

# PAPER TRAIL

RAW rolling papers dominate Eugene-Springfield pot shops

**W**alk into a Eugene dispensary to purchase one of their house-rolled joints and ask the clerk what brand of rolling paper they used. More likely than not, your joint will have been spun up using RAW brand rolling papers.

The local popularity of RAW became evident while this reporter was running an unscientific survey of a number of Eugene, and even some Springfield, dispensaries. Fifteen out of seventeen Eugene-area dispensaries surveyed over the phone say they currently use RAW brand rolling papers to roll their joints — with most using RAW cones, which require no licking or added moisture.

RAW brand papers are touted as being less processed than competing brands, with a variety of hemp and non-hemp options available for cannabis connoisseurs. The brand offers organic and regular versions, arguing that its papers take longer to process because RAW doesn't use ethyl vinyl acetate (chemical glue).

Common reasons for RAW's popularity given by surveyed dispensaries are that RAW papers burn evenly and thus smoke better, and also that customers seem to be expecting RAW.

The brand has a cult-like following with endorsements from Wiz Khalifa, Rihanna and Rick Ross, and 1.2 million

followers on Instagram.

One outlying data-point is Springfield's Phresh Start. Phresh Start owner Racheal Pond says her dispensary currently uses Jware rolling papers for its joints. However, Pond has only been in business for about a month, and says she will "upgrade" to RAW papers as soon as the Jware papers are gone.

In the meantime, Pond has RAW papers in stock if customers would prefer to buy bud and roll their own. To that end, Phresh Start has an April 22 after-4/20 promotion where joints will be on sale for \$3, bringing the RAW papers into the rotation that much quicker.

The other outlying data-point, Buds in Eugene, utilizes Elements for its house joints, says general manager and co-owner Daniel Corgan. "We use [Elements] because the adhesive works better, and I tend to have RAW papers unroll on me," he says.

Corgan adds that he prefers the way the Elements-rolled joints burn to the way RAW papers burn — which he says results in a more even burn, with "less running," which is when one side of the joint burns a little faster than the other.

Buds doesn't utilize no-lick cones, but Corgan says he gets around that by keeping a bowl of water handy to substitute for saliva before feeding the unrolled joint into a

vinyl roller for completion.

But whether a dispensary uses RAW or Elements brand rolling papers, both are the brainchild of New York City's Josh Kesselman, who says that his rolling paper empire has made "ridiculous quantities" of money, though he stresses that "it's never been about the money" and that "money is a lot of fun, but it's not the focus of my life and not the focus of RAW."

Kesselman also contends that his RAW papers are the best in the world, and that they are sold "everywhere people appreciate quality rolling papers," such as Japan, Italy and also Spain, where RAW rolling papers are manufactured.

One thing to note on your next trip to the neighborhood smoke accessory shop is the copious amount of shelf space occupied by RAW products.

"RAW has put out more products than anyone ever has," Kesselman says. On that note, he notes that "this past year I launched RAW black, which is probably the best paper we have ever made."

RAW black, being 25 percent thinner than other RAW papers, is supposed to allow you to taste the weed more clearly, which calls for using high-quality weed because, if you don't, then you will *really* be able to taste the brickweed — more so than if you rock with run-of-the-mill rolling papers like Top.



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

## WALT O'BRIEN

"I got my first camera at the age of 13," says Walt O'Brien, who joined the camera club at Stephen F. Austin Junior High in Amarillo, Texas. "Our darkroom was in the janitor's closet." O'Brien built a darkroom in the attic at home while in high school and another in the basement of his frat house at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. He spent one five-month summer season working at Yellowstone National Park while in college and three more summers there after graduating with a degree in German. "I had only one day a week off," he says. "I used it for landscape photography." In between summers he worked in a camera store in Amarillo, did freelance photography and took classes at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara. After moving to Oregon in 1973, O'Brien worked for photo firms in Corvallis, Salem and Roseburg. In 1980, he opened his own business, The Picture Machine, a one-hour photo lab in Roseburg. "It was the second one-hour lab in Oregon," he says. "I ran it for 15 years." Since 1996, he has provided custom photofinishing services in Eugene. He offers inkjet printing from film or digital, traditional film processing and enlargement, and late 1800s-era palladium printing. The front room of his shop at 2833 Willamette Street, Suite B, is the O'Brien Photo Gallery, currently featuring photographs by members of the Photozone Gallery group. O'Brien himself has been an active member of Photozone since 1992. His exhibit of 36 color photographs, *Natural Landscapes of the American West*, is on view at the University of Oregon Law Center's second-floor Atrium Gallery through July 7.

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