

Hearty Hemp for Health

By Leonard Buckingham

"Heart healthy hemp is here" is fun to say and it's making a return to the American diet after being gone for over fifty years, with great thanks to our fellow North Americans up in Canada. Some of the current popular food items are hemp bars, hemp milk, hemp granola, hemp oil, hemp bread, hemp protein powder, and roasted hemp. While much media focus is on medical marijuana (*cannabis indica*), less focus is on industrial hemp (*cannabis sativa*) despite the widespread consumption of this important agricultural crop.

Medically, hemp is listed in the world's oldest known medical text, Shen Nung's "Pen Ts'ao". This book is the basis of much of Chinese medicine, written nearly 5,000 years ago. The Roman surgeon Dioscorades named it *cannabis sativa* in 70 A.D. in his medical texts which were used until the 1500's, and currently it is used for patients suffering from AIDS, glaucoma, MS, cancer, arthritis, epilepsy, nausea, and other illnesses, as well as repairing problems caused by other medicines. It is used as a pain reducer and anti-inflammatory, for insomnia and anxiety, as well as for appetite enhancement and for reducing depression.

Nutritionally, hemp seeds have been eaten since humans began cultivating the plant, with evidence going back to the Stone Age in China. Poor folks made seed cakes, oils, and hemp butter, which were disdained by the wealthy because the poor ate them, but gave the poor folks healthier, longer lives. Scientists from the rest of the world say it is a nutritionally perfect food. It has always been in bird seed, and has been shown to make exceptional fodder for other animals as well.

Most studies put hemp seed slightly ahead of flax seed as a nutritional powerhouse. The healthy fat and protein compounds can keep a person alive and thriving by eating hempseed and water. No, it will not get you "high", because it is highly regulated. No, it will not cause you to fail a urinalysis test if you eat a pound of it. Yes, it will make you feel better, because you will be giving your body a complete form of nutrition that has been missing for a good part of a century from the human diet. The balanced nutritional breakdown of hemp is roughly 1/3 protein, 1/3 fat, and 1/3 fiber and carbohydrates.

Detractors say that until the USDA does the nutritional breakdown the research performed by other nations doesn't count, but with the USDA virtually run by our major food conglomerates and hemp considered a political hot button, don't expect that research to ever happen. Our federal government is putting the health research into the hands of private industry and then refusing access to the tools needed to do the research, burning industrial crops licensed by states, and arresting the scientists without regard to state laws.

"Make the most of the Indian hempseed, and sow it everywhere!" wrote President George Washington, hemp farmer. In the early colonization of this country, it was illegal to not grow hemp; it was essential for so many necessities. It has been grown throughout human history for rope, paper, clothing, oil, and food. Many of the Western world's most important documents were written on hemp paper, from the Gutenberg Bible to our Constitution. In the early 1990's various countries looked at industrial hemp from an economic viewpoint and realized the tremendous value that has been lost. Today the primary uses are food, fiber, and fuel, but the ways to use it are increasing as more

nations add hemp to their farms. There are currently over 25,000 consumer products using hemp.

Many products are made in the USA from hemp imported from other countries, primarily Canada and China. China is the leading producer of the 17 countries currently exporting hemp, having been cultivated there for thousands of years and believed to be the original source of the plant. This plant has been heavily hybridized by botanists, but evidence of genetic engineering through laboratory manipulation is hard to find, since having the hemp to manipulate would be against the law in the USA and many other countries have outlawed genetically engineered foods. It is still the largest crop, financially, in the state of California, at \$14 billion a year, despite being an illegal substance. In actuality, industrial hemp is quite a different crop, growing taller, more fibrous, and lacking the psychoactive nature of the California plants. The imported hemp is tested to insure that it is unusable for inebriation.

This is a truly amazing plant. Hemp produces more nutritional protein per acre than any other known food source, plant or animal. It uses less water than cotton. It yields 4 times the paper that wood produces per acre. It makes better oil and paint than petroleum and stronger clothing fiber than cotton. It produces stronger building materials than wood or concrete. This is not hype, this is from Agriculture Canada, the Canadian governments regulatory agency, quoted in a report to our Congress.

It is easy to grow hemp organically. Hemp can grow in nearly any soil and actually nourishes the soil after harvest, making it a superb rotational crop. It grows very close together, leaving no sunlight for invasive weeds. This makes it easier for the next crop to have no weeds, so no herbicides are needed for that crop as well. Currently, Canada does not list any herbicides or pesticides as being legal for use with hemp, so their hemp is the safest bet for people who have problems with industrial pollutants, pesticides, and herbicides.

Some scientists are considering hemp to be a possible way to reverse global climate change. It grows so big, so fast, and is so leafy that it literally sucks the carbon dioxide out of the air, with the potential for reversing the effects of the past century of excessive air pollution.

A true miracle plant that has been around since the dawn of time, clothed much of the world, healed the sick, and is even said to have fed the Buddha one seed a day on his path to enlightenment, hemp will make a wonderful addition to your meals or healthcare regimen.

So try hemp today! The balanced nutrition is great for your entire body, which in turn will make your mind feel better, and in keeping with the cooperative spirit will increase the economic importance of hemp and hopefully change minds about this incredible source of nutrition!