

HEMP INDUSTRY



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HEMP PRIMER 101

WE need to sound intelligent if we want to change people's minds about hemp and Cannabis. There are already too many stereotypes about slacker stoners with the munchies. Yes, Cannabis legalization is supported by approximately seven out of 10 Americans, but we need to educate legislators and policymakers, friends and family alike. We shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but open your mouth and sound like an idiot and no one will take you seriously. If you're well spoken, it's harder to dismiss what you're saying. I'm not talking about talking down to someone with a long-winded lecture – if you sound authoritative people might, just might, give you the time of day. The first step is to use the correct terminology.

CANNABIS Everyone calls it marijuana, but it continues the racist legacy of prohibition. The word was used by Harry Anslinger to demonize our favorite plant by associating it with Mexican-Americans. I personally use the word "Cannabis" to distance myself from its racist connotations. It also provides me with the opportunity to share the history of the word.

HEMP Both Cannabis (see above) and hemp are Cannabis sativa L. Hemp aka industrial hemp, is legally defined as Cannabis sativa L. with less than 0.3% THC, thanks to the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 – colloquially called The Farm Bill.

STRAIN Everyone from farmers to dispensaries to budtenders and their customers call Harlequin, OG Kush, Panama Red, et al. 'strains.' I want you to sound truly knowledgeable. Bacteria and viruses have strains, plants have cultivars, or in the case of wine grapes, varietals. You run the risk of sounding elitist, snotty or outright obnoxious if you make a big deal about it, but you'll win points with botanists, agronomists and sophisticated stoners when conversing about cultivars.

OVER THE LAST 20 TO 30 YEARS, GROWERS HAVE FOCUSED ON HIGH THC LEVELS THROUGH SELECTIVE BREEDING.

INDICA AND SATIVA (not to mention hybrids) Odds are everything you're consuming is a modern hybrid. Only a few have access to vintage heirloom landraces like Maui Wowie, Oaxacan or Thai Stick (which was usually grown in Laos). Over the last 20 to 30 years, growers have focused on high THC levels through selective breeding. When outdoor growers faced arrest they moved indoors – a move which favored indicas over sativas because of their shorter height and shorter flower times. I prefer to use indica and sativa as adjectives that describe the experience, not a cultivar's genetics.

TYPE 1, TYPE 2 AND TYPE 3

These terms categorize plants by the relative amounts of THC and CBD. Type 1 plants are THC dominant, Type 3 plants are CBD dominant, and Type 2 plants tend to be a balanced mix of THC and CBD. These words gracefully sidestep the indica, sativa, hybrid mess.

ISOLATE AND DISTILLATE

Both are hemp or Cannabis concentrates. The difference is not so much how they're made, but what is extracted or not extracted from the plant material. Isolates are made to extract one particular chemical, usually CBD or THC. Distillates, by definition, contain a wide variety of compounds. The former is what I call reductionist chemistry. One and only one chemical at the exclusion of everything else. Distillates are whole plant, full spectrum extracts that evoke the entourage effect, the synergistic result of cannabinoids, terpenes and other compounds acting together. Given the choice, reach for distillates over isolates.

We're all hemp and Cannabis activists because the War on Drugs isn't over. Those arrested and incarcerated are POWs. There's plenty of work ahead of us and the more persuasive we are, the faster things will change. Whether you're speaking to someone face to face, writing a letter to your elected officials or discussing current events with reluctant family members, be patient and speak gently. Choose your words carefully, take the above suggestions to heart and you can't go wrong.