

CBD Mixology

Bartenders find new ways to mix non-psychoactive cannabis products into drinks

As cannabis legalization continues to move forward across the country, with more states regularly allowing for medicinal and recreational cannabis use, the platform for CBD-enhanced products behind the bar is growing. Federal prohibitions remain in place to prevent serving alcohol and fully loaded THC products in the same space, but cannabinoid offshoots like CBD, and now marijuana terpenes, are slowly being embraced in creative new ways by mixologists.

“CBD has exploded in popularity and I truly believe the stigma of it being marijuana has largely diminished in recent years as people become more familiar with the benefits of CBD,” says Paige Nast, corporate beverage director and mixologist for Tap 42 Craft Kitchen + Bar, a chain of nine restaurants in southern Florida with strongholds around Miami and Fort Lauderdale. “We use CBD as an infusion to complement select beverages, and it’s also an add-on option for any drink. We use CBD in an interactive way by infusing butterfly pea tea with CBD and putting that into a pipette dropper so guests can add it to their cocktails on their own.”

Tap 42’s CBD-enhanced staples include the Strawberry Kush (\$13 in Miami), made with Haku vodka, basil syrup, lemon juice, and fresh strawberries, topped with basil foam and the CBD pipette, and the Gin ‘N Chronic (\$13), mixing Bombay Sapphire gin with Jack Rudy Classic Tonic syrup and fresh sage, topped with the CBD pipette. “The infused butterfly pea tea changes color based on how acidic a beverage is, so that adds intrigue and makes it fun,” Nast says. “CBD drinks have become more popular in the last few years.”

In Seattle, The Pine Box bar sells Aprch Mint + Cucumber CBD sparkling water by the can (\$8 a 12-ounce can) and also uses it as a cocktail ingredient. The bar’s popular CBD-enhanced drinks include the F’n Smashed (\$11), which combines Pearl Cucumber vodka with muddled sugar and mint, topped with the mint and cucumber CBD water, and the Pimm’s & Chill (\$10), made with Pimm’s No. 1 liqueur, Durwoods gin, lemon, and the mint and cucumber CBD water.

The bar’s non-alcoholic cocktail Dealer’s Choice (\$6)—mixing Gosling’s ginger beer with simple syrup, muddled lime, and the mint and cucumber CBD water—is also popular.

“Having CBD available at bars makes it more approachable,” says Cynthia Huntley, bar manager at The Pine Box.

“Folks who know about CBD are generally happy we have it as an option. CBD has definitely made a name for itself and there are so many ways to use it.” Huntley adds that as the demand for low- and no-alcohol cocktails continues to rise, bartenders are embracing CBD as an alternative to more traditional boozy ingredients.

Los Angeles’ plant-focused restaurant Gusto Green opened this past January in a building owned by cannabis industry incubator Green Street. The venue doesn’t offer CBD-infused food or drinks yet, though the bar does play with cannabis-inspired terpenes—the naturally occurring chemicals in plants that are responsible for aroma, flavor, and color. “We use terpenes to boost the aromatic qualities of cocktails and for the wellness benefits associated with them,” says managing partner Jeronimo de Miguel. “We’re working with terpenes as the more approachable option, but look forward to working with CBD in the near future.”

Gusto Green lists the Nemo (\$17), a Paloma-inspired drink made with Rayu mezcal, Scrappy’s Fire Tincture bitters, grapefruit juice, and Abstrax Grapefruit Kush terpenes, and the zero-proof Weavers (\$13), mixing blueberry syrup, lemon juice, and Abstrax Master Kush terpenes. Each drink requires just a few drops of the terpenes. “Primarily, the terpenes add a layer of scent to the beverage, which in turn affects how your taste buds interpret flavor,” de Miguel explains. “As cannabis has become legal, the stigma surrounding it has crumbled and its use has [expanded]. While it’s illegal to sell cannabis and alcohol in the same space, we’re experimenting with flavors through terpenes so that when legalization occurs, we can have a fully developed cocktail program that incorporates cannabis responsibly and with intent.”



Southern Florida’s Tap 42 Craft Kitchen + Bar uses CBD-infused butterfly pea tea in a variety of drinks, including the vodka-based Strawberry Kush (pictured), which is served with a pipette of the CBD infusion.

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