



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley  
Diners smoke marijuana as they eat dishes prepared by chefs during an evening of pairings of fine food and craft marijuana strains served to invited guests dining at Planet Bluegrass, an outdoor venue in Lyons, Colo.

## Gourmet ganja? Marijuana dining is growing up, slowly

By KRISTEN WYATT  
Associated Press

LYONS, Colo. — How to set a tone of woody chic at a four-course candlelight dinner served under the stars in the Colorado foothills:

Live musicians and flowers, check.

Award-winning cuisine, check.

Beer and wine pairings with each course, check.

Marijuana pairings? Oh, yes.

The 100 diners at this \$200-a-plate dinner smoked a citrus-smelling marijuana strain to go with a fall salad with apples, dates and bacon, followed by a darker, sweeter strain of pot to accompany a main course of slow-roasted pork shoulder in a mole sauce with charred root vegetables and rice.

And with dessert? Marijuana-infused chocolate, of course, grated over salted caramel ice cream and paired with coffee infused with non-intoxicating hemp oil.

The diners received small glass pieces and lighters to smoke the pairings, or they could have their marijuana rolled into joints by professional rollers set up next to a bartender pouring wine.

Welcome to fine dining in Weed Country.

### Away from Doritos

The marijuana industry is trying to move away from its pizza-and-Doritos roots as folks explore how to safely serve marijuana and food. Chefs are working with marijuana growers to chart the still-very-unscientific world of pairing food and weed. And a proliferation of mass-market cheap pot is driving professional growers to develop distinctive flavors and aromas to distinguish themselves in a crowded market.

“We talk with the (marijuana) grower to understand what traits they saw in the marijuana ... whether it’s earthy notes, citrus notes, herbal notes, things that we could play off,” said Corey Buck, head of catering for Blackbelly Restaurant, a top-rated farm-to-table restaurant that provided the meal.

The grower of one of the pot strains served at the dinner, Alex Perry, said it won’t be long until marijuana’s flavors and effects are parsed as intently as wine profiles. But that’s in the future, he conceded.

“It’s still looked down upon as a not-very-sophisticated thing,” said Perry, who grew a strain called Black Cherry Soda for his company, Headquarters Cannabis.

Holding his nose to a small jar of marijuana, Perry said, “If I asked my mom or my dad what they smell, they’re going to say, ‘skunk,’ or, ‘It smells like marijuana.’ But it’s like wine or anything else. There’s more flavor profile there.”

But chefs and pot growers trying to explore fine dining with weed face a legal gauntlet to make pot dinners a reality, even where the drug is as legal as beer.

Colorado’s marijuana retailers can’t also sell food, so guests at this dinner had to

buy a separate \$25 “goodie bag” from a dispensary for the pot pairings.

The bags came with tiny graters for diners to shave the pot chocolate onto their ice cream themselves; the wait staff could not legally serve a dish containing pot, even though the event was private and limited to people over 21. Diners were shuttled to and from the event by private bus, to avoid potentially stoned drivers leaving the dinner.

Marijuana dining may become more accessible in coming months, though.

Denver voters this fall will consider a proposal to allow marijuana use at some bars and restaurants as long as the drug isn’t smoked, with the potential for new outdoor marijuana smoking areas.

And two of the five states considering recreational marijuana in November — California and Maine — would allow some “social use” of the drug, leaving the potential for pot clubs or cafes.

### Tasting rooms

Currently, Alaska is the only legal weed state that allows on-site marijuana use, with “tasting rooms” possible in commercial dispensaries. But that state is still working on rules for how those consumption areas would work.

For now, marijuana dining is limited to folks who hire private chefs to craft infused foods for meals served in their homes, or to special events like this one, limited to adults and set outside to avoid violating smoke-free air laws.

Guests at the Colorado dinner were admittedly experimenting with pairing weed and food, many giggling as they toked between bites. It became apparent late in the evening that a rich meal doesn’t counteract marijuana’s effects.

## NOW HEAR THIS

# Emergency agencies turn off radio encryption

By DAVE COLLINS  
Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Some police and fire departments are bucking a trend to conceal dispatch communications from the public, acknowledging that radio encryption has the potential to backfire and put first responders in danger.

Agencies with digital radio systems have turned off the encryption to their main dispatching channels and others have decided not to turn it on. They say their officers and firefighters may not be heard during emergencies by responders at neighboring departments with radio systems that either don’t have access to their encrypted channels or aren’t advanced enough to have encryption capability.

Officials also say they are addressing concerns from critics who argue encryption decreases police transparency at a time when it is needed, especially in the wake of shootings of unarmed black people by police officers.

“The overwhelming opinion of encryption is that it works great for preplanned tactical environments like SWAT teams staging a situation,” said Eddie Reyes, deputy chief of Amtrak police and chairman of the International Association of Chiefs of Police communications and technology committee.

“But for day-to-day operations where officers are going across borders in emergency pursuits or foot pursuits, that’s where it tends to break down,” he said. “A good number of agencies are still operating on antiquated systems and would not have the ability to accept encryption.”

When Reyes was working for Arlington, Virginia, police in 2006, he said, an officer who fatally shot a teenager outside a restaurant inadvertently switched over to encryption mode on his portable radio. There was temporary chaos on the radio when officers en route couldn’t communicate with the officer in the shooting because their radios weren’t in encryption mode, Reyes said.

### On the coast

Dave Ham, Seaside police chief said, “We do not use an encrypted channel. It has not been an issue for us.”

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said “All the agencies in Clatsop County mainly use the main dispatch frequency which is plain language and nonencrypted. This is for clarity and transparency to dispatch, officers, and the public.”

“Cannon Beach does have



AP Photo/Dave Collins  
Police Chief Christopher Edson points out the department's dispatching communications system in Naugatuck, Conn.

an encrypted channel that is available,” he said. “But we very rarely use it when discussing confidential or officer safety information. It is several channels from our regular channel, so as not to be confused.”

### Gathering trend

A slow trend continues toward encryption, which has been around for years. It hides communications from public airwaves by modifying voice signals with coded algorithms, preventing people from listening via radio scanners, the internet and cellphone apps. Only people with encryption “keys,” the information needed to access the encrypted channels, can listen.

Open government advocates say the practice withholds crucial information about emergency situations from the public. Concerns also have been raised by news organizations, which say it cuts off journalists who monitor public safety broadcasts from being alerted to major events.

Police officials say they’re worried about the safety of their officers, because criminals have been known to track officers’ movements by listening to police communications.

They also say they want to prevent the public broadcasting of people’s personal information, including medical histories and juveniles’ names.

They further cite violence against officers around the country over the past few months and the response to the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, when people listening to police communications posted misleading and inaccurate information on social media.

Among police departments that have recently encrypted all communications are those in Anchorage, Alaska; Riverside, California; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Newtown, Connecticut.

“What happened this summer really culminated in making the decision,” Newtown Police Chief James Viadero said, referring to violence against police. “I had a legitimate concern for my officers.”

### Opposite approach

Other departments are taking the opposite approach. Police in New Orleans; Spokane, Washington; and other cities have vowed not to encrypt their main dispatch channels. Others that had encrypted their communications have turned it off.

Police in Mansfield, Massachusetts, turned off their encryption more than a year ago after officers expressed concern they couldn’t talk with counterparts in some neighboring towns, Police Chief Ronald Sellon said. Mansfield is home to the 20,000-seat Xfinity Center outdoor amphitheater, and there were worries about communications with other agencies if there was a mass casualty event at the theater.

Last year, Washington, D.C., officials switched off the encryption for fire communications. The move came after firefighters had problems using their radios in a subway tunnel during an emergency response. The tunnel filled with smoke because of an electrical malfunction, killing one person and sickening dozens more.

The Metro transit agency, which had a radio system in the subway that allowed below-ground communications by city firefighters, said the radio problems were the result of the fire department changing its own radio system, including adding encryption, without telling the transit agency. City officials denied encryption caused the problems.

Police in Naugatuck, Connecticut, like many departments, are keeping their main dispatch channel open to the public while maintaining encrypted channels to use during tactical operations.

Naugatuck Police Chief Christopher Edson cited the need to be able to communicate with other emergency responders, as well as the expense of encryption, which can cost several hundred dollars per radio to implement. Another issue was not wanting to block out the public, he said.

“We also want to be transparent,” he said, “during this particular climate in the country.”

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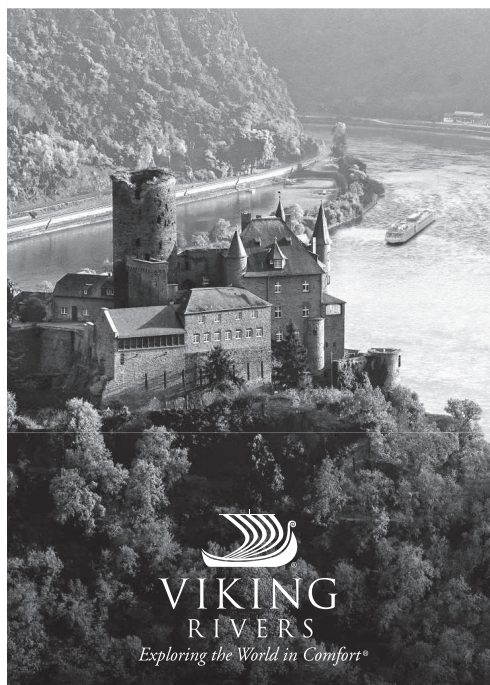
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