Cannabis Edibles

History of ingested cannabis

Cannabis has been used medicinally since 2500 BC in China when the plant was discovered to produce a mild euphoria in those who ingested it, and to be an effective general pain reliever. Its use as a medicine continued through 200 BC, when it was noted to be used by the Essenes in the holy land. Its therapeutic value by physicians can be traced back to Dioscorides and Galen around 1000 AD. By 1300 AD, the Inquisition outlawed cannabis ingestion in Spain, yet it continued to be used as a medicine throughout Europe. Reports by W. B. O'Shaughnessy in 1839 recommended its medical use for a variety of ailments. Marijuana continued to be used as a medicine in the US, especially in tincture form, until 1937 when its use was stopped by the Marijuana Tax Act. Now the only form of federally legalized edible marijuana is THC in prescription form as Marinol.

Effects of ingestion

Eating marijuana-infused preparations usually leads to a longer, stronger, and much more physical effect than smoking. For some conditions, such as muscle spasms and intestinal disorders, eating cannabis can be more effective than smoking. Also because ingestion provides a longer, slower release of cannabinoids, it may be a better choice for insomnia, lasting through the night. For patients concerned with the effects of smoked marijuana, or for those who require a maximum dose of medicinal compounds, oral ingestion of marijuana is a good treatment method.

Although eating is a good way of absorbing marijuana into the bloodstream, higher amounts must be used in a preparation in order to make the product effective. It takes considerably longer to experience the effects. The effects of ingested cannabis may be felt within 30 minutes to 2 hours. If the stomach is full the effects may take longer. These effects may last for 6 – 8 hours. It is generally considered that up to three times as much cannabis is required when taken orally compared to smoking.

THC is only one of the active cannabinoids in cannabis. For example, it is known that Cannabidiol (CBD) has sedative effects that offset the cumulative effects of pure THC. Commonly, patients use marijuana leaf for cooking and flower tops (buds) for smoking. Because marijuana leaves usually contain a higher percentage of CBD than THC, eating cannabis leaf can make one drowsy. Occasionally a patient may feel uneasy, groggy, or disoriented with ingested cannabis. It is wise to allow time to rest in order to assess how you will respond. Always start with a small amount, wait an hour or two and, if needed, gradually increase the dose.

Especially for those with tender digestion, all marijuana must be ground to a fine consistency before cooking. One of the drawbacks of eating marijuana leaf is the common complaint of stomach irritation. The top side of cannabis leaves are coated with thousands of microscopic thorns, and these sometimes cause minor intestinal irritation, even after grinding. As a general rule, the smaller leaves growing closest to the flower tops are closest to the plant’s resin glands, and therefore have the greatest amount of medicinal compounds, and are higher in THC content.

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Cannabinoids are barely soluble in water. Fortunately they are fat-soluble, meaning that they bind to fat cells and can dissolve best into organic solvents. As a result, solvents like butter, oil or alcohol are ideal to extract and deliver cannabinoids to the body. Cannabis tinctures are an example of an edible prepared by extracting cannabis with alcohol.

Cannabis can be cooked directly into edibles or can be made into butter or oil that is used to prepare foods, or can be packaged into capsules. Use cannabis oil or butter in your favorite brownie or cookie recipe. You can even use a brownie or cake mix. Other edibles include candies, honey, teas, tinctures, or you can just spread your butter on a cracker. Cannabis as food can be your medicine.
Cannabis capsules
Cannabis capsules are prepared from powdered marijuana treated in oil and are available at dispensaries. The process is described on the link below. Common doses are in the range of 2 to 5 pills. 
www.cannabismd.org/reports/mjcapsules

Cannabis oil or butter preparation
Recipe 1
Place 4 oz of leaf marijuana in a large pot of water with 1.25 cups of olive oil (for cooking purposes use 1 pound of butter instead of olive oil), bring to a boil and simmer at a low boil for 3-4 hours. Cool the mixture and strain through cheesecloth (wring well). Save the liquid and discard the leaf. Refrigerate until the olive oil solidifies at the top. Peel away olive oil or butter(this has the cannabinoids in it) and discard the water. After straining, cooling and peeling, use the "puna butter" in place of oil in your favorite recipes. (www.onlinepot.org/medical/topical)

Recipe 2 – Canna-oil
Use 2.5oz+ high quality bud-shake, 2 cups Crisco shortening, 2T cooking oil, 5 gallon paint sifter, 8 cups water, 5 quart sauce pan, 2 transparent half gallon pitchers
Preparation:
In the five quart sauce pan mix water, oil, Crisco, and bud shake ground up fairly well. Bring to boil on high, when it starts to boil immediately turn down heat to a very low simmer and cover for 18-24 hours. Cool for about 3-4 hours. Use the paint sifter to strain the liquid out of the pan and into the pitchers. Squeeze out as much of the liquid as possible because the canna-oil is now in that plant material and needs to be squished out. Set the pitchers in the fridge for an hour and the canna-oil will separate and solidify on the top of the water. Put the oil in a cup or bag or container of your choice. Canna-oil should be green. This Canna-oil will work in any recipe that calls for shortening or cooking-oil if you melt it down before use. (boards.cannabis.com/recipes/8076-best-canna-oil-recipe)

There are several cookbooks, websites and recipes available for use of marijuana in foods. Some good resources are listed below.
Grandma’s Green Cookbooks – www.greencookbook.com