



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley

In this Oct. 2 photo, 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. 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 legal.

Gourmet ganja?

Marijuana dining is growing up, slowly

By KRISTEN WYATT
Associated Press

LYONS, Colo. — How to set a tone of woodsy 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 the meal.

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.

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,



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley

In this Oct. 2 photo, a menu shows the dishes paired with certain strains of pot 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.



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley

In this Oct. 2 photo, diners chat and smoke marijuana, before eating 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.

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.

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

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apparent late in the evening that a rich meal doesn’t counteract marijuana’s effects.

“What was I just saying?” one diner wondered aloud before dessert. “Oh, yeah. About my dog. No, your dog. Somebody’s dog.”

The man trailed off, not finishing his thought. His neighbor patted him on the back and handed him a fresh spoon for the ice cream.

Diners seemed genuinely curious about how to properly pair marijuana and food without getting too intoxicated.

“I am not a savant with this,” said Tamara Haddad of Lyons, who was waiting to have one of her pot samples professionally rolled into a joint. “I enjoy (marijuana) occasionally. I enjoy it with friends. I’m learning more about it.”

She laughed when asked whether marijuana can really move beyond its association with junk-food cravings.

“I have also munched out after being at the bar and drinking martinis and thinking, ‘Taco Bell sounds great,’” she said.

Green sandwich spread transforms ham and cheese

By ELIZABETH KARMELE
Associated Press

My sister sent me a text about a green spread that said, “you have to make this...love it on sandwiches, crackers, eggs, etc.”

And she was right — this green spread is a sandwich genie. It is also a great way to get a few more vegetables in your diet. Better yet, it’s made with ingredients that you almost always have in the pantry.

The “Green Genie” spread, as my sister and I refer to it, is a garlicky pureed artichoke spread colored with curly green parsley that gives it a fresh clean flavor rich with garlic, lemon zest, pistachios and good olive oil. It is neutral enough to go with most of your sandwich fillings and enhance their flavor. It is also a great topping for crackers and if you keep it on hand, it’s an easy appetizer before dinner.

Making it took a bit of maneuvering in my blender, as the vegetables had to be pushed around to blend evenly, but soon I had a bright green, aromatic spread that was thick like a dip. I tried a little on a cracker and it made me want to have another. But it was lunchtime so I made a sandwich instead. I replaced my mustard and my lettuce with this spread and made a ham and Swiss cheese on rye. And, I was richly rewarded with the best sandwich that I had eaten in a long time.



HAM AND SWISS ON RYE WITH GREEN GENIE SANDWICH SPREAD

If packing this for a brown bag lunch, make the sandwich with frozen bread. By the time lunch rolls around, the bread will be freshly thawed.

Servings: 2

Start to finish: 15 minutes

- 2 slices rye bread
- 2 slices of Swiss cheese
- 2 slices ham
- Green Genie Sandwich Spread (see below)

Spread each slice of bread with the Green Genie Spread. Layer the ham and the cheese and cut sandwich in half. Enjoy at room temperature.

Green Genie Sandwich Spread (Garlic-Artichoke Spread):

- 1 can water-packed artichoke hearts, rinsed and drained
- 1/3 cup roasted pistachios or other nut
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 cup packed curly parsley, washed & dried
- Zest and juice of a large lemon
- 1/3 cup best-quality extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon fine-grain sea salt; more to taste
- White pepper to taste

Put all ingredients in a blender or a food processor fitted with the “S” blade. Process until smooth and pureed. Depending on your blender, you may need to use a spoon to move the ingredients as you process them.

Place in a non-reactive container until ready to use. Will keep in refrigerator for up to one week.

Ham & Swiss on rye:

Nutrition information per serving: 278 calories; 89 calories from fat; 10 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 30 mg cholesterol; 784 mg sodium; 32 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 15 g protein.

Green Genie Spread:

Nutrition information per serving: 112 calories; 85 calories from fat; 9 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 174 mg sodium; 6 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 2 g protein.

Why tomatoes lose flavor in the fridge

NEW YORK (AP) — If you buy tomatoes from John Bancher at his farmstand in New Jersey, he’ll recommend keeping them out of the fridge or they’ll lose some of their taste.

Now scientists have figured out why: It’s because some of their genes chill out, says a study that may help solve that problem.

Cooling tomatoes below 54 degrees stops them from making some of the substances that contribute to their taste, according to researchers who dug into the genetic roots of the problem.

That robs the fruit of flavor, whether it happens in a home refrigerator or in cold storage before the produce reaches the grocery shelf, they said.

With the new detailed knowledge of how that happens, “maybe we can breed tomatoes to change that,” said researcher Denise Tieman of the University of Florida in Gainesville.

She and colleagues there, in China and at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, report

their findings in a paper published Monday by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

They showed that after seven days of storage at 39 degrees, tomatoes lost some of their supply of substances that produce their characteristic aroma, which is a key part of their flavor. Three days of sitting at room temperature didn’t remedy that, and a taste test by 76 people confirmed the chilled tomatoes weren’t as good as fresh fruit.

Tomatoes stored for just one or three days didn’t lose their aroma substances.

Further research showed that the prolonged chilling reduced the activity of certain genes that make those compounds, Tieman said.

Her lab is already looking into the possibility of breeding tomatoes that don’t lose flavor in the cold, she said.

In the meantime, “Just leave them out on the counter, or leave them in a shaded area, something like that,” said Bancher, whose farm is in Gloucester County. “A tomato has a decent shelf life.”