



# SWEET MARY JANE

The South African brewing scene often looks to the United States and Europe for inspiration, but when the next trend features a product that's illegal on our soil, what can brewers do to keep up?

**Lucy Corne** takes a look at the advent of cannabis beers.

**B**eer has a new competitor. Research published earlier this year by two American universities showed that alcohol sales were down 15% in US states where medical marijuana had been legalised. In March of last year, Forbes reported that the beer industry in North America could potentially lose \$2 billion because of legal marijuana.

“The marijuana industry could fuel alcohol’s next growth cycle or instead suffocate an industry already on the defensive,” wrote Spiros Malandrakis, senior analyst with market research provider Euromonitor International. “The cannabis revolution is in full swing

while the alcohol industry appears to be largely sitting on the fence, drink in hand, occasionally throwing crumpled cans in the general direction of the on-going legalisation debate.” Malandrakis wrote his report in September 2017 and since then it seems the beer industry has at least climbed down from the fence, tossed their cans into the recycling and taken stock of the changes. And now they’re scrambling to get a piece of the – ahem – special pie.

## THE FUTURE IS GREEN

This August, Constellation Brands, parent company of Corona, invested a whopping \$4 billion in Canopy Growth, a Canadian medical marijuana grower. The company has stated that they don’t plan to make any cannabis beers until the plant is legal on a federal level in the US, but clearly see that when it comes to recreational drugs, the future is green. And they’re not the only ones. Molson Coors recently entered into a joint venture with Quebec cannabis producer Hydropothecary Corp to develop non-alcoholic, cannabis-infused beers for the Canadian market. Marijuana use will be legalised across Canada in October 2018 and it’s already legal or decriminalised in many US states.

Brewers in some of those states have been working on ways to incorporate weed into beer for years. In 2016, Dad & Dudes Breweria launched the USA’s first