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HOW IT'S MADE

How Cannabis-Infused Beverage Mixes Are Made

Almost any beverage can become an infused one with the addition of a futuristic beverage mix. Learn more and find out how these dissolvable cannabis powders are made.



It sounds like something from a science lab of the future: Stir a single-serving beverage mix powder into your favourite drink, and in less than a minute, it's infused with THC or CBD. Welcome to the world of water-soluble cannabis, a highly innovative and relatively new format that can turn almost any beverage into a cannabinoid-infused drink.

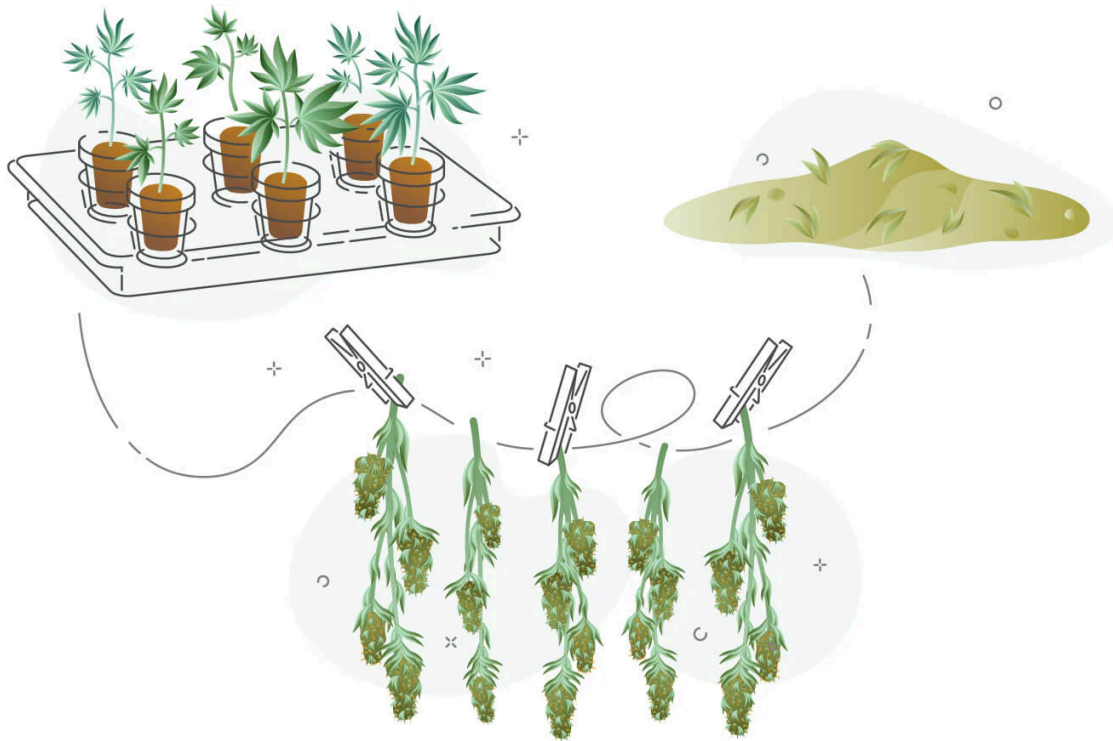
While THC and CBD dissolve very well into fat-rich foods, such as chocolate and oils, they don't play well with water. But traditional edibles made from those ingredients need time for the body to absorb the cannabinoids; the speed of their onset can vary widely.

Enter nanoemulsification — a process that turns cannabinoids into a liquid-friendly substance and improves their bioavailability. This means that they may be absorbed into the body relatively quickly.

We talked to Edison, one company making these pioneering beverage mixes, to find out what goes into the innovative production process, from selecting the raw materials through to testing and

packaging.

Picking Flower



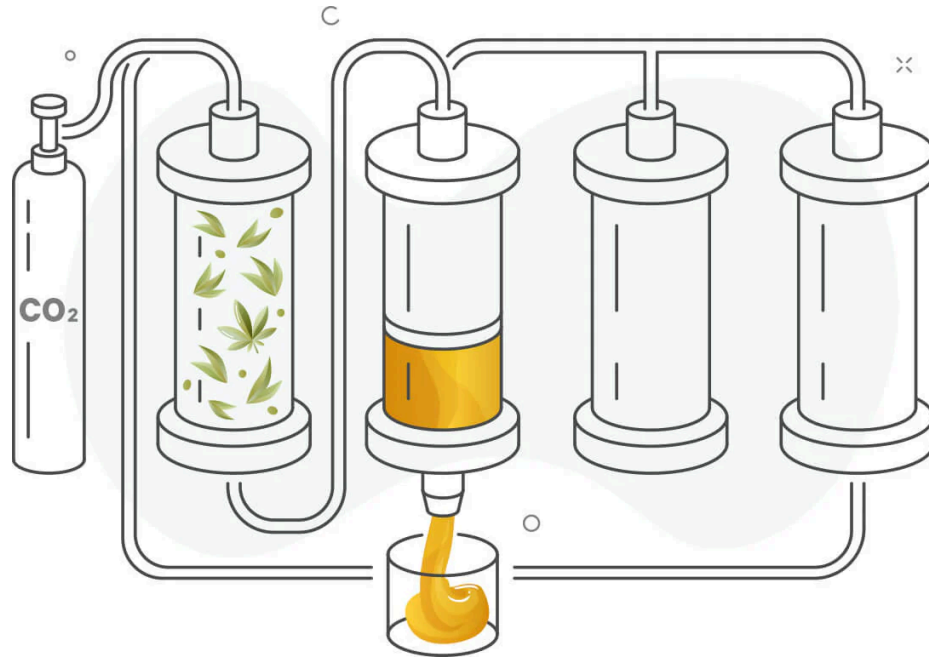
The first step in creating Edison RE:MIX, a white powdery beverage mix that's transparent once dissolved, is producing the cannabis itself. "We grow high-quality cannabis in our state-of-the-art indoor facility in Moncton, N.B.," says Judd Asoyuf, project manager of product implementation at Edison. The company chooses indoor-grown plants for its THC beverage mix and a blend of indoor and outdoor for the CBD variety (the company also makes a balanced formula), but there's no specific strain involved — the distillation and formulation processes ensure the finished product is consistent, regardless of the plant genetics.

After harvesting, the cannabis flower is dried and cured in Edison's purpose-built drying rooms. The cannabis is then milled, a process that grinds the plant material into a medium or fine powder, and sent for extraction.

Fun Fact

Edison can make 50 kilograms of RE:MIX beverage mix — equivalent to the weight of a baby hippo! — at one time

Creating the Extract



Here's where the process starts to get technical: The milled cannabis is processed to isolate the essential cannabinoids (THC and/or CBD, depending on the particular product). The technique is similar to the way many other cannabis concentrates are made, where the cannabinoids are separated from the plant material to create a highly concentrated distillate.

To get specific, Edison uses a supercritical CO2 extraction method. The milled cannabis is fed into the extraction column, where carbon dioxide, or CO2, is exposed to high pressure and temperature. This causes the CO2 to become “supercritical” and act as a liquid and a gas at the same time, breaking the trichomes and dissolving the plant material. A careful adjustment of the temperature allows the targeted cannabinoids to attach to the CO2, and they're collected as a concentrated extract.

Nanoemulsification Time



Now the real science happens. Edison uses a proprietary nanoemulsification process, so we can't give away too many secrets, but it's helpful to remember that "nano" describes something extremely tiny, and "emulsification" means mixing two typically unmixable liquids, like oil and water. The cannabis distillate must first be combined with a carrier oil; that mixture is then nano-emulsified, helping turn the cannabis distillate into water-friendly particles.

"RE:MIX powder is made in two main stages, similar to baking," says Asoyuf. First, the cannabis extract is stirred thoroughly with an antioxidant, sunflower oil, fractionated coconut oil, polysorbate and water to create a base formulation. This mixture is then combined with sorbitol and an antifoam powder in a large stainless-steel bowl.

A quality check ensures the entire batch is mixed evenly — that is, that the cannabinoids are dispersed homogeneously throughout. Once the batch has passed these tests, the mixture is blanketed in nitrogen to reduce oxidization and allowed to dry for three days. At this point, another round of quality-control testing occurs.

Testing Testing



“We follow all the standard processes cannabis producers are required to follow under Health Canada regulations to ensure the purity and integrity of the product,” says Asoyuf. Some testing is done in-house and some by a third-party lab.

Of equal importance is checking how the product works in the real world. “We tested the dissolvability of RE:MIX in many types of liquids, such as coffee, water, soda and juice,” says Asoyuf. The beverage mix is odourless, flavourless and mixes in clear. “The current formulation is compatible with most drinks but works less well with tannin-rich drinks such as green tea.”

Good to know

Adding RE:MIX directly to carbonated drinks will cause foaming, so Edison recommends premixing it with 1 tbsp (15 mL) of water and waiting for it to clear before stirring into your favourite fizzy drink

Testing complete, the beverage mix is then poured into a specialized filling machine that dispenses it, along with a dose of nitrogen to reduce oxidization, into individual moisture-resistant stick packs that bear the required standardized THC symbol. Beverage mixes are considered an edible, so it’s labelled like other edible cannabis products, including the potency and nutrition facts panel.

To ensure safety and further protection from moisture, the stick packs are placed in child-resistant containers, which are X-rayed to ensure there are no foreign materials inside. The checked packages are excise-stamped, put into cases and prepared for shipment.

The amount of THC and CBD is listed on the beverage mix’s product label. As with any cannabis product, the key to minimizing the risk of overconsumption is to start low and go slow. “Customers

should be aware that this product may act faster than traditional solid edibles, and plan accordingly,” says Asoyuf.

Beverage mixes can be combined with lots of other liquids and foods, too, such as frozen dessert, whipped cream, vegetable oil and even salad dressing to infuse an item with cannabis. Combining it with alcohol, however, is not recommended — doing so may cause severe levels of impairment and adverse effects.

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