

# CBD bakeries seeing increased sales during COVID-19

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CBD might have a powerful role to play as consumers look to foods for wellness during the pandemic. In March, a Brightfield Group’s survey found that 39% of CBD users said they plan to use it more frequently in the months ahead. Of that group, 48% said they had already stocked up or planned to stock up on CBD.

“Many of the companies I’ve talked to have said their direct-to-consumer business has been very strong throughout this time,” said Virginia Lee, CBD research manager, Brightfield Group. “We definitely see people using CBD to manage the additional stress and difficulties falling asleep.”

This piquing interest in CBD products comes after record-setting innovation in 2019. New products sprung up in markets around the country, both at restaurants, online and at CBD retailers.

Brightfield Group figures show that direct-to-consumer e-commerce was the single largest channel for edibles like baked goods with \$25.9 million in sales. Ms. Lee noted that e-commerce offers the widest selection of products.

Brick-and-mortar sales of CBD edibles in 2019 reached \$17.6 million in specialty retailers and \$14.2 million natural food stores.

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- Melissa Abbott, The Hartman Group

“Because they’re not national chains, they’re willing to stock not just topicals and tinctures and capsules but CBD drinks and products like CBD brownies, CBD popcorn and more,” Ms. Lee said.

She added that CBD foods won’t appear in larger national retailers until the FDA approves CBD for use in food. Consumers are not waiting for that green light, however. And restaurants are some of the businesses leading the way by adding CBD to their foods.

Spinelli’s Pizzeria in Tempe, Ariz., announced last year that it would let customers spike cocktails, beers, soft drinks and even pizzas with CBD oil. For an extra \$5, the restaurant will add CBD oil to the beverages or a slice of pizza.

The National Restaurant Association in 2019 asked 650 professional chefs from across the country what they thought the biggest trends of the year would be. The survey found that 77% named CBD. And what starts in restaurants often makes its way to grocery store shelves.

CBD is also starting to appear in snacks. ZBD Health, Boulder, Colo., introduced bars containing 10 mg of lab-tested, traceable CBD. The bars, which include flavors like Mint Chocochip and PB Chocochip, feature up to 7 grams of protein and are free from gluten, additives and artificial ingredients. They can be purchased online and at natural grocery stores.

*[Related reading: CBD could be a game-changer this decade, Nielsen analyst says]*

There is still a lot of gray area left in the CBD market as producers await a change of heart from FDA as CBD becomes more widely accepted. Until then, CBD- and cannabis-related products will remain a niche food, according to Pina Hosfaci, industry manager, packaged food, for Euromonitor International. In Euromonitor’s “Here Comes Cannabis” report, he said that the growth opportunities remain strong.

“Similar to the way plant-based disrupted the entire packaged food industry, cannabis is expected to bring a brand-new edge to mindful consumption,” Mr. Hosfasi said. “Today’s functional food-seeking consumer will convert into tomorrow’s mindful/mood-boosting consumer.”

While the use of cannabidiol (CBD) in food is not approved at the federal level, Florida is one of several states to legalize CBD in food. To sell or manufacture CBD foods, companies must be licensed with the state.

Glenn Family Bakery, Sarasota, Fla., is a licensed company that sells CBD baked goods through [www.CBDBakesSweets.com](http://www.CBDBakesSweets.com). It sells its branded products to CBD stores, farmers markets and coffee shops in Florida and distributes them to Connecticut, Colorado and Indiana. The bakery also makes private label products as a wholesale alternative. Transparency is key in everything the company does.

“All of our certifications are posted online,” said Lisa Glenn, who owns and operates Glenn Family Bakery with her husband, John. “Or if any shops need our Certification of Analysis, we send it to them so they have it on file.”

The certification documents the tested quality of the CBD and proves it came from a reliable supplier. For the bakery, taste is also paramount.

To get its line of 25 mg CBD bars, cookies, brownies and other baked goods to taste right, the Glenns had to do some research. Hemp extract has a strong taste, and certain CBD oils, they found, didn’t hold up to the high temperatures of the oven. The CBD molecules would break down, limiting efficacy in the final product.

*[Related reading: Can CBD be used in foods? Reply hazy, try again]*

So, Glenn Family Bakery opted to avoid CBD oil in favor of an isolate powder that mixes into the formula just like baking soda or baking powder. Because it’s an isolate, there are no negative effects on the taste or texture of the final product. And they can use the family’s standard recipe.

“We ended up going with the powder because it remains the same consistency no matter what temperature you’re baking it at,” Ms. Glenn said.

The company’s CBD supplier, Mindful Medicinals, in Sarasota, Fla., conducts one of three quality assurance tests on the isolate powder.

Ms. Glenn recognized the problem that CBD oils aren’t regulated across the country, and therefore, have a wide range of quality issues. To combat that, Glenn Family Bakery has taken on the role of consumer educator.

“The more people are educated, the more they are going to pay attention to where it comes from and how it’s made,” Ms. Glenn said.

The Hartman Group has identified a similarity between modern CBD and the organic and natural movements of the 1990s.

“Today, diverse cannabinoid products are storming into the vanguard of contemporary health and wellness culture,” said Melissa Abbott, vice president of Hartman Retainer Services at The Hartman Group. “There is a real opportunity here for a brand or brands to emerge that provide a consistent set of language, labeling and efficacy measures that the consumer can understand.”

Baked goods, given their indulgent nature, may also be prime carriers for CBD. The University of Minnesota recently found that epilepsy patients who consumed a fatty food before taking a dose of CBD had 14 times more CBD in their blood than subjects who didn’t eat something with a fat. The study, published in the medical journal *Epilepsia*, concluded that the type of food can make a large difference in the amount of CBD that gets absorbed into the body.

*This article is an excerpt from the August 2020 issue of Baking & Snack. To read the entire feature, [click here](#).*

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