



Fresh baby leaf
cannabis juice with
lemon, recipe by
Adam Pearson for
Kitchen Toke

BRAISED and INFUSED

Joline Rivera, founder and creative director of *Kitchen Toke* magazine, is demystifying cannabis culture and making weed and wellness part of the same conversation.

By Liz Grossman / Portrait by Bradley Murray / Food and beverage photography by Eva Kolenko

Look through the recipes throughout the beautifully designed cannabis-focused food and wellness magazine *Kitchen Toke* and you'll be hard-pressed to find what looks like, well, actual pot. Besides a single leaf joining avocado, pickled ginger and jalapeño as a garnish on a scallop poke bowl, or torn leaves sprinkled over raw broccoli soup with cashew cream, the medicinal ingredient shows up more subtly in the form of butters, oils, syrups, elixirs and tinctures in recipes that run the gamut from drinks to desserts (and we're talking more than laced brownies, although there is a recipe with sea salt caramels, peanut butter cups and pecans for that, too).

"If there's a way to use the plant, we will," says Joline Rivera, the founder and creative director of *Kitchen Toke* (kitchentoke.com). "We've juiced leaves, chopped them up and put them in salads; if there's an oil you can put in your food, then you can use cannabis."

But before Rivera knew you could glaze duck with THC-infused honey or spike blueberry-lemon Italian soda with CBD tincture, she saw the power of pot when her colleague's dad was dying of cancer in 2016. "It spread to his lymph nodes and his throat was swollen, but he wanted to enjoy his last few months," says Rivera, who got her hands on strong THC candies that could melt on his tongue. Within half an hour, he started feeling the

effects. "He was hungry, he was laughing, he was playing with his grandkids, he cracked open a beer and started eating a sandwich," she recalls. "His daughters were crying because they hadn't seen their dad like that in years."

One of those daughters was Nellie Williams, Rivera's colleague at a food service publication and close friend of more than 10 years. "I told her, 'We make pretty magazines. Let's see if we can do something that means a little more than just making things look pretty.'" They started looking at the medical marijuana industry in Denver (which had gone recreational in 2014) and tried to figure out where they fit in the cannabis space. They wrangled a legal team, talked to doctors and cancer patients, and Rivera applied for a medical marijuana card after years of dealing with chronic pain from a car accident in 2010. "I started to use CBD with light THC for my herniated disks in my neck and rotator cuffs, and I'd use it to recover from working out. I'd run five miles a day and it would help with inflammation," says Rivera, who was never a big pot user before. As a newbie, she felt in the dark when it came to getting information about cannabis. "It seemed directed toward people who already knew about it, and there are great magazines out there, but they're kind of scary if you're just a canna-curious person," she says.



Wild salmon with charred asparagus, fingerling potatoes and sedated saffron yogurt, recipe by Niki Ford for *Kitchen Toke*

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CANNABIS. FOOD. HEALTH.



Volume 2, Issue 3 (Fall) cover art by Ferrari Elite Sheppard

Inaugural Issue cover art by David Plunkert

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COOKING WITH CANNABIS



Plunkert

Sesame ginger soba noodles, recipe by *Kitchen Toke*





Jolene Rivera, founder
and creative director
of *Kitchen Toke*



Yuba “pasta” with chanterelles and carrots, recipe by *Kitchen Toke*

Her curiosity grew even more after seeing rapper Action Bronson smoking pot on his *Vice* cooking show. “He had a joint hanging out of his mouth and smoke around his food and I was thinking, ‘Why is he getting high while cooking?’ It was like a math equation in my brain I hadn’t connected yet,” she says. She brought it up to her longtime publishing collaborator, Editorial Director Laura Yee, who jokingly asked why he didn’t just put the weed in his food. That aha moment inspired *Kitchen Toke*. “We created something I refer to as the most friendly cannabis magazine in the world,” says Rivera, who launched it in January 2017. “You could give it to your grandmother, mother, sister—they won’t be offended or turned off.”

Now on its sixth issue, the quarterly magazine is sold in 2,500 stores around the U.S., and in Spain, the U.K., New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands and Canada. Food is the main focus, but it also covers health, wellness and cannabis culture (from how to host a CBD dinner party to what chefs like to eat when they get the munchies). The magazine also examines the validity of the ever-growing CBD product craze (from water to makeup), profiles athletes who manage their chronic pain with THC, and covers legislation and legalization news. “We have a section that’s kind of a state of the union, but every day there’s something new. It’s hard to keep up. We just try to pay attention and report the facts.”

Rivera and her team develop the recipes, and also work with chefs who already cook with CBD or are looking to learn more. “Our first issue was challenging because no one was really talking about it,” says Rivera. “Now, chefs come forward and say they’re doing it. You also have chefs doing it but won’t talk about it in public because they’re backed by a mainstream advertiser, and then you have chefs in the middle.” While the *Kitchen Toke*

recipes are generally for readers who have medical marijuana cards (necessary to buy THC products if you don’t live in a state where it’s legal), the nationwide availability of CBD oil derived from hemp (aka cannabidiol, which is said to offer similar therapeutic qualities of THC without the high) is a legal substitution that can be used in any recipe. “Regardless of whether you have access to THC products, you can still cook with our recipes because you can get hemp,” says Rivera.

Aside from the magazine, Rivera also produces online videos and how-tos, and is developing an app that will help pot users with dosing calculations, managing edible strengths and more. “It’s like a diary of your own cannabis path,” says Rivera. She also works with chefs to develop CBD dishes for private clients like Chicago rapper Vic Mensa, who wanted a CBD-dinner for his private album release party, and fashion designer Prabal Gurung, who had *Kitchen Toke* make CBD chocolate rum balls for a private-event at New York Fashion Week. “I have a chef who will take someone through a dinner by starting with THC then CBD to come down, then another THC and CBD to come up, so you’ve gone on a little roller-coaster ride and come out and you feel good,” says Rivera. Of course, for now, a dinner like that could only be pulled off in certain states, and is done only on a private event basis—just one challenge Rivera and her team face (advertising remains the biggest since some social media platforms block all cannabis content). But for now, Rivera is staying focused on the foundation.

“It takes a tablespoon of hemp CBD on anything you’re eating to make it a little more healthy,” says Rivera. “Even if you have no injuries—if you work out and have inflammation in your body, it’s really good for you.” 