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AFRICA
WOMEN AND GANJA

**CHERRY
GASM!**

Dimensions of
RIPENESS

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PART 1

BY FRENCHY CANNOLI





I have worked alongside Hashishins in the producing regions of the world and shared their lives with no more credentials than a love for excellence, a passion for Cannabis resin and no further goal than making the highest quality Hashish from season to season.

The passion and knowledge of these families, masters of the trade for countless generations, is vast, and was shared without restraint. The learning was an unconscious but natural absorption of a methodology rooted in pure awareness with no scientific or sometimes even logical rationalization.

There are basic natural and obvious characteristics of the resin that dictate methodology and quality, dry sieving for example has to be done in the winter since cold and dry conditions facilitate the processing, and oppositely pressing requires warm conditions. There is also a less apparent procedure, like curing resin three to nine months on the plants before sieving, which is a fundamental factor in the overall quality of the resin, but not the determining element.

I had never truly thought of the question in depth until recently. Outside the fundamental understanding that a healthy plant at the peak of its flowering cycle is optimum to resin quality I had certainly not sought the source of quality.

I had solely sought perfection in resin ripeness while hand-rubbing Charas in India and Nepal. The maturity of the trichome heads is quite apparent when caressing live flowers to collect resin; it is sticky and smelly when ripe and your senses bear witness to the fact.

My experience in Hashish producing countries on the other hand had mostly been with dried and cured material, as tradition demands, and I had never thought truly of the reasons behind the different resin qualities at the time. The different grades that are dictated by the different levels of resin cleanliness were the key factors of quality in my eyes then.

As all craftsmen, the quality of my work is entirely defined by the knowledge of the material I work with and the

tools I use; I had a deep knowledge and a number of years of experience with various sieving methodologies but I knew next to nothing about the biological processes of the material I was collecting, the trichome and the resin within.

Hashishins have the privilege to work with the most amazing compounds crafted by Mother Nature, the Cannabis resin; eighty plus cannabinoid compounds created by the bounding of the two most common molecules found in the plant kingdom, terpenes and phenols. A process so complex that Nature's secret behind this transformation has yet to be fully understood.

As much as the knowledge of the secretory development of cannabinoids in the resin heads is vital to my quest in understanding the mystery of resin quality, my whole approach was changed by a simple fact of nature unknown but one that I had experienced every time I touched a dry Cannabis plant: mature resin heads fall at the slightest touch.

A resin head is made by nature like a fruit or a leaf, and as such falls at the end of its life cycle. Or to put it in scientific terms: "An abscission zone develops at the base of the head where the stipe cells attach to the disc cells resulting in abscission of glands upon attaining maturity".

This simple piece of evidence was a revelation! Judging ripeness while harvesting fruits from a tree is not too complex, a first light shake of the tree will bring down the ripest fruits, a second shake a little harder will bring fruits that are slightly less ripe and so on until the tree is bare.

My ice-water sieving technique is an adaptation of dry sieving methodology,



Quality is primarily determined by the amount of resin formed in the resin heads, better known as melt, so that the knowledge of all aspects of the resin glands, their composition and the chemistry behind the formation and the development of the resin, its cannabinoids and terpenes content is mandatory to finding the Cannabis resin window of excellence.





as well as a maximization of the characteristics of a sieve. The most basic principle of sieving is that the harder you shake the more product falls through the perforations of the sieve. Therefore, I had unconsciously collected different levels of ripeness all my life but had been focusing only on the cleanliness of the resin, an inherent necessity to sieving dry material that breaks into fine particles at the gentlest touch.

The preservation of the resin purity is not such a concern with the ice water sieving process; re-humidified leaf material that has regained all its flexibility can be shaken thoroughly without breaking apart. I agitate my material within a vortex of water that applies a constant force, and so the strength of my "shaking the tree" is defined in fact by the length of my washing cycle, as for many things in life timing is primordial to success or quality in our case.

I wash one batch of material an average of eight to twelve times. My first wash is hardly longer than a minute. The following washes are a minute or two longer than the precedent and, as such, each wash shakes a different level or dimension of ripeness from the leaf matter, from the ripest to the less mature resin heads.

The resin collected in those washes varies in color from a dark amber to a milky color, the first wash holds the ripest resin and always has a darker shade of amber which, washes after washes, lightens to a creamy golden colored resin.

As with all fruits there is what we could call a color scale of ripeness,

each color exemplifies a dimension of the maturation of the resin, an easy approach to judging and selecting ripeness.

The resin we collect is the bibliography of the plant's life, the Book of the Hashishin.


There is plateau of maturity that defines quality within the dimensions of

ripeness; the geography, the climate, the genetics and the knowledge of the grower dictate this.

The window of optimum development of the resin is relatively small. While the formation of the trichomes start early in the life of the Cannabis plant, like the fruit nature designed it to be, initially, it has a slow growth ending with a swift ripening.

A cannabis plant harvested one or two weeks early will produce flowers



It is an enlightening experience to separate dozen of washes and work separately with all the dimensions of ripeness a plant has to offer. The difference is hard to discern while the resin is wet. It becomes more apparent once dried, and obvious once pressed and rolled into Temple Balls. 



showing high level of cannabinoids, however the collected trichomes will hold very little resin and will be impossible to press into Hashish or even hard press into resin sometimes.

On the other end of the spectrum, a plant harvested too late will produce a concentrate of lower quality in the first one to three washes; it will show a fair amount of resin when pressing but the degradation caused by over ripeness is apparent when compared to the following washes.

Between these two extremes, a different plateau of quality is found, and

in the middle stands perfection, the full resin development in every dimensions of ripeness which can only be produced by a plant brought to the peak of its flowering cycle. The resin may not offer the same melt as the ripest trichomes but to the last wash the resin will have formed fully and will press beautifully.

What is happening during these final two weeks of resin development that is so central to quality?

That is a question that I will strive to answer in Part 2 of the Dimensions of Ripeness.

References

1. *Abscission* (from the Latin *ab*, meaning away, and *scindere*, meaning to cut) is the shedding of various parts of an organism, such as a plant dropping a leaf, fruit, flower, or seed. (Wikipedia)
2. *THC Accumulation in Glands of Cannabis* Paul G. Mahlberg and Eun Soo Kim, Department of Biology, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN USA; and Department of Biology, Konkuk University, Seoul, Korea. <http://www.hempreport.com/issues/17/malbody17.html>

Frenchy Cannoli is a consultant, educator and writer in the Cannabis industry with special focus on hash making using traditional methods. Frenchy can be reached through his website at: www.frenchycannoli.com or seen on Instagram @frenchycannoli.

