

THE BIG CHILL

WHEN IT COMES TO THE CANNABIDIOL MARKET, IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHICH BRANDS ARE FOR REAL AND WHICH ARE JUST BLOWING SMOKE. HERE ARE THE ABC'S OF CBD

by **SARAH CRISTOBAL**

There's been much ado about cannabis this year, particularly its delightfully soothing compound cannabidiol, or CBD, which has been reported to help remedy all your ills and then some. Need to calm your frayed nerves? (Let's face it—it's been *a year*.) CBD has been dubbed the leaner, greener Xanax. Got skin irritation? There are CBD lotions and balms for that. Issues with digestion or muscle soreness? Keep checking that green box.

Why is it so effective? "All humans have an endocannabinoid system that reacts exclusively to compounds predominantly found in plants, especially the cannabis plant," says Verena von Pfetten, co-founder of *Gossamer*, the biannual cultural magazine for discerning cannabis enthusiasts. "That system regulates your body's homeostasis—everything from breathing to sleep to blood pressure to inflammation to circulation. That's why I think people are so excited to add CBD to their daily routine, because it can help with all of those things."

Both hemp and marijuana are *Cannabis sativa* plants, and both contain CBD. However, hemp has much lower levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (commonly known as THC, the psychoactive constituent in cannabis). Marijuana is legal in nine states for recreational and medicinal use and in many other states for medicinal use only. Currently, hemp is considered a controlled substance, though it's legal



The Purple
Haze latte
at Chillhouse,
N.Y.C.

Ananda
Hemp
Spectrum
600,
\$90;
ananda
hemp
.com.

for limited purposes when grown under the pilot programs put in place in the 2014 Farm Bill. The revised Farm Bill pending in Congress would make it legal to grow everywhere.

Surprisingly, in this era of divided politics, the hemp portion of the bill has bipartisan support from Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who realizes that hemp production could replace dwindling tobacco farming in his home state of Kentucky.

Unlike its sister compound, THC, CBD won't get you high, but it will still make you feel good. "There is a misconception that CBD is going to cause reefer madness," says Dr. Alex Capano, a general practitioner based in Philadelphia who is also a natural-cannabis researcher and faculty member at the Lambert Center for the Study of Medicinal Cannabis and Hemp. "There's still a stigma against marijuana, particularly in certain communities or populations. And so it's all about education. I think people don't understand that it's legal. At least some of it is legal."

If you're still hazy on the details, know that CBD products and services are not going away anytime soon. But with the added interest come rogue pop-up labels that are just looking to capitalize on the moment and are not monitoring their products. To maintain CBD's true restorative properties, the integrity of the plant must be preserved, and the way CBD and its "entourage" of fellow compounds, or terpenes, is extracted is crucial.

So how do you separate the weed from the chaff? Research. If you're thinking about trying out new products, Dr. Capano recommends calling the brand to ask for a certificate of analysis. Companies should be clear about what's in their concoction, how much CBD is being used, and whether the product is chemical-free. "It's a little bit of the Wild West in the industry," she says. "There are some people out there who want to make a quick buck, and they're not necessarily transparent about what's in their product or the processing and the chemistry behind how they get it. So 70 percent of CBD labels don't match what's in the bottle."

"I think the tricky part for us has always been finding a brand that uses CBD but also formulates to our standards," says Annie Jackson, the co-founder of natural-beauty company Credo. Out of hundreds of submissions over the past two years, Credo carries only three brands containing CBD: Vertly, started by a former fashion editor and her husband, whose family has roots in the cannabis business; Shea Brand, which began by selling shea butter; and Khus + Khus, created by a California Ayurvedic specialist and yogi.

Former beauty editor and PR maven Cindy Capobianco also pivoted into this green-shaded wellness space with Lord Jones, the cannabis-and-CBD-friendly lifestyle brand she launched with her husband in L.A. in 2015 after operating a medical collective for three years. It was there that Capobianco realized that the majority of the people coming in weren't stoners off the street—they were patients in physical pain from cancer, AIDS, neuropathy, and other diseases.

"Even though CBD has become trendy, cannabis is not a trend, and it's not even a movement. It's really a revolution," says Capobianco. "Our goal is to destigmatize

and normalize this ancient plant and to share what we have learned about CBD from working closely with real patients with serious conditions. This is what we've learned: When used properly, cannabinoids can be as effective as prescription medication with fewer side effects. At the end of the day, we want to empty the unnecessary prescription medication from medicine cabinets and fill them with CBD."

Other brands that have been recommended by those in the know: Cosmic View, started by a former UC Berkeley professor and international cancer researcher after her daughter was diagnosed with endometrial cancer, and Ananda Hemp, a Kentucky-based operation led by an eighth-generation farmer who helped shape much of the hemp regulation for the 2014 Farm Bill.

To fully reap the benefits of CBD, your best bet is to try a tincture so you



Lord Jones High CBD Pain & Wellness Formula Body Lotion, \$60; lordjones.com.



Shea Brand CBD Natural Pain Reliever, \$30; credo.beauty.com.



Ildi Pekar in N.Y.C. offers facials with CBD-infused products.

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can begin with a low dose and amp up as needed. Topicals are great for helping with localized pain. There are also gummies, chocolates, and vapes, if those delivery systems are more your type of thing. Spas offer CBD too: Chillhouse in N.Y.C. gives CBD massages, and facialist Ildi Pekar features CBD-infused treatments. But since this isn't a Cheech and Chong situation, don't expect to take a "hit" and feel good instantly. Everyone's endocannabinoid makeup is different, and it can take up to a few weeks for the CBD to work.

As for all those super-trendy hipster joints serving shots of CBD with your coffee? Dr. Capano is cautiously optimistic. "I think it's fine, but to me it's not ideal," she says. "If you take CBD under your tongue, you get a better delivery. So putting it into food seems a little antithetical to me. People are having fun with it—and I don't want to be negative. Just have your latte, but take your tincture separately." ■



Cosmic View Deep Down Deep Tissue, \$40; acosmicview.co.



Vertly Hemp Infused Lip Balm, \$22; vertlybalm.com.