

Colorado Panel Considers Labeling for Pot Edibles

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GOLDEN, Colo. (AP) — Marijuana can go in more than brownies and cookies. And the dizzying variety of foods that can be infused with the drug is complicating matters for Colorado regulators who want to make sure pot-infused edibles and drinks won't be confused with regular foods.

A first meeting Friday of edible marijuana makers, state regulators and pot critics ran into controversy early. Many seem to agree that pot cookies and candies should come with identifiable markers or colors. But what about marijuana-infused honey? Or pasta sauce?

Colorado opened recreational marijuana to adults over 21 in January. Since then, sales have boomed for edible pot, considered a tastier or healthier alternative to smoking weed. Now regulators are looking for ways to make sure no one accidentally eats or drinks the drug.

"I want to know what's a Duncan Hines brownie and what's a marijuana brownie, just by looking at it. Whether you're 5 or 50, people need to know what that is," said Rep. Jonathan Singer, D-Longmont, who sponsored the new law requiring edible marijuana to be "clearly identifiable."

Marijuana food and drink makers helping write those regulations didn't seem to oppose stamps or marks on easily-marked products like hard candies or chocolate bars.

But the workgroup tripped up when contemplating all the varieties of foods that can be infused with marijuana's psychoactive ingredient, THC. Liquids, powdered drink mixes, even meats and cereals can be infused with THC.

"How are we going to be able to make these edibles identifiable to the public, so that they know this is marijuana? This is a very, very heavy lift," said Gina Carbone, a volunteer for SMART Colorado, a group critical of the marijuana industry.

Carbone suggested that some edible marijuana products — such as lollipops or gummy bears — shouldn't be allowed for commercial sale because they are likely to appeal to kids.

"We're going to allow every edible imaginable, versus another approach where edibles are regulated," Carbone said after suggesting some products should be taken off store shelves.

But the suggestion got a sour reaction from industry operators and Singer, all of whom argued that the black market already produces unregulated edibles, and that banning food people want to eat is a bad idea.

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"We're here to identify products, not to limit items on the market," said Jaime Lewis of Mountain Medicine, which makes pot-infused sweets such as pie bars and chocolate-covered pretzels.

The panel made no decisions Friday and plans to meet twice more before making a recommendation to the Colorado Legislature in February.

The meeting came a day after Colorado adopted emergency edible-pot rules aimed at making it easier for consumers to tell how much pot they're eating. The new rules require edible products to be easily divisible into "servings" of 10 mg of THC, about the amount in a medium-sized joint.

Colorado's rules already require edible pot to be sold in "servings" of 10 milligrams of THC. But many consumers have complained they can't tell what a serving is and eat too much of a heavily dosed product. Those stronger-dosed edibles are holdovers from the medical pot marketplace, where sellers say consumers who have built up strong tolerances won't buy anything that has a dosage less than 100 milligrams of THC.

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