Cannabis Beverages: A New Way to Get High

By Ruth Kava — June 28, 2016

When it comes to marijuana, we have choices. Not just which premium brand to buy (where it's legal (1), of course). You can smoke it, you can eat it (brownies, anyone?), and soon — you may be able to drink it. Yep, those entrepreneurs are at it again — at least some of them are busy devising cannabis beverages for those who don't smoke and don't want the extra calories from the brownies.

Why do this? Well, their reasoning is that "cannabis has poor aesthetics," and cultural perceptions of it put it in a negative category. So to deal with that issue, one should change the way "something looks or behaves." Because smoking is associated with "cancer, big tobacco and the poorly educated," a smoker presents a social negative. Since edible cannabis products consist of cookies, brownies, gummy bears and candy bars, there is a negative association of this type of "junk food" vehicle with obesity — also a social no-no.

Enter the cannabis beverage. According to these entrepreneurs, not only will the beverages avoid the negative perceptions listed above, they might also improve bioavailability compared to either smoking or edible versions, depending on the exact formulation. These ready-to-drink (RTD) formulations should be able to provide anywhere from 50 to 75 percent bioavailability — and thus more accurate dosing. (As if people who are smoking pot care about adequate dosing?)

They also opine that these drinks can be promoted as "all-natural" (whatever that means) and thus might reach a particular segment of the consuming public. Overall, their point is that "cannabis beverages can dramatically improve aesthetics of the cannabis industry if properly implemented."
Of course, any possible health effects aren’t mentioned, nor are particularly calorie-dense possible formulation (cannabis smoothie, anyone?). And a number of questions arise: Will there be health effects? Hard to tell — one might reasonably expect such beverages to become popular, but would they be regulated as is alcohol, another psychoactive drug? Would they have to list the percent of the active cannabis ingredient on the label, or the number of calories? Would we have breathalyzer types of testing if drivers are driving erratically or ver--rrrr--y slowly (2)? No answers are available yet, but when they become available we will certainly let you know.

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**Notes:**

1. Although marijuana has been decriminalized by individual states, it remains illegal under federal law.

2. Unlike alcohol, there is no good method to determine if a person who has smoked or eaten marijuana is driving while impaired. THC— the active components of marijuana stays in the blood for days. It is impossible to tell when it was used.