

Author's Note

I'm a bartender. For nearly two decades, I've earned my living mixing and serving drinks in Frisco, Colorado, in the heart of Colorado ski country.

Frisco, a tiny mountain town, is an undiscovered gem compared to its more worldly neighbors like Aspen, Vail, and Breckenridge. Our little town sits in the middle of seven of some of the best ski mountains in the state, and our summers are quite beautiful.

I work in several local bars. People tend to talk pretty openly to bartenders. I have seen and heard the finest people doing the poorest things, and the poorest in character doing the finest things. I make no comments on what I see, and keep private things private. People ask me about sports, sex, psychology, local activities, where to park, where to eat, stocks, and wait, oh yes, sex again.

Even so, I was unprepared for the volume of questions and stories that arose about the cannabis industry when Coloradans voted, on November 6, 2012, to legalize pot. Customer curiosity exploded when the bill became law, and the first recreational pot shops opened January 1, 2014. I was *overwhelmed* by the amount of discussion. Never before had there been this much fervor behind a topic discussed at the bars where I work. Interest has yet to wane.

For years, my favorite greeting to visitors, tourists, and new arrivals was, "Welcome to the high country." I was referring to the elevation and especially the grandeur of our beautiful state. We have the highest elevated city in the country

(Leadville, 10,430 feet); the highest paved road (on Mt. Evans, 14,258 feet); and the highest highway tunnel (Eisenhower Tunnel, 11,000 feet). But now “the high country” has a whole new meaning.

Stories . . . I Get Stories

It didn't take me long to realize I was in a unique position to provide an eyewitness report on the real-world impact of Colorado's marijuana laws. The stories I heard from my customers, a broad mix of locals and tourists, covered an unusual breadth and depth of experiences. They ranged from the uneasy feelings about legalization to the nonstop search for new ways to find both fun and profit in legal weed. I was dying to share these stories and to hear more. It was time to get out from behind the bar.

Out from Behind the Bar

I began to compile my favorite anecdotes from the bar, and I pulled together a team of great people to help me brainstorm topics and collect interviews. We knew there were obvious people to talk with, like dispensary owners, but we also wanted to learn more about the people impacted by legalization who weren't in the public eye. People like the proprietors of new, related businesses, and the budtenders, the nurses, the illegal dealers, and even the “Town Stoner.”

Some of the team are in the food and beverage industry, one is in the computer industry, and a few are entrepreneurs. One of us has never smoked marijuana, one has in the past but doesn't anymore, two are casual or rare users, and one is a regular user. We set up a mastermind meeting and created

a mission: to deliver lighthearted, grassroots (yes, yes, I know) accounts of an unprecedented event—the legalization of marijuana in Colorado and its first eighteen months of mayhem.

What to Expect

If you're looking for a definitive guidebook or journalistic investigation, this isn't the book for you. As I said, I'm a bartender. But on the other hand, if you want to learn what it's really like to live in the first state in America to legalize marijuana, you're probably in the right place. You'll find answers to the questions my customers ask all the time: "Hey, how is it *really* going over there?" "Is it reefer madness?" "Are there people coming in from all over because of it?" "Has crime gone up or down?" "Do they really make gummy bears with pot in them?" "What is it like going into a pot shop?"

I won't tell you how to open a dispensary or make a living in this fledgling industry, but you'll glean plenty of tips from glimpses into the minds of people who are already doing just that. You'll find stories from people who make their living solely from this newly legalized industry: the business tycoon, the cannabis strain expert, the franchise guru, the medical healer, the promoter, and the cannabis activist.

You'll also find stories like the guy who bought the entire town of Stoner, CO, and plans to pump in almost \$100 million to redevelop and create a research facility. I talked with three film crews: one is a reality show, a comedy, and the other is a documentary on cannabis topics in Colorado. I interviewed a sheriff.

Many talented writers are reporting on this hot topic, and I reprint some of their stories. I do provide some practical information, too. In the appendices, you'll see some of the new laws and guidelines, names of different strains of cannabis, pot stocks, favorite dispensaries, and many of the nicknames of marijuana.

Believe me, I am no expert on cannabis. When I was growing up, there was only “seed weed” and “good bud.” Now, there are more strains of weed than lawyers in New Jersey, with creative names like Sour Diesel, Skunk, Northern Lights, Bubba Kush, Blueberry Haze, Ferrari, California Dream, and wax concentrates named Bruce Banner and Harlequin, and thousands more. There are websites dedicated to the different types of strains, names, and what kind of high they will give you, in addition to the definitions and differences of *indicas* and *sativas*.

By the way, the word *cannabis* seems to now be the most commonly used term for marijuana. Both are used throughout this book interchangeably.

Why Does a Bartender Write a Book?

I anticipate many questions from those who are against the legalization of pot. The opposition still runs surprisingly deep. I slammed into it headfirst when I tried to donate a percent of sales from this book to charity. I tried five different charities and was turned down by each one. Five out of five would not accept money from the “marijuana industry.”

Mostly, I wrote this book to entertain and inform—to give you a catbird seat at the bar during the first year of legalization.

These stories were the most talked about while I was mixing and serving drinks. There are more stories out there. They are never ending. If I have another agenda, it may be this: in my twenty-two years as a bartender, I've witnessed the effects of alcohol on people every day. Now that cannabis is legal, I'm now face-to-face not just with people who are drunk, but also with people who are high. I see the similarities and the differences. I know firsthand what each drug can do to people. By raising awareness of the effects of both drink and marijuana on users, positive and negative, I hope to alleviate some fears. I hope to ease flamboyant use of the weed by those who push the boundaries of the new law, but I also hope my bias comes through. In my simple bartender's eye view, drinkers tend to get emotional, and smokers tend to get happy. (And hungry)