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A New Way to Cure Bud



Who knew the process of curing cannabis is remarkably similar to curing meat or cheese? David and Jane Sandelman figured it out and have since applied their knowledge to provide a much-needed product. Lee Allen met up with them to discuss process, products, and demand.

by Lee Allen

While the origins of drying cheese predate recorded history (perhaps as far back as 8,000 BC), super techie David Sandelman has updated that process as a way to dry and cure weed instead of cheese.

And “whey” not?

The process used on artisan cheeses (and in charcuterie) is similar to drying cannabinoids with all the products having a comparable goal — drying product to its optimal stage.

“It’s called vapor control technology. We tried it and the results were amazing, game-changing,” says David, the chief engineer at Cannatrol. David and his wife, Jane, who founded Cannatrol together, are awaiting receipt of a patent on their Vaportrol technology that gently removes water while continuously maintaining vapor pressure during the drying and curing process.

Modest and measured in his response, David says, “We didn’t invent basic physics. We just took the concepts and applied them.”

The Sandelmans are corporate refugees from the New York area who decided nearly 20 years ago to buy a rustic inn in a rural Vermont community. “We ran it for 10 years and used to serve a lot of local cheeses, so we became friendly with cheesemakers who were complaining of problems controlling their drying rooms,” says Jane, who acts as Cannatrol’s chief marketing officer.

Turns out, Dave’s technical background helped solve some of those problems and that’s the genesis from edibles to smokables.

“We cool dry a superior product to the point where water activity can’t survive any longer and you end up with a shelf-stable product,” adds Jane.





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As most people know, flowers from a cannabis plant aren't very smokable without drying them first. Also, without drying, you get mold and decay, just like many foods.

Traditionally, people would harvest the flowers and hang them outside in a barn or their basement. But if it's outside, it's subject to all kinds of weather conditions from hot and humid rainy climates to extremely arid weather and the end results can be unpredictable. Originally with cheeses, they were made in particular regions around the world at a certain time of the year, but we now have the capability to do that year-round.

“It's the same with our system — you can cure, year-round, in bone-dry weather in the desert, or hot, humid conditions in places like Florida,” says Dave.



Once they get the flower to a desired stable water activity condition where it's shelf-stable, it is moved into a controlled environment for the curing process where all kinds of chemistry happens to enhance the product and improve its taste and flavor.

"What we bring to the industry is consistency and measurable, quantifiable results," says Jane.

And, according to Dave, "we bring better yield because our Cool Cure environment results in higher terpene retention. If you dry cannabis flower too fast, you wind up with a hay smell resulting in a harsh smoke. We offer the ability to control the moisture rate and a mechanism to dial it in for optimum results. We offer producers a way to deliver a superior product, a better quality smokable flower with higher terpene retention, and because our product isn't over-dried, final sale weights are higher, adding more profit to the bottom line.

"Once you get to the point of a shelf-stable product, any additional water you remove from the product represents lost revenue because at the end of the day, when product is weighed, if you've been able to retain that water while remaining shelf-stable, you add two-three-four per cent of weight... and that's two, three, four per cent of top-line sales that goes directly to the bottom line. Just like time is money, in this case, weight is money."

"After a couple of months, they begged us not to take the units away, **so we knew we had a winner.**"

The company makes small cure boxes for the home grower all the way up to a 1,200-pound commercial unit. "The tabletop unit utilizes the same physics as larger systems which can literally be scaled to any size required," says Dave, noting the return on investment is very short.

"We got a tremendous reaction from our beta testers before we released to the public," says Jane. "After a couple of months, they begged us not to take the units away, so we knew we had a winner. We took the product on the road and have been shipping units across the country, from California to Maine. One of our larger installations did a sensory panel with our end-product and panelists preferred Cannatrol-dried product two-to-one."

Dave makes the comparison this way: "Comparing our results is like comparing a \$3.99 bottle of wine versus a \$50 bottle. You can chug both of them down and they'll produce similar results, but there's a clear reason why people purchase the higher-priced product... because it's better."

The inventors believe their technology may not be the missing link in the industry, but it could represent the solution to a weaker link in the process.

"A lot of work is already being done on seeds and genetics, lighting, and nutrients. Everything up to the point of flower harvest, but there's a gap when it comes to the dry and cure step of the process and that's where our technology comes in," says Dave. 