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“I THINK WHAT MAKES THE ANDERSON VALLEY SO UNIQUE IS THE GROWING REGION THAT WE HAVE HERE.”

- JAMIE EVANS

CANNABIS
IN BLOOM
AT THE
BOHEMIAN
CHEMIST'S
SUGAR HILL
FARM.

ESTATE GROWN

A CANNABIS RETAILER ADOPTS IDEAS FROM THE WINE AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES.

ABOUT two and a half hours north of San Francisco lies a lesser-known wine region within a small valley that—with walk-in availability, bottles of pinot noir priced around \$40, farm-fresh cheeses, fine dining, apple orchards, vineyards, and redwood groves—feels unpretentious, but appropriately vacation fancy. Driving there on the first weekend of November 2023, the grapevine leaves are turning rasta colors—red, green, and gold—as the valley unfolds, driving west towards the Pacific Ocean. The rolling hills and roadsides are primarily lined with evergreen oaks and redwoods, cut with the occasional yellow-leaved alder or statuesque giant golden ginkgos. After Boonville, in a tiny town called Philo, there is a unique cannabis hospitality concept, a hotel that also grows its own cannabis and offers it for purchase onsite. Checking into The Madrones, the lobby is on the left, within the giftshop that leads to the restaurant. On the right, there's a 1920s Art Deco apothecary-themed cannabis retailer, The Bohemian Chemist.

While stepping outside to puff a joint at most hotels feels like an anxiety-ridden exercise in not getting caught, The Madrones boasts an open-air cannabis consumption lounge in an enclosed courtyard behind the lobby. The model feels like a winery tasting room where you'd enjoy a taste or a glass of wine in an opulent environment onsite and then buy a bottle to take home.

The 2023 cannabis harvest is complete, and The Bohemian Chemist is hosting its first cannabis pick-up party for its club members. The hotel is in the Anderson Valley in Mendocino County, the southernmost point of the famed Northern California cannabis cultivation region, the Emerald Triangle. The idea is that club members pick up a box of freshly harvested, dried, and cured cannabis flowers, then join in on a discounted weekend at the hotel and a few other harvest-themed activities. ▶

A UNIQUE HARVEST WEEKEND

While harvest-themed parties are common in the wine industry, applying the concept to release this year's cannabis crop is quite novel. The Bohemian Chemist's harvest weekend starts with a Friday evening cannabis and wine pairing led by Jamie Evans, the founder of the cannabis blog and lifestyle brand The Herb Somm.

"I think what makes the Anderson Valley so unique is the growing region that we have here," Evans says. "And so just some fun facts about Anderson Valley: it's approximately one mile wide and 15 miles long, and it's surrounded by redwoods. And down the middle of the valley, you have the Navarro River, and we're actually quite close to the coast as well. So, factoring all those things in, it's an ideal region for growing grapes. We're getting pinot noir, chardonnay, and cool-climate grapes that do extremely well here."

To pair the wine and cannabis, Evans focuses on terpenes.

"If you haven't heard of terpenes before, they are the organic compounds that give cannabis all the wonderful aromas and flavors that you receive when you're smelling through your favorite strains, but they're not just found in cannabis alone," Evans explains. "They're found in many fruits, flowers, and spices; they're even found in wine."

The first pairing combines The Bohemian Chemist's African Sherbet—Lemon Sherbet and African Orange bred by Equilibrium Genetics—with a 2022 pinot noir rosé from Long Meadow Ranch winery. The cannabis and the grapes were grown within a mile of each other.

The African Sherbet has a light floral aroma. Evans passes out wine glasses of pink rose petals to smell alongside sniffing wine glasses of African Sherbet and the rosé, which tastes like white peaches.

"This year, we've really been learning a lot. As far as our cannabis, we're leaning a lot into landrace, a lot into old-school varieties," says Jim Roberts, who owns and runs the cannabis venture and hotel with his partner in business and life, Brian Adkinson.

The second pairing is a 2019 Anderson Valley chardonnay with an African landrace, Swazi Gold. Both express an apple/pear aroma and taste citrusy.

"What I like to say is light, uplifting strains with light, crisp white wines," Evans says. "More bold sedating strains. I like to pair that with red wine to really keep it balanced, more relaxing."



GUESTS GATHER BEFORE THE HARVEST DINNER.



JIM ROBERTS (LEFT) AND BRIAN ADKINSON (RIGHT) POSE FOR A SHOT IN THE CANNABIS GROW IN FRONT OF THEIR HOME.



THE INTERIOR OF THE BOHEMIAN CHEMIST WAS DESIGNED TO LOOK LIKE AN APOTHECARY.



PHOTO BY JAMIE EVANS

A CANNABIS AND WINE PAIRING AT THE MADRONES.

THE PAIRING

When I meet Adkinson, he tells me he and Roberts met in San Francisco's Castro District in 2012. He's originally from Kansas, and Roberts is originally from Southern California. Roberts used to have an interior design business, which is the current location of The Madrones.

"The Anderson Valley is unique in that it's an east/west facing valley instead of a north/south facing valley in California. It's an east/west valley that actually butts up against the coast, and that's what creates our ideal climate conditions; we literally pull the fog in at night—it gets really, really cold—and then push it out during the day," Adkinson says as we begin the tour of their homestead cannabis grow. "This particular spot is the highest spot in the Anderson Valley looking down the length of the valley."

The property has rose and shade gardens, with a 5,000-square-foot cannabis grow in front of the home where Adkinson and Roberts live. These days, Adkinson focuses on running the hotel, while Roberts focuses on cannabis cultivation.

Roberts's mother, Rosemary Roberts, introduced him to weed in high school as she grew it and gave it to him.

"I'm jumping right out there; I'm completely out of the closet for a second time," Roberts says of his decision to start a cannabis brand in 2020 after previously cultivating under Proposition 215. "Everything's been a fight."

Not only have they had farming challenges and issues with banking for the aspect of their business that does not include cannabis cultivation due to mere association, but they've also had to combat the stigmas around cannabis use. One of their



▲ JIM ROBERTS (LEFT) AND BRIAN ADKINSON (RIGHT) RUN A HOTEL ATTACHED TO A CANNABIS RETAIL SHOP THAT FEATURES THEIR ESTATE-GROWN CANNABIS.

strategies to do that relies on high-end design. "We knew when we created our packaging we had to have something that was going to be palatable and approachable to a bougie wine person," Adkinson says. "We decided that instead of doing that '60s/'70s vibe, that we wanted to push things back to the 1920s, [and] we went with a real Art Deco vibe."

"THE ANDERSON VALLEY IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT'S AN EAST/WEST FACING VALLEY INSTEAD OF A NORTH/SOUTH FACING VALLEY IN CALIFORNIA."

- BRIAN ADKINSON

▼ PACKAGING AESTHETICS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE BOHEMIAN CHEMIST'S SUCCESS.

The packaging—which won a 2023 Clio Award for packaging brand design—has elements of Egyptian-inspired imagery, like a scarab, that was popular in the '20s. The retail shop displays jars Roberts purchased through an auction house, featuring items from a Hungarian pharmacy that had been in the same family since 1810. ▶



▼ THE CANNABIS GROW BLENDS IN WITH THE TREES IN THE ANDERSON VALLEY.



"THIS IS THE OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH EXPERIENCE. IT'S AN AUTHENTIC WORKING COMMUNITY."

- JIM ROBERTS

▼ THE TABLE IS SET FOR THE 2023 HARVEST DINNER.

"AS FAR AS OUR CANNABIS,
WE'RE LEANING A LOT INTO LANDRACE,
A LOT INTO OLD-SCHOOL VARIETIES."
- JIM ROBERTS



CHEF JASON AZEVEDO INTRODUCES THE COURSES.

SABLEFISH WITH MISO BUTTER, BOK CHOY, AND A CAVIAR BEURRE BLANC.



JAMIE EVANS SIGNS BOOKS AT THE BOHEMIAN CHEMIST DINNER EVENT.



A CANNABIS CLUB

Tom Butler and his wife Cristal Butler—who live in Roseville, California, near Sacramento—became members of the cannabis club at The Bohemian Chemist about three weeks before the harvest event while they were previously visiting Anderson Valley. They returned to pick up their shipment—a box including flowers alongside pre-rolls and vape cartridges—to participate in the weekend's events.

"I'm [retired], and she's retiring in two months," Tom Butler tells me after we finish the farm's drying room tour. "We're going to start traveling more. We like to come up here and spend time in Mendocino."

Tom Butler says his favorite type of cannabis he's tried from The Bohemian Chemist has been Blue Dream and that he's more of an evening partaker for relaxation and typically uses a Pax flower vaporizer.

The Butlers are staying at The Madrones's adjacent property, The Brambles, located in a redwood grove. While there's no smoking inside the hotel rooms, visitors staying at The Madrones or The Brambles have plenty of space to smoke outside. I take advantage of this fact, puffing on Maui Pineapple pre-rolls—The Bohemian Chemist calls them "Giggle Sticks"—before and during the harvest festival dinner.

There's nothing quite like a trip to witness the beauty of Mendocino County firsthand, especially in the fall. My weekend getaway to the Anderson Valley was filled with delicious food, wine, and sungrown cannabis.

"This is the off-the-beaten-path experience," Roberts says. "It's an authentic working community." **HT**