

Mary Jane's unsteady future

by Mark Pavilons

Right next to the table of apple and cherry pies is one marked 'special blend' at the church fundraiser.

'Pot luck' events will make for some very happy church-goers in the coming year.

The 'special' ingredient making us all very merry is marijuana. The edible goodie, made with TLC and THC, will put a smile on everyone's face.

The organic menu at local coffee shops and bakeries will expand to include these home-baked products. They'd be advised to add some chips and other munchies to the menu as well! Guests may stay a bit longer though, as time slows to a crawl!

Edibles will present a whole new, scary scenario as we move toward legalizing marijuana.

The new law for purchasing and smoking marijuana comes into effect Oct. 17, but the powers that be are still struggling with restrictions on edibles, something they likely did not anticipate.

Cannabis-infused food products will become available, and this will raise everything to a whole new level of weird. If it's legal, and results in profits, you can bet we'll be seeing everything from cannabis cereal to weed chewing gum.

Apparently, edibles were not initially included in Bill C-45, but the parliamentary health committee decided last fall that a comprehensive approach was necessary.

According to a recently-survey from Dalhousie University, 93 per cent of those favouring legalization of marijuana are also very likely to try an edible product.

Our food industry is a massive, \$200-billion sector. From fast food outlets to food trucks and concession stands, food is everywhere. Imagine access to the edible loco weed will be universal and largely unrestricted.

But here's the scary part. Unlike smoking dope, edible ganja is discrete. You won't know if your co-worker is munching away on a power bar or a doobie bar.

There's no way to tell if your professor is enjoying the sunshine on campus, or relaxing after a bag of wowie chips.

Again, while consumption of pot in any variety is up to adults with a smidgen of common sense, how will this impact our youth and children?

Will a rushed parent substitute weed butter by mistake in their kids' lunch?

Will clever tots sneak a few grass sticks from the cupboard?

Health Canada staff have their work cut out for them in not only creating regulatory framework, but ensuring edibles don't get out of hand.

One of the main reasons for legalizing dope is to eliminate back alley dealers; getting the stuff off the streets and monitoring it. Of course, the government stands to make a ton of cash in taxes, too.

Food companies have to be stringent on safety issues, labelling and cautious in preventing misuse and lawsuits. All it takes is for one

person to die from a marijuana cracker and the whole thing goes up in smoke!

If the proper safety measures are put in place, it will, of course, be a windfall for food product manufacturers. The sky's the limit when it comes to new food choices!

It's not new, though.

In California in 2017, consumers purchased \$180 million worth of cannabis-infused food and drink. In Colorado, sales of edibles rose by some 60 per cent a year over the past two years.

There's more.

Will drinkable cannabis impact the alcohol business??Will we see maryjane mojitos on restaurant menus? Just what to you mix with a shot of reefer rum?

The slogan, "this Bud's for you," would be a hit and never more fitting.

And, this would provide a new twist on energy drinks, although in this case, it would be more like dullness drinks.

What's interesting is that the cannabis plant itself is full of nutritional value, making it a new-found miracle weed! It contains protein, carbohydrates, insoluble fibre, potassium, magnesium, sulphur, calcium, iron, zinc, vitamins E and C, and many other beneficial ingredients. Step aside Echinacea and grape seed, make room for Super Killer Bud!

The Dalhousie survey also revealed that roughly 20 per cent of food processing companies are interested in, and prepared to enter, the edible market.

Sure, we'll have a transition period and some industries may prefer to just wait and see. But it won't take long for others to jump on the bhong bandwagon. Where there's money to be made. I can seed this as the next bid deal, out-performing the whole dot-com industry.

The products are merely the end result, and what consumers see.

This whole business will spawn a multitude of college courses, growing equipment manufacturing, a new generation of "potting soil" concoctions, even air purification systems.

I'm waiting for the t-shirts and coffee mugs that exclaim "I drink my weed for breakfast!" or "World's highest grandpa!"

While more people will be enjoying laughing grass, it's not really a laughing matter.

The collective IQs of our leaders and bureaucrats will have to rise substantially, to offset the lowering of IQs of all those on wacky tabacky.

We are living in interesting times to be sure. All I can advise is buckle up, people, we're in for a heck of a ride!