

# Pot Sauce Williams, aiming to be the Heinz of medical marijuana BBQ sauces

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Dealer Hot Sauce Williams is known for its barbecue menu. The chain may be adding a special sauce with marijuana as one of the ingredients.

**with Diane Suchetka**

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Clevelanders know about Hot Sauce Williams' barbecue joints. Colorado is about to experience the restaurant's famous sauce in a whole new way - with a whole new name.

Pot Sauce Williams.

That's no joke.

"We hope to make it the Heinz of medical marijuana sauces," said Norm Roulet, a Cleveland business consultant who got the idea off the ground.

Roulet is working with Greg Williams to turn out a high-test, marijuana-laced version of the rib coating. And Williams, special projects manager for the Cleveland-based restaurant chain, with help from a Denver lab, has created a prototype of a new version of the chain's famous sauce. This one is infused with cannabis.

Medical marijuana is legal in Colorado, for those who have a doctor's referral, which residents say is not difficult to get.

"Let's just say you don't have to prove you were run over by a threshing machine to get one," said Lory Kohn, chief inspirational officer for [cannabis-commerce.com](http://cannabis-commerce.com).

Greg Williams said production might be months away.

"We are planning a sauce for sale, but we want to make sure it (the marijuana) doesn't alter the product," Williams, 48, said.

Heidi Morgan, co-owner with her husband, Ralph, of [OrganaLabs](http://OrganaLabs) in Denver, confirmed that the company developed and tested a recipe for Pot Sauce Williams.

"Anytime you medicate anything with cannabis you are going to alter the taste," she says. "Even a teaspoon of hemp oil would do that. But barbecue sauce is strong in flavor."

There is a hitch - you can't actually barbecue with it. "If you cook it over 300 degrees, which barbecuing would be, then it would no longer be potent," said Kohn, who is working with Roulet to develop more marijuana food products.

Colorado law makes starting businesses that involve production of cannabis-infused products expensive and time-consuming. But Morgan said there is potential for what are known as edibles -- food infused with marijuana.

"There is a huge market for this," she said. "People are sick and tired of brownies.

Especially, she said, people who have illnesses like MS, HIV, or other autoimmune disorders -- "They'll say, 'I don't want 100 milligrams of sugar when I eat this.'"

The original sauce is available at Cleveland's three restaurants, and through mail order, Williams said, but added that the pot-infused sauce made in Colorado "can only be sold to people in Colorado."

Colorado is one of 15 states that has legalized medical marijuana.

So what's Pot Sauce Williams like?

Kohn, who has a referral for medical marijuana, loves it.

"It packed just about the right size wallop you wanted," he said. "It made you merry. It gave you positive body sensations, good tingles, it was as good or better as any edible product I've tried - and I've tried a lot. It's da bomb."

Hot Sauce Williams was founded in Cleveland in 1964 by the five Williams brothers, who hailed from Mississippi.

Today, the restaurants are run by the next generation: cousins Deborah, Sharon and Greg Williams.

"I cannot even grasp this," said a mystified Deborah Williams, speaking Friday afternoon from the Carnegie Avenue location. "Nowadays I wouldn't put anything past anyone, but this is the first I've heard of it, and I know Sharon hasn't heard of it."

Greg Williams said he imagines the Colorado sauce could be used by people "in pain" but, "It could be pleasurable too."

Hot Sauce Williams' restaurants [drew national attention last year when Cleveland celebrity chef Michael Symon and Anthony Bourdain](#), the author/television host, visited while in Cleveland, and raved about the ribs and sauce.

Now it could get even more exposure.

"Their model is to have a number of sauces out, and they are looking at even doing some of their bakery products," Roulet said. "They have a sweet potato pie and a pecan pie.

"One of the things they are looking at is creating some products to appeal to the urban marketplace.

"They are being innovative."

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