

# THE LOST ART OF *THE HASHISHIN*



## PRESSING, CURING & AGING BY FRENCHY

Traditions are the reflection of the power of human observation and the corner stone of evolution, those that stand the test of time should be evaluated scientifically to show that the custom is in fact more than just old meaningless rituals. It is the best practice for the process.

I BELIEVE THE TECHNIQUE OF PRESSING, CURING AND AGING HASHISH FALLS INTO THIS CATEGORY.



Before going further I would like to offer a definition of the word Hashish for our discussion:

**Psychoactive drug made from sieving the resin glands of the dried female Cannabis flowers and from pressing them with a source of heat.**

From Afghanistan to Morocco, you will commonly find local Hashish smokers actively pressing resin glands before smoking. The various pressing techniques applied around the world are all focused on enhancing as much as preserving potency, original aromas and flavors. Hashish quality has been defined by its smell and taste since the dawn of time and science is discovering today the importance of terpenes. The medicinal value of terpenes and aromatherapy is well documented but the terpenes of the cannabis plants were not scientifically studied until it was found that terpenoid profiles would help determine the origins of the product in custom seizures.

Prohibition became the source of ground-breaking discoveries, we learned that terpenes present in cannabis resin enhance the potency of THC and the effectiveness of the medicine, as shown by the extensive research into Cannabis based medicines, done by GW Pharmaceuticals. Dr Watson, founder of Hortapharm, a legally chartered cannabis research firm in Holland, pioneered a study concluding that THC possessed stronger psychoactive properties when having a higher terpenes concentration. Nathan Spaulding, in his article "Importance of Terpenes", analyzed their ability to alter the permeability of both cell membranes and the blood/brain barrier, causing THC and other active cannabinoids to have a faster onset and more thorough absorption.

Traditional value of Hashish quality based on smell seems to make a lot of sense considering these research studies. Curing and aging are also universally practiced. The techniques may vary but shelf life, flavor preservation and mold-free curing support the practice. The origins of these traditions may be lost in history, and their full benefits are generally unknown to most in the Western Cannabis Industry, but I believe there is scientific foundation to these long practiced cultural traditions that the Western Cannabis connoisseur would benefit from exploring. Let's review the traditional Hashish making process and explore the known science behind these age-old beneficial traditions.

Fresh resin powder is hardly ever smoked anywhere in producing countries and as far as history and traditions show. Most solventless concentrate specialists do not practice the art of curing their resin, which would be comparable to smoking Cannabis flowers just dried, a big NO to all connoisseurs. High quality resin needs to be cured slowly, over a period of at least 3 months. If the flowers have not been cured before sieving, the resin should be kept in an enclosed and airtight container with temperature in the 90°F during the three months necessary for a perfect cure. The containers traditionally used for this first curing could range from goats' skins to metal boxes, anything but plastic. The container is opened every other day to prevent humidity build-up.

After three months, the polymerization of terpenes has transformed aromas and flavors as the Cannabis resin ages

and matures. We may also have to take into account that the plants are often dried in full sun, which would start a decarboxylation at the drying stage and bring the humidity to a lower level that would facilitate curing.

This maturation of the resin glands through curing is similar to the transformation happening during the flowers cure, especially when curing before trimming. A perfect curing of trichomes is mandatory to quality, why would it apply only to flowers?

There is more to pressing resin glands than mere transportation, convenience or marketing commodity. It is a complex operation that changes deeply the very nature of the resin glands, as well as their psychoactive and medicinal properties; an art form with thousands of years of evolution behind it.

## PRESSING

The various pressing techniques, used for thousand of years, always involve a source of heat.

Scientific studies shows that heat application literally activates the THCA into THC. The process of activating THCA into THC is called "decarboxylation". The decarboxylation of acidic cannabinoids occur in both daylight and darkness and seems to be a temperature-dependent process; it occurs naturally with time and temperature, as a function of drying and curing. The more heat, the faster the occurrence, within reasonable ranges. It occurs naturally when the material is burned or vaporized, however, when THCA and CBDA are converted into THC and CBD, THC is also converted into CBN at a faster rate; at about 70% of the decarboxylation, THC transforms into CBN at a faster rate than the conversion of THCA to THC.

It is a very delicate operation, important factors have to be taken into consideration when pressing with heat: the level of decarboxylation has to be in correlation with the length of curing done and the amount of aging planned since the decarboxylation will still be occurring naturally during these phases. The conservation and maximization of terpenoids are also dependent on your decarboxylation.

The transformation of loose resin glands into a resinous form brings out the fragrance of the flowers when breaking the membranes surrounding the resin heads and 'locks' the fragrance and flavors into the Hashish, the terpenes are 'bound', for a better term, in the mass with the cannabinoids through the pressing process. The resinous mass is 'corrosive', meaning that it will gradually absorb the resin gland's membranes and most microscopic vegetal matters in the first weeks of its transformation, resulting in a cleaner Hashish with a richer, more complex nose.

*Please note that there are no scientific studies to back up this reasoning, which is based on personal experience only.*

## AFTER PRESSING

The mass of resin going through a 'chemical stage of digestion', a final polymerization of the terpenes and chlorophyll dissipation, will need time to 'settle down' to a non-active stage. Cannabinoids stability being influenced by light, temperature, humidity and oxygen availability; the choice of container, curing environment and regulation of oxygen is crucial.



## AGING

Most connoisseurs would agree that the aging process helps mellow the smoke and improve the flavors but, again, there is very little scientific data available on the subject. On the other hand, there are plenty of first-hand reports about quality Hashish as old as 12 years, 3 to 5 years being common. Like tobacco, wine, hard liquor or cheese, aging develops the taste but, again, the choice of container, aging environment and oxygen removal is essential to the process.

Hashish cured and aged to perfection has no rival in quality. Traditions learned in producing countries have had a strong influence in the way I sieve with ice water today. The technique of sieving does not truly change when using water as a 'containment' medium but working with ice and water offers new grounds to study especially when it comes to pressing, curing and aging after drying trichomes.



## PRESSING *FRENCHY STYLE*

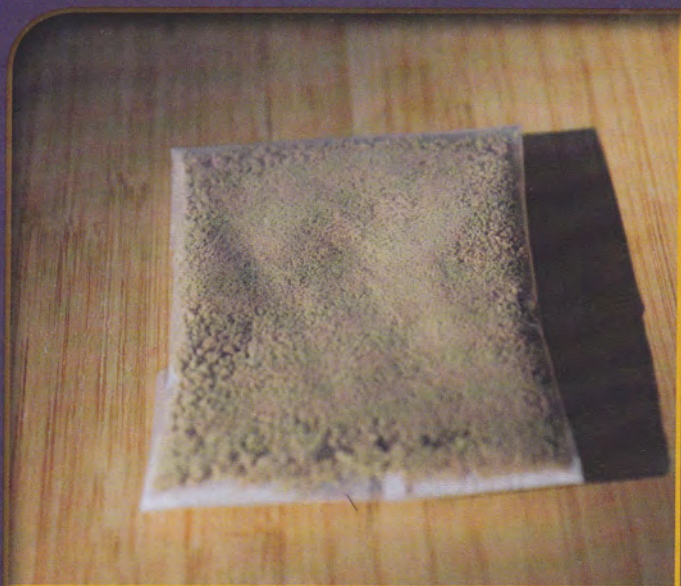
Place loose trichomes in heavy plastic and constrain resin glands to limited area to facilitate pressing.



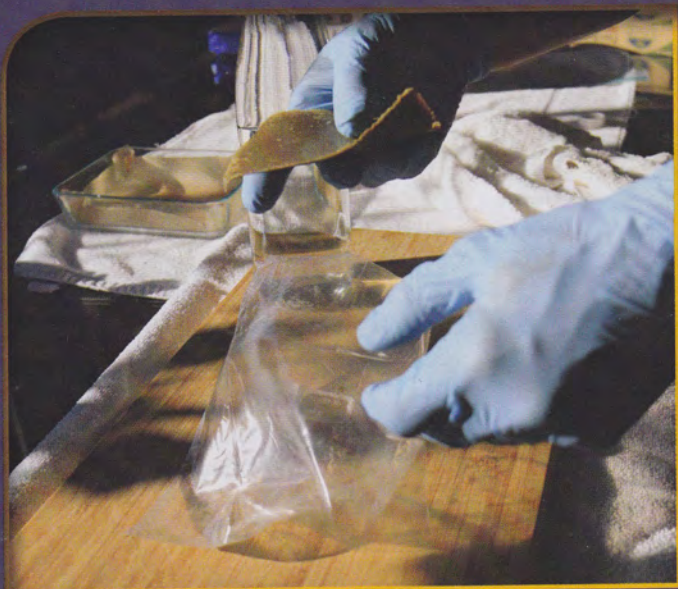
Press with bottle filled with boiling water.



Open up the plastic, and finish melting the resin glands as if you were rolling a pie crust.







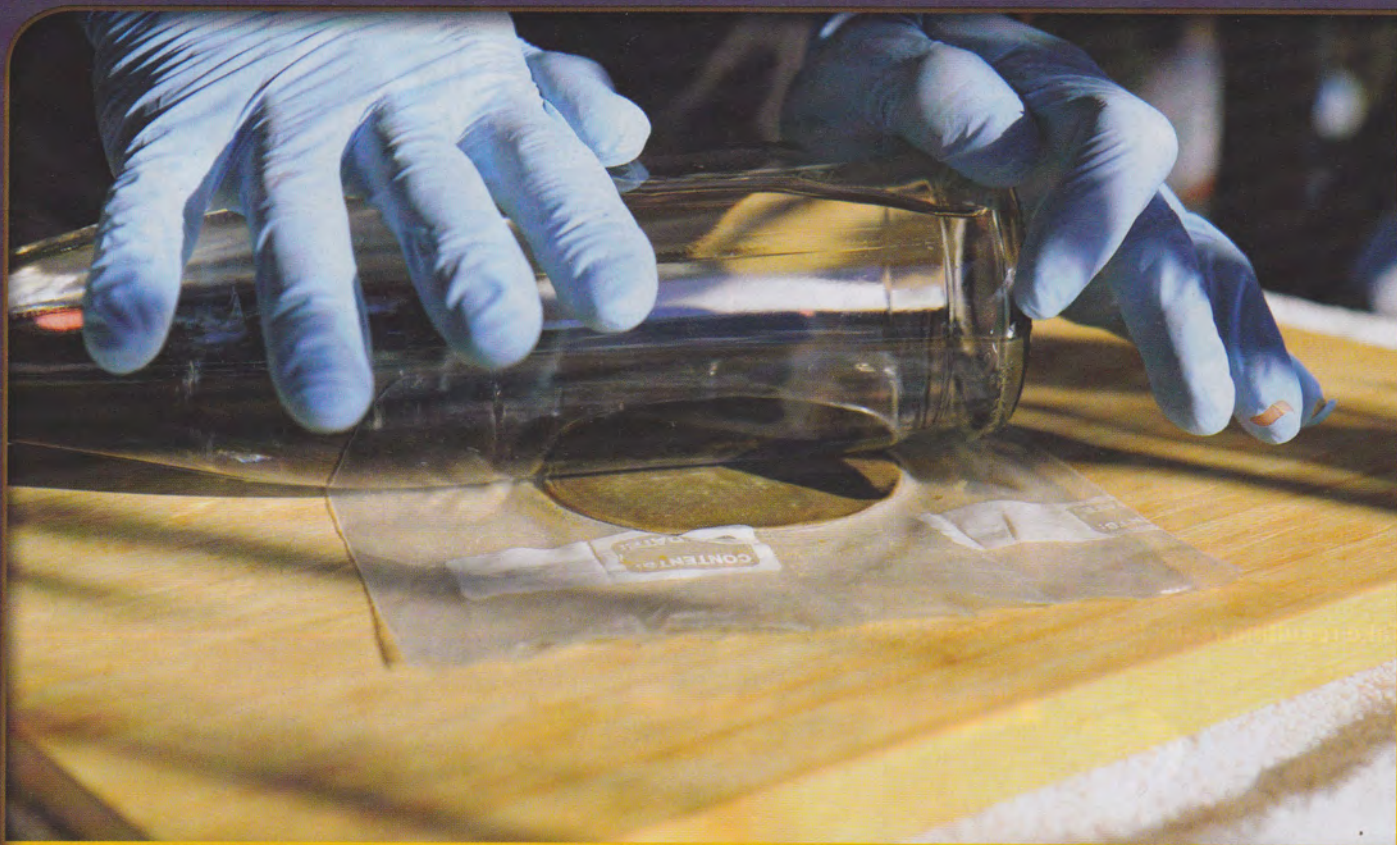
► Take resulting resin, fold it and place it back in plastic.



Repress with new bottle of hot water.

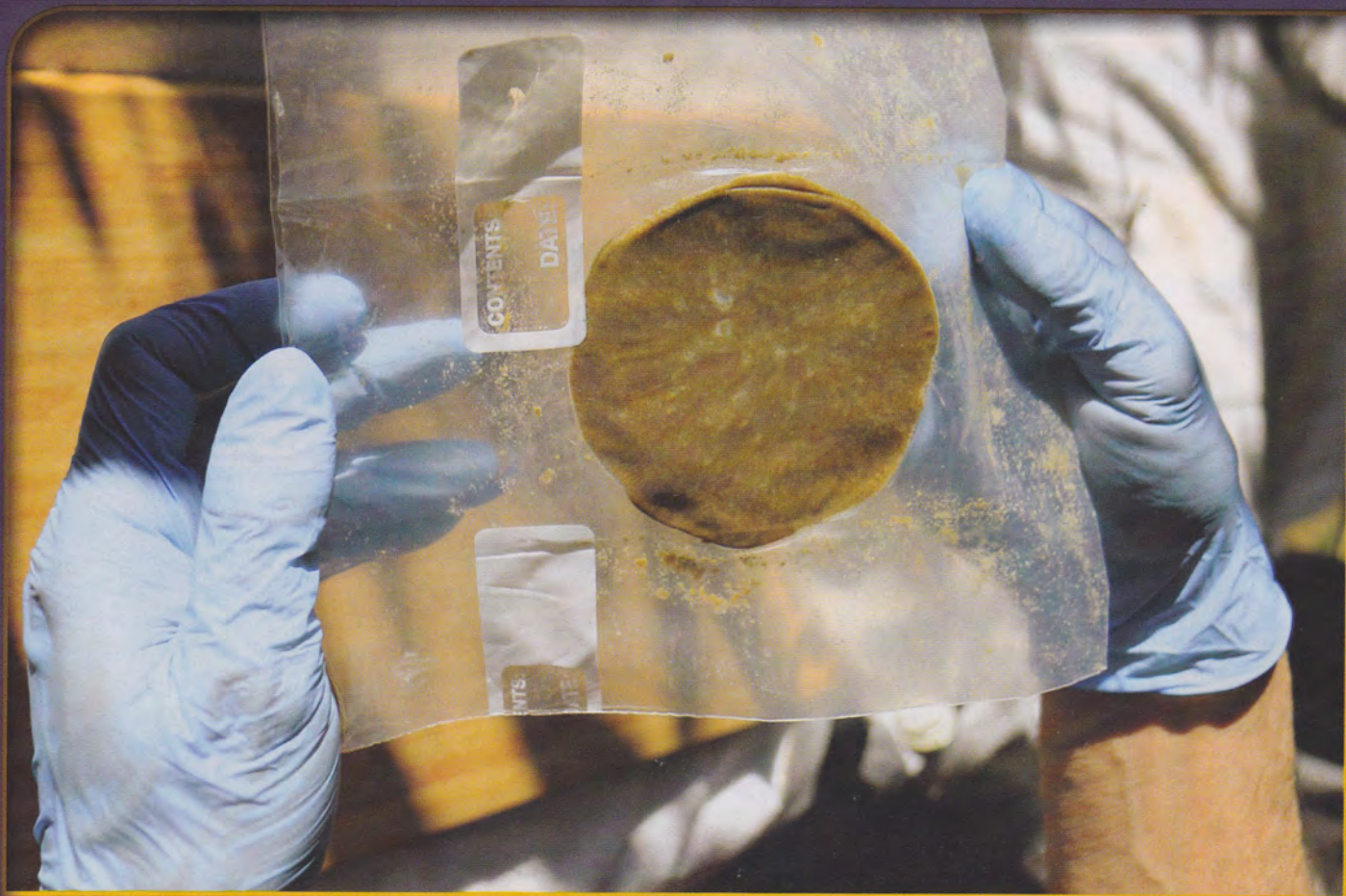






Refrigerate the plastic 30 seconds to facilitate removal of resin if necessary. ....

Repeat three to five times the folding and pressing process. ....





Roll it up like a cannoli.



## AGING

A smaller size container is recommended for aging and long-term storage.

I will conclude this article by a simple question; if pressing resin was just a convenient way of transportation for our ancestors, why would it have gone through thousands of years of evolution and always been such an important part in defining quality despite being so impractical and so much work?

## BY FRENCHY, PHOTOS BY TC

### Bibliography:

*Importance of Terpenes*

Posted on November 13, 2011 by Jason-Lauve

By Nathan Spaulding

<http://cannabishealthnewsmagazine.com/news/1238/importance-of-terpenes/>

*Cannabis Review by Dr Arno Hazekamp*

Department of Plants Metabolomics, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherland

(<http://skunkpharmresearch.com/decarboxylation/>) (Skunk Pharm Research, LLC.)

*Marijuana and the Cannabinoids*

Forensic Science And Medicine 2007

*Cannabis and Natural Cannabis Medicines*

Robert C. Clarke BA, David P. Watson

MARIJUANA AND THE CANNABINOIDS

by Mahmoud A. ElSohly, PhD

The School of Pharmacy, The University of Mississippi; ElSohly Laboratories Inc., Oxford, MS

*Advantages of Polypharmaceutical herbal Cannabis compared to single-ingredient, synthetic tetrahydrocannabinol*

By John McPartland at the Third International Symposium on Bioresource Hemp, Wolfsburg, Germany

## AFTER PRESS CURING

Choose a container slightly bigger than your cannoli to minimize oxygen degradation.

Pop container open to breath once a day for 3-4 weeks.

