

## NEW YORK POST

These luxury cigarettes have pot in them



As it turns out, not everybody must get stoned.

At least that's the hope of a Colorado company that is betting the estimated \$17 billion that legal marijuana and related products pumped into the US economy in 2016 is mature enough that a sub-sector can catch fire.

Toast, an Aspen-based startup, is peddling what can best be described as upscale, pot-lite cigarettes.

Toast's Slice smokes — which the company claims are the first professionally manufactured marijuana cigarettes — contain less than 10 percent of the THC of your garden variety joint.

The hope among Toast brass is that older, more sophisticated folks will want the nice buzz of marijuana without getting totally stoned.

"You don't get couch lock with our product," said Punit Seth, the chief executive and co-founder of Toast. "Each puff is like having a sip of champagne, and a complete cigarette is like having a generous glass of wine."

A pack of 10 Slice smokes will set you back \$85. The pot in Slice has a 6 percent concentration of THC — the chemical compound in cannabis responsible for its high — compared to 88 percent in other pot products.

With pot being legal in Colorado for three years, Toast is not alone in trying to mine the upscale cannabis market. So far, marketing efforts aimed at potential upscale pot users tried to highlight the difference between affluent potheads and younger stoners.

Beboe recently got some media attention for its edible \$1 apiece pot-infused gummi candies and \$60 vaporizers — good for about 150 drags.

A third company, AuBox, offers, where the law allows, a \$150 mail order box of marijuana, cannabis and related items. They also offer a box-of-the-month subscription.

Toast and the other upscale pot businesses are confident the growing legal cannabis market is ready for upscale products. Executives at those companies like to point to a November survey that showed fewer than a third of 800 respondents said they consumed weed to feel “stoned,” “zonked” or “out of it.”

Ninety-five percent of respondents to the Miner & Co. Studio survey said they preferred “a high that allows them to be ‘present’, ‘mindful’ or ‘focused.’ ”

The \$17 billion that cannabis helped pump into the US economy last year, according to a study, is expected to grow to between \$24 billion and \$44 billion by 2020.

The legal sale of cannabis in 2016 was up 26 percent over 2015.

Toast and the other companies hope older pot users — as well as some of today’s stoners — will discover a more upscale marijuana the way younger wine drinkers “graduate” to better products.

Since its Feb. 10 launch, Toast has signed up six retail outlets and has 25 stores in the pipeline.

It also plans to be in 100 outlets by the end of the year. And, as the cannabis-legalization movement expands beyond Colorado’s \$875 million recreational market, so will Toast.

The company is committed to opening in Las Vegas when recreational use becomes legal in July, executives said.

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