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## Dispensary products can vary

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As more medical marijuana dispensaries open throughout Colorado, secondary businesses that deal in marijuana products - from pizza to soda pop - are growing just as fast.

Dispensaries like Medicine Man and Nature's Own Wellness Center in Cortez have started creating their own homegrown products to distribute locally through their dispensaries, especially after the passage this summer of House Bill 1284, which mandated 70 percent of medicine is grown by the center.

Sherry Garcia, owner of Medicine Man dispensary in Cortez, said she made most of the products she sells out of her center from the start, from Caribbean Jerk sauce to muffins. Garcia estimated her secondary product sales are "35 percent and growing" and hopes to expand her operation to distribute more unique products, like her mom's recipe for salsa, which she infuses with medicine and then bottles and sells.

"First I was interested in it personally, but then I got the idea I could patent my own creation," said Garcia, who also is a medical marijuana card holder. "I started making some of my own products because of demand, and now people are requesting it."

Garcia said she constantly tries new ideas.

Journal/Hope Nealson  
Sherry Garcia, who owns Medicine Man medical marijuana dispensary in Cortez, bakes and makes her own edibles. Garcia said about 30 percent of her shop's sales are from edibles, and she plans to come out with a salsa and green chile sauce next.

"We're very seasonal in this area, so I'm always in the process of working on something - like this summer, it's barbecue sauce and homemade jams. The industry is here, and there is endless opportunity."

Travis Pollock used to buy secondary products from outside the area to sell in his two medical marijuana dispensaries, Nature's Own Wellness Center in Cortez and Durango.

"We provide a lot of other things besides just the flower, or bud," Pollock said. "Edibles, tinctures, topical solutions. We've been getting our edibles from another caregiver from the Saguache (Colo.) area. Now with the house bill (HB 1284), we won't be able to make the monetary exchange from caregiver to center."

Pollock said he had more than 15 companies who supplied his shop - from Mile High Ice-Cream out of Denver to Pharmistry's medicated soda pop out of Boulder. With HB 1284, stricter laws like needing a special type of kitchen - no more renting of restaurant kitchens - and steep licensing fees will make it harder for smaller operations that aren't dispensary owners to operate. To make sure he keeps the supply running smoothly, Pollock built his own facility to manufacture his own products.

"We go through 100-plus pieces per week," he said. "We carry 15 types of ice-cream and eight types of medicated drinks alone."

Pollock said the average age of his clients is 40, with 300 to 400 cardholders from Montezuma County. Many prefer edibles - or drinkables - to smoking, he said. Products like tinctures, topical salves, balms, medicated energy "shots" with added properties like ginseng to promote more energy and sprays for the skin to treat rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia are an important part of his inventory. So are medicated butters and oils for patients who prefer to do their own baking and cooking.

Pollock purchased a gas chromatograph to test the properties in the edibles he will create. The instrument, used in the oil and gas industry to decipher particulate matter in samples, will give him the most complete picture possible of his medicinal edibles.

"I will market it to other centers so they know where their potency rates are," he said. "I'm the first dispensary in the state to actually do this, and I'll charge \$75 dollars per test. They can bring as many products as they want and find out their THC, CBN and CBD levels."

TCH, CBN and CBD - tetrahydrocannabinol, cannabidiol and cannabitol - are chemicals in marijuana. Identifying the amount of THC, CBD and CBN in any given sample will enable the caregiver and user to know the effect of the medicine.

Pollock also works as a consultant for would-be ganjapreneurs in Arizona who are sniffing around the state before a November election will determine if medical marijuana will be sold in the Grand Canyon State.

"I already have four clients, and what I've been doing is meeting with local officials in Arizona. The local municipalities have to accept the use (of medical marijuana) before the state will license, so I can help my clients through the process of what it will take to obtain a dispensary: which municipality you'll be in, the zoning, applying through the city and then the state, and guiding them through the tax implications."

Gus Escamilla, the founder and chief executive officer of Greenway University, said Colorado was the best spot to offer the 16-week Medical Marijuana Business Administration curriculum, which addresses the caveats specific to the marijuana industry, including the most recent state laws and regulations for green related industries.

"It's happening right before our eyes, and with Greenway University being the first approved (by the U.S. Department of Higher Education) in the country - that is revolutionary in itself," Escamilla said. "We have a curriculum from a market-tested position so (ganjapreneurs) don't have to learn by trial and error."

Escamilla said industries that didn't exist before have sprung up.

"We have a new breed of professionals - displaced senior management staff, displaced CPAs, attorneys, insurance consultants and doctors - entering this industry and benefiting one way or another," he said.

Real estate agents had their all-time best months selling industrial and commercial space throughout Colorado as dispensary owners raced to snatch up space to either grow or create their products, Escamilla said.

Trade organizations like the Medical Marijuana Business Alliance are working to create a conducive environment for ganjapreneurs in Colorado, Escamilla said.

"There is a place for dispensary owners and growers and everyone to meet and talk about the topics, current findings, newest and latest products - everything that is available on the market," he said. "We're in a very new industry, and we have to make sure we do everything right because all eyes are on us."

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