

THE Herb COMPANION

Hemp Products Hitting the Shelves after Judge's Ruling

By Kathryn Compton and Amy Mayfield

A federal judge's ruling early this year has opened the door for hemp food and body-care products to find their way onto shelves in the U.S. marketplace. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Drug Enforcement Administration had overstepped the bounds of controlled substance laws when it attempted to ban foods containing trace elements of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, more commonly known as THC (the psychoactive component of cannabis). Unless the Justice Department appeals the decision to the Supreme Court — which it had not done by press time — the ruling marks an end to a ban on the sale of hemp products for human consumption.

Hemp is easy and inexpensive to grow and can be made into a variety of everyday products, including paper, fiber, food and fuel. Though it is derived from the same plant species (*Cannabis sativa*) as marijuana, hemp contains only a trace of THC — an amount comparable to the amount of opiates in poppy seeds. For comparison, hemp contains about 0.3 to 1.5 percent THC, whereas marijuana contains approximately 10 percent or more THC.

Hemp: A Nutritional Powerhouse

- Excellent source of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids
- High in fiber
- Good source of protein
- Contains all essential amino acids
- Rich in vitamins and minerals, such as vitamins E and C

Hemp seeds (and their oil) are high in protein, rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, and are used in food and an increasing number of body-care products. In the last few years, the hemp foods industry has exploded from less than \$1 million a year to more than \$7 million in retail sales, primarily in Canada, where hemp is legal. According to David Bronner, chairman of the Hemp Trade Association committee and principal of Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, the ruling is going to blow the market for hemp products wide open. "The decision ... is a huge boost to the hemp food market, and we expect to see many more hemp food products on store shelves," Bronner said.

Hemp Oil's Healthy Habits

Hemp seed oil, available at health-food stores, is a true nutritional powerhouse. The oil contains compounds that can benefit heart health, help support good mood and protect the skin from free-radical damage after excess sun exposure. The oil is a rich source of omega-6 (linoleic) and omega-3 (linolenic) essential fatty acids (EFAs). EFAs are essential because they lubricate the skin and tissues and cause cell membranes to function normally.

Getting ample EFAs in your diet can help improve some skin conditions, such as dryness, dandruff and hair loss.

Here are some tips for using hemp seed oil:

- Hemp oil tastes quite good. It has a dark-green color and a nutty flavor. Use it on salads, baked potatoes or popcorn.
- The perfect dose: 2 to 4 teaspoons of hemp seed oil daily (depending on weight) fulfills your daily requirement of essential fatty acids.
- Don't cook with hemp oil. At high temperatures, unhealthy byproducts are formed from the unsaturated fatty acids.
- Hemp oil often is sold in tinted or dark bottles to protect it from light (this is also true of other unrefined, cold-pressed oils).
- After opening your hemp oil, store it in the refrigerator and use it within six months.

Happy, Hemp-y Foods

Look for hemp in these food products:

- Coffee blends
- Corn chips
- Nutrition bars
- Flours
- Pancake mixes
- Nut butters
- Protein powders
- Hummus
- Milk substitutes
- Cereals
- Breads
- Vegetarian burgers
- Salad dressing
- Waffles

The Missing Health Link?

Many researchers believe fatty acids may be the missing link in a number of unsolved diseases. EFAs are being used by an increasing number of health-care practitioners to treat chronic inflammatory conditions, such as lupus, arthritis and psoriasis, sometimes with dramatic results. Hemp also may help improve your blood cholesterol profile and reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Hemp seed oil is one of the healthiest oils because it is available with no solvent extraction and contains an excellent balance of linoleic and linolenic fatty acids (in a 3:1 ratio) — even better than flaxseed oil, which is 1:5.

Clothing and accessories
Lip balms
Hair-care products
Lotions
Soaps
Paper

For Mood and Brain

EFA's are associated with mood and mental functioning, so hemp may help you stay cheery and keep your brain working smoothly. EFA's are essential for proper brain development and function of the brain and nervous system. Some researchers believe that the amount and type of polyunsaturated fatty acids (including EFA's) in your blood can affect both mood and behavior; so if your brain doesn't have access to the right amount and quality of fatty acids, you might be more prone to depression and hostility.

Hemp seed oil also contains 2 to 4 percent of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), the well-known ingredient of evening primrose oil and black currant seed oil, which also can support a healthy mind. Numerous studies have shown that GLA is often effective for reducing symptoms of skin ailments, such as eczema.

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