

[TREND ON TRIAL]

HEALTHY HEMP FOODS:

SMOKING-HOT TREND OR HEADING FOR BURN OUT?

Peruse any health-food store and you'll find a slew of foods—breads, waffles, granola bars—fortified with hemp. Yes, hemp, as in cannabis, the plant mostly associated with marijuana. Recently, there's been an explosion in hemp foods, says Marcia Mogelonsky of Mintel, a market research firm in Chicago. Is hemp *the* next big health trend?

PROS: Similar to flaxseed, hemp seeds boast a highly desirable ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fats, making them a heart-healthy choice; their impressive mix of amino acids makes them a high-quality plant protein. Plus, hemp seeds impart a nice nutty flavor and great chewy texture to foods.

CONS: In 2003, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration outlawed growing *all* cannabis—not just marijuana strains high in psychoactive tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)—for commercial use. Food producers must import the “industrial hemp” that yields the nutritious seeds (even though its THC concentration is just 0.3 percent).

OUR VERDICT: Hemp is truly nutritious and legal to grow in every industrialized nation except the U.S. That could soon change: a bill recently introduced in Congress calls for removing restrictions on the cultivation of industrial hemp. —*Cheryl Sternman Rule*

