason jars, and a mesh strainer or cheese cloth.

Mix one cup (two sticks) of melted butter, coconut oil, olive oil or other fat of your choosing with three or four grams of ground bud in a one-pint mason jar. Simmer the jars on high heat in a hot water bath for two hours, checking the water regularly and adding more as needed. After the first hour, "burp" the jar to release the built-up pressure and recap it. After two hours, remove the jars from the hot water and allow to cool. Strain out the plant matter, making sure to wring out every last drop, and transfer to a clean container for storage. Depending on the potency of the strain, your infused butter will have 4-6 milligrams of THC per teaspoon.

Infused Cream (Bhang)

While different from the traditional Hindi edible, infused cream or non-dairy substitutes can offer an exciting ingredient that goes beyond the typical dosed baked goods. Homemade ricotta cheese, ice cream, nacho sauce, or cream filled pastries can all be enhanced with cannabis infusion. For dairy alternatives, make sure the milk contains at least 4 grams of fat per serving or the infusion will not be successful.

Using a double boiler, combine one cup of heavy cream with seven grams of ground and decarboxylated trim and flower. Cook for 30 minutes, stirring often to avoid scalding. Remove from heat and strain out the solids. The resulting infusion contains about 11 milligrams of THC per tsp and can be stored in the refrigerator for up to four days. Add to your morning

coffee or whip it and drop a cherry on top.

Nitrous Green Dragon

Alcohol is also a powerful attractant for cannabinoids, though not as good as fat. Those with patients can infuse their favorite spirit with THC by stuffing their liquor bottles with decarbed buds and allowing it to sit for a few months.

Those more antsy to shake up some cannabinated cocktails can use a nitrous oxide-powered whipped cream dispenser for "force infuse" alcohol with THC. The whipped cream dispensers work by discharging a small canister of nitrous gas into a sealed vessel with cream, introducing air into the cream instantly, the same way a whisk or electric beater does. The force of the nitrous gas can also be used to expel the oils from the cannabis flowers into alcohol.

Mix three grams of ground buds with two cups of a chosen spirit in the canister of the whipped cream dispenser. Screw on the dispenser head and charge with the nitrous oxide charger according to the manufacturer's instructions. Allow to sit for 5 minutes.

Vent out the pressurized gas by unscrewing the top. Stir the liquid and allow them to sit for another minute while the residual gas dissipates. Next, move the flower/alcohol mixture into a mason jar and simmer in a hot water bath for one hour. After one hour, allow it to cool and strain into a clean jar to store for up to 6 months. The alcohol infusion will contain about 2.5 milligrams of THC per tablespoon or 7.5 milligrams per 1 ½ oz shot.

There seems to be just as many new ways to enjoy cannabis as there are curious individuals looking to try new things. It might seem indulgent, as smoking a joint still works just as well as ever before. But while any stigma about cannabis still remains from the century-long crusade against the plant in America, it's encouraging to see all the ways people are finding to bridge that divide.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Growing Green: How Maine is leading the way in Sustainable Cannabis

As cannabis legalization continues to sweep the country, one question looms large: Can the industry grow without sacrificing the planet?

Maine's recreational cannabis market is still young, but it's maturing fast—and doing so with a keen eye on sustainability. Across cultivation, processing, packaging, and retail, Maine's cannabis industry is navigating environmental challenges with an ethos rooted in organic farming, local sourcing, and energy efficiency.

It's not just a feel-good, hipster trend. From consumers to cultivators, regulators to retailers, sustainability is quickly becoming a competitive advantage—and in some cases, a regulatory necessity. In this deep dive, we explore how Maine's cannabis sector is embracing eco-conscious practices, what challenges remain, and what lessons can be drawn from other U.S. states blazing the trail toward greener cannabis.

Why Sustainability in Cannabis Matters

Cannabis can be incredibly resource-intensive. Indoor grows draw significant electricity for lighting, climate control, and dehumidification. Outdoor and greenhouse operations face risks from water overuse, soil degradation, and chemical runoff. Then there's packaging—often plastic-heavy due to strict regulations—and transportation, which adds another layer of carbon emissions.

Left unchecked, the environmental cost of cannabis cultivation could rival—or exceed—that of traditional agriculture.

Maine, however, is uniquely positioned to do things differently. With a strong organic farming community (shout out to MOFGA, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association), an eco-conscious consumer base, and cultivators steeped in sustainable methods, the state has the potential to be a national leader in sustainable cannabis production.

Sustainable Soil & Farming Practices

Living Soil & Organic Inputs

Leading Maine cultivators like Sweet Dirt and Grumpy's Organic Farm are showing that living soil cultivation isn't just possible—it can be profitable. Sweet Dirt's hybrid greenhouse operation in Eliot uses living soil, compost, and natural inputs to create a closed-loop ecosystem that nurtures both the plant and the planet. The farm holds MOFGA's Certified Clean Cannabis (MC3) designation, one of the highest standards for organic-style cannabis in the U.S.

Similarly, Grumpy's Organic Farm avoids synthetic inputs and emphasizes natural soil health, producing cannabis with complex terpene profiles and minimal environmental impact.

No-Till, Regenerative Farming

Art & Craft, a small-batch cultivator, goes even further—sun-grown, off-grid, and regenerative by design. By avoiding tillage, planting living mulch, and using local compost, Art & Craft preserves topsoil, supports beneficial insects, and creates resilient ecosystems that can thrive year after year.

IPM: Integrated Pest Management

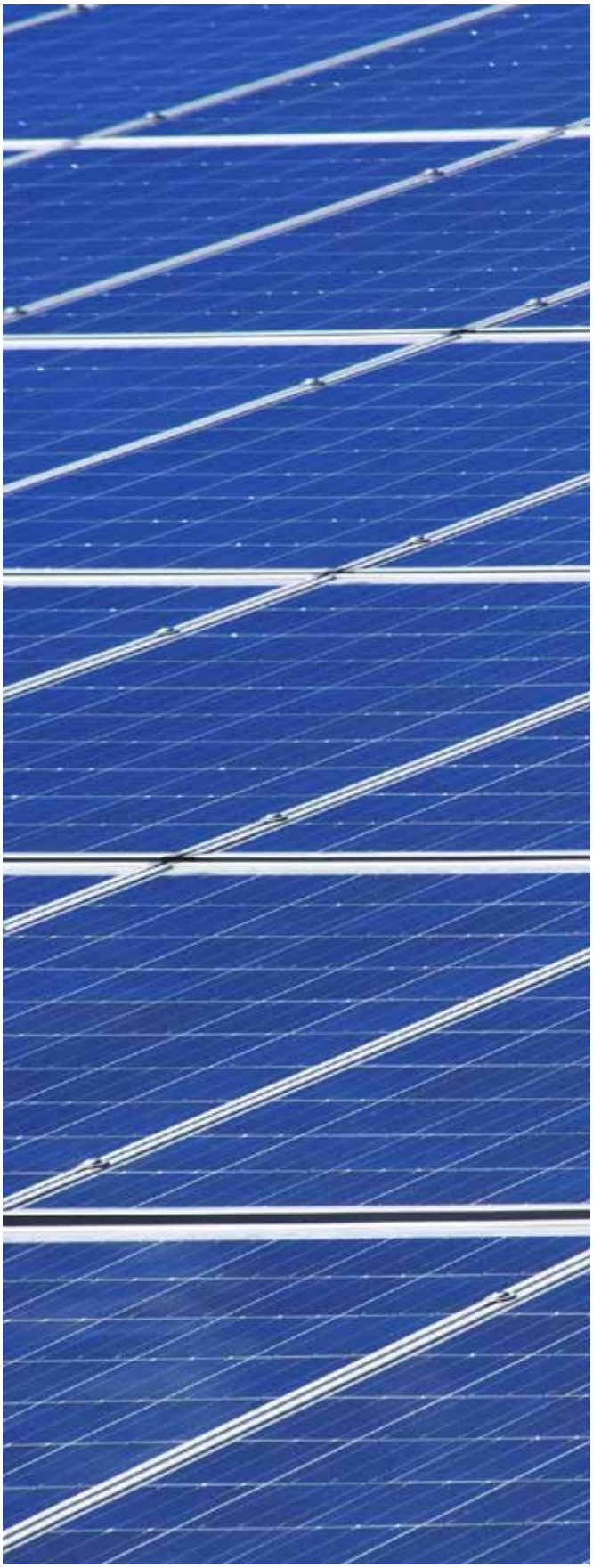
Maine's MC3 standards forbid synthetic pesticides. Instead, growers rely on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies: sanitation, crop rotation, companion planting, biological controls, and constant monitoring. Chemical sprays are a last resort—if they're used at all.

Water & Energy: From Thirsty to Thoughtful

Water conservation is a growing concern as climate extremes intensify across the U.S. In cannabis, water use adds up quickly. Smart growers are tackling the issue through:

- Rainwater capture
- Condensate reuse (from HVAC/dehumidifiers)
- Drip irrigation & moisture sensors

Meanwhile, energy efficiency is a hot-button issue—especially in indoor cultivation. Sweet Dirt, for example, uses a 32,800-square-foot hybrid greenhouse that maximizes sunlight while minimizing artificial light and HVAC loads. Their design integrates insulation and passive solar heating to cut energy demand dramatically.



Other innovations include:

- High-efficiency LED grow lights
- Smart thermostats and motion sensors
- Zoning HVAC systems to avoid unnecessary heating/cooling
- On-site renewable energy (solar, biomass, geothermal etc.)

From Harvest to Cure: Sustainability Doesn't Stop at the Grow

Post-harvest, the real work begins. Drying, curing, trimming, and storing cannabis are all resource-intensive steps, but there's room for improvement:

- Efficient dehumidification systems
- Passive drying techniques where climate allows
- Composting trim and plant waste or reusing it in hash or tincture production
- Room insulation & airflow management to reduce HVAC needs

Small cultivators like Loud & Local emphasize hand trimming, living soil, and zero chemical sprays—decisions that not only elevate quality but reduce energy and chemical inputs across the board.

Indoor vs. Outdoor vs. Hybrid: What's the Greenest Grow?

There's no one-size-fits-all answer—but the spectrum looks something like this:

- Outdoor grows: Lowest energy input, but greatest exposure to environmental risks.
- Greenhouses/hybrids: Best of both worlds—natural light with some climate control.
- Indoor grows: Highest energy demand but offer year-round control. To reduce their footprint, they must lean hard into efficiency.

Maine's climate makes year-round outdoor growing challenging, but with the right infrastructure—insulated greenhouses, passive solar designs, renewable integration—even cold-weather states can make sustainable cultivation work.

The Packaging Problem: Waste vs. Compliance

Ask any cannabis operator about packaging and you'll hear the same thing: the rules make sustainability tough.

Child-resistant, tamper-evident, and often multi-layered,

cannabis packaging is typically plastic-heavy and hard to recycle. I'm imagining W.A.L.L.E., but piles of 'doob-tubes' replacing the garbage. Compostable or recyclable alternatives exist—but they cost more and can be harder to source locally.

That said, Maine has innovators leading the charge:

- Some of Maine's cannabis operators use plastic-free, certified compostable pre-roll tubes
- Their bags are locally manufactured in New England, reducing transport emissions
- Others are experimenting with mono-material films (easier to recycle) and minimal packaging designs to cut back on unnecessary waste

Organizations like the Sustainable Cannabis Packaging Council are pushing for industry-wide standards that define sustainable packaging not just as "eco-friendly," but as safe, reusable, recyclable, or compostable.

Still, infrastructure matters. Compostable packaging isn't helpful if your municipality doesn't accept industrial compost. And recycling is complicated by multi-layered materials. Local governments and industry must collaborate to close these loops.

Beyond the Grow: Distribution, Retail & Supply Chain

Cannabis's carbon footprint continues into transport, storage, and retail. Here's how Maine companies are addressing it:

- Local sourcing reduces transport emissions
- Vertical integration (grow → process → retail) minimizes logistics and packaging steps
- Energy-efficient dispensaries use LED lighting, smart climate control, and digital receipts
- Reusable bag programs and education about packaging disposal are growing in popularity

States like New York now require cannabis operators to file environmental sustainability plans, including energy reporting

and waste minimization strategies. It's a model Maine may want to emulate more broadly.

Certification, Policy, and Accountability

Without strong certification programs and regulatory oversight, sustainability efforts risk being little more than greenwashing.

Maine is ahead of the curve with MOFGA's Certified Clean Cannabis (MC3) program. Though not federally recognized (since cannabis is still illegal at the federal level), MC3 mirrors USDA organic standards and emphasizes:

- Soil-based cultivation (no hydroponics)
- Natural inputs only
- Full traceability and input documentation

More broadly, Maine mandates seed-to-sale tracking and testing for contaminants in the adult-use market—though medical cannabis has lagged behind in regulation. Legislation may close that gap in the future, ensuring both safety and environmental compliance across the board.

States like New York go further, requiring annual energy use disclosures, packaging reports, and sustainability metrics from licensed operators. These benchmarks help push the entire industry forward. Although these government enforced policies bolster the sustainability effort, is government policy really the best solution?

Challenges on the Path to Sustainability

- Even the most eco-minded cultivators face barriers:
- Upfront costs for LED lights, HVAC upgrades, solar panels, or insulation
- Inconsistent regulations across markets (medical vs. recreational, state-by-state)
- Packaging mandates that often prioritize safety over sustainability
- Lack of recycling or composting infrastructure at the municipal level
- Price-sensitive consumers who may balk at the premium for sustainably grown cannabis

And then there's scale. Smaller farms often struggle with costs and logistics that larger operators can absorb more easily. That's why public support and financial incentives (grants, tax breaks, rebates) are crucial to leveling the playing field.

What Maine Is Doing Right

- MC3 certification sets a gold standard for clean cultivation
- Sun-grown and hybrid greenhouse grows like Sweet Dirt, Art & Craft, and Grumpy's reduce energy and chemical inputs
- Innovative, compostable packaging solutions are being developed locally
- Regenerative and off-grid practices are thriving among small and mid-sized growers
- Retailers and vertically integrated operations are closing loops on waste and transport

Where Maine Can Improve

- More funding & incentives for sustainable infrastructure (especially for small growers)
- Aligning medical & recreational testing/tracking standards
- Scaling recycling/composting infrastructure to match the packaging innovations already happening
- Expanding access to renewable energy sources across the industry
- Building consumer awareness around sustainability certifications and waste reduction

Future Opportunities

Looking ahead, Maine and other states have opportunities to go even further:

- Carbon tracking and offset programs
- Closed-loop water and waste systems
- On-site or community solar/wind/geothermal installations
- AI and sensor-based efficiency tools
- Reusable packaging and take-back programs
- Sustainability-focused licensing incentives

Perhaps most importantly, social sustainability must be part of the conversation: fair labor, equitable access, and community investment are all part of a truly green cannabis economy.

Final Takeaway: Green Should Mean Green

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword—it's a requirement for cannabis businesses that want to thrive long-term. Maine, with its environmental legacy and agricultural know-how, has the opportunity to become a national model.

From the soil to the shelf, every decision matters. The cannabis industry can either mirror the worst practices of Big Ag and Big Pharma—or it can set a new standard for regenerative, responsible commerce.

The "green" in cannabis should mean more than the color of the plant—it should mean a thriving, sustainable future.

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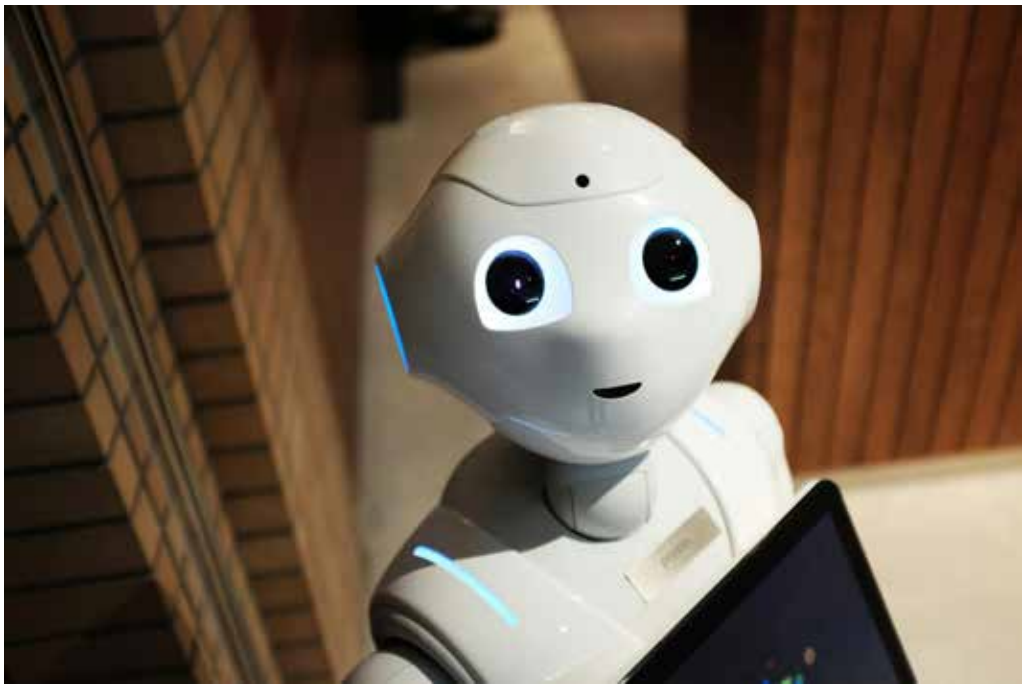
The Transformative Role of Artificial Intelligence in Cannabis Research

By Eric I. Mitchell

Eric I. Mitchell, MD MA FACPE AAPL is president and medical director of Hemp Commodity Industries, LLC.



Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the landscape of cannabis research, offering unprecedented opportunities to analyze biological interactions and accelerate therapeutic innovations. As the cannabis industry continues to expand, the integration of AI technologies is proving to be a game-changer, enabling researchers to unlock the complex genetic and biochemical properties of the plant. This article explores how AI is transforming cannabis research by enhancing our understanding of biological interactions. This article shows the acceleration and development of cannabis-based therapeutics that overcome historical barriers that have hindered progress in this field.

AI in Analyzing Biological Interactions in Cannabis Research

The cannabis plant, particularly Cannabis sativa L, contains a vast array of cannabinoids, each with unique properties and potential therapeutic applications. With over 140 identified cannabinoids, understanding their interactions within the human body is crucial for developing effective treatments. AI plays a pivotal role in this endeavor by analyzing complex datasets derived from genomic studies, biochemical assays, and clinical trials. By leveraging machine learning algorithms, researchers can predict the therapeutic potential of new cannabinoids and their interactions with the Endocannabinoid System (ECS), which is integral to various physiological processes. Parallel computing cannot achieve these tasks. Quantum computing is on the way.

AI's ability to process and interpret large volumes of data allows for the identification of patterns and correlations that may not be apparent through traditional research methods. For instance, AI can analyze the chemical structures of cannabinoids and their biological interactions, pinpointing potential medical applications that could lead to the development of targeted and personalized therapies. This capability is particularly significant in the context of personalized medicine, where treatments can be tailored to individual patient profiles, maximizing therapeutic efficacy while minimizing adverse effects.

Moreover, AI-driven tools are being utilized to optimize cultivation practices, ensuring that cannabis plants are grown under ideal conditions to maximize cannabinoid production. By monitoring and adjusting environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and light exposure, AI systems can enhance crop

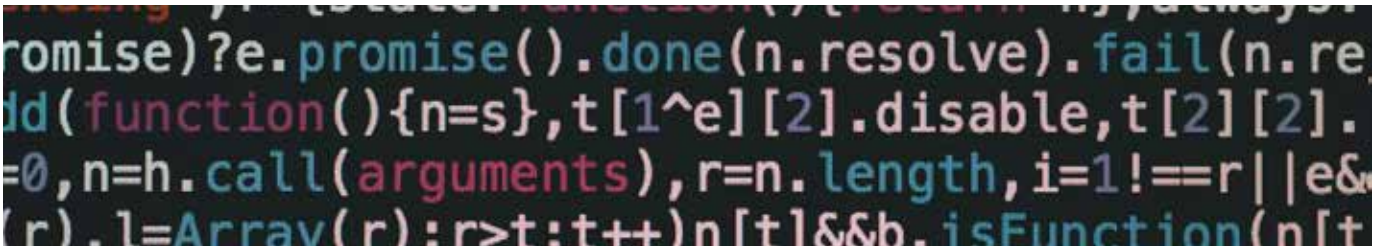
yields and quality, which is essential for the production of consistent and effective cannabis-based products. The Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) is the chip driving AI at the present time. Quantum computing is coming with its Q-bits.

AI-Driven Advancements in Cannabis-Based Therapeutic Development

The development of cannabis-based therapeutics has historically faced numerous challenges, including regulatory hurdles and a lack of comprehensive research. However, AI is emerging as a powerful ally in overcoming these barriers by streamlining the drug discovery process. By analyzing existing clinical data and real-world patient experiences, AI can identify new cannabis formulations and therapeutic applications that may have been overlooked in traditional research settings.

One of the most exciting applications of AI in this context is the design of custom cannabinoid blends. By understanding how different cannabinoids interact and synergize, AI can assist in developing personalized blends tailored to specific health conditions. This approach not only enhances therapeutic efficacy but also reduces the risk of adverse effects, making cannabis-based treatments more appealing to both patients and healthcare providers.

Furthermore, AI can predict potential side effects and toxicity of new cannabinoid-based drugs, significantly accelerating the drug discovery process. This predictive capability allows researchers to focus on the most promising candidates, reducing the time and resources required to bring new treatments to market. As a result, patients can benefit from innovative therapies that address a wide



range of conditions, from chronic pain and anxiety to more complex neurological disorders. This acceleration will change cannabis like never thought possible.

The Role of AI in Analyzing the Endocannabinoid System and Cannabinoid Effects

The Endocannabinoid System (ECS) plays a crucial role in regulating various physiological processes, including mood, appetite, and pain sensation. Understanding how cannabinoids interact with the ECS is essential for developing effective cannabis-based therapies. AI is instrumental in this analysis, as it can process vast amounts of data from genomic studies and clinical trials to identify how different cannabinoids affect the ECS and its components.

By mapping interactions between cannabis compounds and the human body, AI can provide insights into the biological responses to cannabis use. This knowledge is vital for predicting therapeutic applications based on molecular pathways and understanding the potential risks associated with cannabis consumption. For instance, AI can analyze how specific cannabinoids may influence neurotransmitter release or modulate inflammatory responses, paving the way for targeted treatments for conditions such as epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and chronic pain.

Moreover, AI can assist in identifying new compounds that may interact with the ECS in novel ways, potentially leading to the development of innovative therapies. By analyzing existing data on cannabinoid interactions, researchers can uncover previously unknown relationships between cannabinoids and the ECS, opening up new avenues for exploration and discovery. This capability is particularly important as the cannabis industry continues to evolve, with increasing interest in the therapeutic potential of lesser-known cannabinoids and synthetic compounds.

Overcoming Historical Barriers to Cannabis Research with AI

I have written historically about cannabis research and how it has been hindered by regulatory restrictions, societal stigma, and a lack of funding. These barriers have limited the scope of scientific inquiry and delayed the development of effective cannabis-based therapies. However, AI is emerging as a powerful tool to overcome these challenges by providing researchers with the means to analyze complex datasets and generate evidence-based insights that can inform policy and practice as I wrote in the previous article.

One of the keyways AI is addressing these historical barriers is through its ability to analyze real-world data from diverse sources, including patient experiences, clinical trials, and observational studies. By aggregating and interpreting this data, AI can provide a more comprehensive understanding of cannabis's therapeutic potential and its effects on various health conditions. This approach not only enhances the credibility of cannabis research but also helps to dispel misconceptions and stigma associated with cannabis use.

Additionally, AI can facilitate the development of educational tools and resources for healthcare providers, helping to bridge the knowledge gap regarding cannabis-based therapies. Many doctors are unfamiliar with the latest research on cannabis, which can hinder their ability to recommend appropriate treatments to patients. AI-powered training programs can provide healthcare professionals with up-to-date information on the benefits and risks of cannabis, empowering them to make informed decisions and engage in meaningful conversations with their patients.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Artificial Intelligence is transforming cannabis research by enabling the analysis of complex biological interactions and accelerating the development of cannabis-based therapeutics with the GPU chip and the coming Quantum Computing. Through its ability to process vast amounts of data, AI is helping researchers uncover the therapeutic potential of cannabinoids, optimize cultivation practices, and overcome historical barriers that have hindered progress in this field. As AI continues to advance, its integration into cannabis research will not only enhance our understanding of the plant's properties but also drive innovation and growth in the cannabis industry. The future of cannabis research is bright, with AI serving as a powerful ally in the quest for effective, personalized treatments that can improve the lives of patients worldwide.

Eric I. Mitchell, MD.

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Republican Congressman Introduces Bill to Reschedule Cannabis

By AJ Harrington

GOP Rep. Greg Steube of Florida recently introduced a bill that would reclassify marijuana under federal drugs laws. Steube filed the measure, dubbed the Marijuana 1-to-3 Act, in the House of Representatives on August 12, according to a report from online cannabis news source Marijuana Moment.

If passed, the bill would remove marijuana from Schedule I of the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and place it in Schedule III, a less restrictive classification that would likely ease research and improve the business climate for regulated cannabis companies.

Bill Codifies Biden Administration Cannabis Rescheduling Proposal

Steube's bill would have the same effect as an October 2022 proposal developed by the Department of Health and Human Services under the Biden administration. A decision on that proposal, which is still pending with the Drug Enforcement Administration after progress stalled in January, is expected within "the next few weeks," according to a statement from President Donald Trump earlier this week. Steube has introduced the Marijuana 1-to-3 Act (H.R. 4963) in the House in each of the past four legislative sessions. The two-page measure mandates that "the Attorney General of the United States shall, by order not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this section, transfer marijuana…from schedule I of such Act to schedule III" of the CSA.

The Florida Republican announced via a post on social media that he would be introducing the cannabis rescheduling bill again for the current session.

"It makes zero sense that federal law treats marijuana the same as heroin and LSD," Steube said in a post on the platform X. "It is even more ridiculous that cocaine is technically classified as less restrictive than marijuana."

"This week, I'm reintroducing my Marijuana 1-to-3 Act to move marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act. This is a common-sense change that will finally allow real scientific research into its medicinal value and ensure our drug laws reflect reality," he added. "I urge my colleagues and the Trump administration to get it done."

Cannabis CEO Sees 'Rare Opportunity' For Trump

Peter Barsoom, founder and CEO of cannabis edibles brand 1906, says that Steube's bill would benefit consumers as well as regulated cannabis companies.

"Codifying cannabis reform through legislation would give the industry the stability it needs to invest, innovate, and expand access, while ensuring patients and consumers nationwide can benefit from safe, regulated products," Barsoom writes in an emailed statement.

"Millions of Americans already use it to sleep better, manage pain, reduce anxiety, and improve quality of life – often as a safer alternative to alcohol or more dangerous drugs," he added. "With this bill, the Trump administration has a rare opportunity to end decades of wasted tax dollars, needless arrests, and blocked medical breakthroughs."

Trump Administration on Rescheduling Coming Soon

Steube filed his bill only one day after Trump made his first public comments about cannabis policy reform since taking office in January. On Monday, the president said during a press conference that his administration will soon decide on the rescheduling proposal.

"Some people like it. Some people hate it—people hate the whole concept of marijuana, because it does bad for the children [and] it does bad for people that are older than children," Trump said at the press conference. "But we're looking at reclassification, and we'll make a determination over the next few weeks—and that determination, hopefully, will be the right one."

House Lawmakers Introduce Cannabis Legalization Bill

By AJ Harrington

A group of Democratic lawmakers recently reintroduced legislation to legalize marijuana at the federal level. If passed, the bill would remove cannabis from the nation's list of controlled substances and establish regulations for commercial weed sales, Marijuana Moment reported.

Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York introduced the legislation dubbed the Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, along with dozens of his Democratic colleagues in the House. This is the fourth consecutive legislative session Nadler has introduced the measure to legalize cannabis.

"As more states continue to legalize marijuana and public support increases, federal laws must catch up and reverse failed policies criminalizing marijuana," Nadler said in a statement about the bill. "It is long past time to decriminalize marijuana at the federal level, expunge marijuana convictions, and facilitate resentencing, while reinvesting in the communities most adversely impacted by the War on Drugs."

If passed, the MORE Act would remove cannabis from the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA), effectively legalizing marijuana at the federal level. Each state would then be free to regulate cannabis as it saw fit, including continuing to prohibit the plant and its use.

The measure also regulates commercial cannabis activity and levies a 5% federal excise tax on marijuana products, rising to 8% after five years. The legislation includes regulations to govern such products, including packaging and labeling requirements.

Dozens Of House Democrats Back Weed Legalization Bill

The Democratic congressional representatives who have signed on as co-sponsors of this year's version of MORE Act include Reps. Dina Titus of Nevada, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Nydia Velázquez of New York, California's Lou Correa and Ted Lieu, Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia, Pramila Jayapal of Washington and Maine's Chellie Pingree, among more than 30 others.

"It's time to modernize our laws to reflect the reality of cannabis use in the United States, recognize the legitimate industry that has emerged, and fully embrace the medical benefits of the plant," said Titus, a co-chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus. "The federal government must catch up to the states, and this bill provides a framework to end the failed War on Drugs while supporting communities and businesses nationwide."

The bill also allows for the expungement of records of past federal marijuana-related crimes and prohibits the denial of federal benefits based on the possession or use of cannabis. Half of tax revenue would fund a Community Reinvestment Grant Program administered by the Justice Department, while 10% would be dedicated to substance misuse treatment programs. The remaining 40% of tax dollars would be directed to the Small Business Administration, which would be tasked with creating and implementing an equitable cannabis business license program.

Omar, another Congressional Cannabis Caucus co-chair, said she understands "how deeply the War on Drugs has devastated families and fueled racial disparities in arrests and incarceration without making us safer."

"The MORE Act will decriminalize marijuana at the federal level, clear records, and reinvest in the communities most harmed by these failed policies," she added. "In Minnesota we have already shown that legalization can deliver both fairness and economic opportunity. It is past time for the federal government to follow our lead and finally end the era of criminalization."

Nonprofit Groups Back Weed Legalization Bid

The MORE Act is also backed by dozens of groups including cannabis policy reform advocacy nonprofits, labor organizations and civil rights groups.

"For decades, marijuana criminalization has disproportionately targeted people of color and low-income communities," said Maritza Perez Medina, director of federal affairs at the Drug Policy Alliance. "This policy of marijuana criminalization has led to mass incarceration, family separation, deportation, and lost economic opportunities."

"In addition to clearly and unambiguously descheduling marijuana, the MORE Act would address the vast social and economic harms caused by marijuana criminalization," she said. "Anything short of descheduling will continue to perpetuate the harms of federal marijuana criminalization, and we urge members of Congress who oppose these harms to cosponsor MORE."

Nadler has introduced the legislation three times previously. The House of Representatives approved the MORE Act twice under Democratic leadership, but the bill failed to gain approval from the Senate. Under Republican leadership, the measure has not come up for a vote of the full House. This year's measure is essentially the same as previous versions, with minor technical changes.

"The House made history when it passed the MORE Act in the 116th and 117th Congresses," Kat Murti, executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP), said. "With the House once again leading the way, the Senate must act now to finally deliver on the promise of justice and opportunity nationwide."

"Young people deserve a future free from the lifelong harms of prohibition, and we urge Congress to act swiftly to pass this legislation and begin repairing the injustices caused by decades of criminalization," she continued.

The introduction of this year's version of the MORE Act comes as the Trump administration considers a more modest proposal to reform federal marijuana policy that was initiated under former President Joseph Biden. Under that plan, cannabis would be removed from Schedule I of the CSA and placed under Schedule III. A bill a Florida GOP representative introduced earlier this month would accomplish the same goal. A separate bipartisan bill introduced in April would direct the U.S. attorney general to develop a plan for federal marijuana policy reform.

Most Cannabis Consumers Expect Federal Legalization Before 2028 Election, Poll Shows

By AJ Harrington

A slight majority of cannabis consumers believe the federal government will legalize marijuana before the 2028 presidential election, according to the results of a recent survey. The poll found that 54% of cannabis users said they expect the federal reform to come in the next three years.

The survey was conducted by NuggMD, a telehealth platform that connects prospective patients with physicians qualified to issue medical cannabis recommendations. The poll interviewed 390 cannabis consumers who live in states with legal weed.

The survey queried participants about their views on the possibility of reform before the next election, asking them: "Do you expect cannabis to be federally legalized during the next three years?"

Just over half of respondents (54%) said they are expecting the federal government to legalize cannabis in the next three years, while the remainder (46%) said they did not expect the government to enact the reform in that time frame. Andrew Graham, head of communications at NuggMD, said the change would be significant for the approximately one in seven U.S. residents who use cannabis.

"The 50 million Americans who choose to use cannabis are the main stakeholders in its legality, so it is noteworthy to see that a majority of them expect federal legalization to happen before the 2028 election is set to occur," Graham told Marijuana Moment.

"I don't necessarily share that optimism, but it's worth reiterating that federal legalization is overwhelmingly popular with most every voting demographic," he continued. "The party that's currently in power needs to cut ties with its prohibitionist wing and focus on doing what's obvious and popular. Federal legalization, and the creation of a fair, pro-business regulatory environment, is long overdue."

The NuggMD poll was conducted between July 31 and August 2 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.96 percentage points, according to the company.

Separate Survey Also Show Strong Support for Federal Cannabis Policy Reform

Another recent survey also showed strong support for federal cannabis legalization among U.S. residents. The survey conducted by the Coalition for Cannabis Policy, Education, and Regulation (CPEAR) determined that seven out of 10 Americans said they support "reforming federal cannabis law, thus ending the federal prohibition on cannabis for adult-use," and 69% said they support "allowing individual states to decide whether cannabis will be legal in their state."

The survey also asked respondents about a specific reform proposal known as the Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States (STATES) 2.0 Act. If passed, the measure would legalize cannabis at the federal level in states that have ended marijuana prohibition and establish regulations for commercial cannabis products.

The survey from CPEAR, whose membership includes large tobacco and alcohol companies, concluded by saying the findings "make one thing clear: voters across the political spectrum continue to support commonsense cannabis reforms that respect state decisions, enhance public safety, and reflect evolving attitudes."

"This is not about expanding federal power—it's about limiting it," Shanita Penny, executive director of CPEAR, said in a press release. "The STATES 2.0 Act respects the will of voters, reinforces states' rights, and ensures law enforcement can focus on real public safety threats—not outdated cannabis laws. It's time for Congress and the administration to act on a policy the American people clearly support."

Federal Appeals Court Rules Government Must Show Cannabis Users Pose a Risk to Justify Gun Ban

By AJ Harrington

A federal appeals court has ruled that the government must prove that cannabis users pose a risk to justify its ban on gun possession and purchases for people who use marijuana. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit agreed with a lower court judge that dismissed an indictment against an Oklahoma man charged by federal prosecutors after police found cannabis and a gun in his car. The Department of Justice appealed that ruling, sending the case to the appeals court.

The man, Jared Michael Harrison, was charged in 2022 under a 1968 law [referred to as § 922(g)(3)] prohibiting an "unlawful user" of a federally controlled substance from possessing or purchasing a firearm. The policy effectively enacts a blanket ban on gun possession and purchases by individuals with any history of cannabis use, despite protections under the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that guarantee the right to bear arms.

The three-judge appeals court ruled on August 26 that the government must prove that people who use cannabis "pose a risk of future danger" to justify maintaining the ban on gun possession and purchases, according to a report from Marijuana Moment.

Government Equates Cannabis Use with Mental Illness

In its case against Harrison, the federal government argued that the ban on firearm purchases and possession by cannabis users is consistent with historical bans on gun ownership by people with mental illness. The appeals court said "the government cannot justify" the current policy based on that standard.

"We agree with the district court and Mr. Harrison. On the record before us, the government has not shown laws disarming the mentally ill are relevant historical analogues," the court wrote in its decision. "The government suggests laws disarming the mentally ill reveal a principle that legislatures may disarm those who are not 'responsible,' 'ordinary,' or able to exercise 'self-control.' This analysis relies on constructs the Supreme Court has explicitly refused to endorse."

Further, the court said "Mr. Harrison is among 'the People' protected by the Second Amendment, so the government must justify § 922(g)(3) by showing it is consistent with our tradition of firearm regulation; § 922(g)(3) lacks a distinctly similar regulation despite addressing a persistent societal problem, which is relevant evidence it violates the Second Amendment as applied."

Judge Veronica Rossman, who authored the opinion, noted that the court departs in a "narrow way" from the district court's ruling, as judges "hold the historical tradition supports a principle that legislatures may disarm those believed to pose a risk of future danger."

"And we further hold the district court must inquire into the government's assertion that non-intoxicated marijuana users pose a risk of danger," the opinion said.

The historical cases that the Department of Justice relied on to support its argument that the ban is legal included references to antiquated case law preventing Catholics, loyalists, slaves and Indians from having guns.

The circuit court said, however, that "the government must show non-intoxicated marijuana users pose a risk of future danger" to support the current policy. "This inquiry, which may involve fact finding, is best suited for the district court."

The case has been returned to that lower court, which determined that the law banning "unlawful" users of cannabis from possessing firearms is unconstitutional.


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