



Design News + Trends Theresa Christine Johnson

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Cannabis Couture: Is Luxury the Latest Trend in Marijuana Packaging?



[Bloom Farms](#) hand rolls, [Lord Jones](#) bath and body products, [AYA](#) nectar...that's just the beginning of the growing list of luxury cannabis products on the market today. As cannabis becomes increasingly accepted and more widely available, noticeable trends naturally follow suit. And it seems that many consumers are asking themselves: "If I'm going to partake, why wouldn't I want to elevate the experience to something luxe?"

[Over half of U.S. states have legalized some form of marijuana](#), opening up opportunities for package designers to step in and create something cannabis consumers have never seen before. In 2016 alone, [legal marijuana sales reached over \\$6.7](#)

[billion](#)—and that number is expected to reach over \$20 billion by 2021. And as the marketplace widens, luxury packaging is an obvious niche to see pop up.

“The cannabis industry has grown so significantly in the past few years that luxury brands within the cannabis market are quickly paving the way for new ideas in consumption,” explained [Hannah Meadows](#), an author at the online resource [Leafly](#). “Just twenty years ago, many people thought legalization was out of the question due to negative stigma. However, that’s all changed, and cannabis is now a marketable product that has the potential to span numerous brands and industries.”



This does, however, set up a potential roadblock for companies or brands that want to be marketed as luxury but don’t have the quality product to warrant the higher price tag. “Just because you have ‘luxury packaging’ does not mean you have a luxury brand or product,” warned Gabrielle Rein, Creative Director at [Toast™](#), a brand of elegant cannabis cigarettes. “If the overall consumer experience holds up the promise of luxury I think consumers will be very happy. Same with wine or champagne. How many beautiful and expensive bottles are consumers let down by?”

Jared Mirsky, Founder and CEO at [OMD Agency](#), agrees. With the products and brands he's helped design, the luxury factor is often more of the perception that's created to generate a more likely sale. "The product that sells the most is generally the most quality at the most inexpensive price," he explained. "It's a very cost-conscious market at the moment." Even with [Hamptons Reserve](#), the most premium cannabis product from OMD's portfolio, Jared made sure that the extravagant packaging remained cost-effective.

As brands and designers continue to try and strike the balance between luxury cannabis products and attainability, one thing is for certain: this could play a vital role in altering the way marijuana is perceived. "Cannabis still holds significant negative stigma for a lot of people in certain areas of the U.S. and the world. With education and the willingness of brands to reach different audiences, I believe cannabis will become just as normalized as alcohol—hopefully sooner rather than later," confessed Hannah Meadows. "I think that the luxury trend contributes to the 'falling away' of this stigma. It's bringing something that has been hiding in the shadows out to the public and showing it as a facet of someone's lifestyle rather than a dirty little secret."



INCORPORATING LUXURY DESIGN INTO CANNABIS PRODUCT PACKAGING

When it comes to designing luxury in this market, **almost anything goes**. Unlike other industries, like beauty or liquor, no established code of luxury exists yet. “There is no paint by numbers code or element that can make a [cannabis] brand luxury,” Gabrielle Rein explained. Although this lack of guidelines may seem daunting, she suggested that designers should strive to stay true to the brand story—and in doing so, a luxury approach will feel more authentic.

From there, an elegant design could take any route, from simple, clean, and bold to something more detailed. When asked what trends she’s noticed recently, Hannah Meadows recalled examples of unique artwork. “I’ve seen gorgeous sketches, paintings, watercolors, and all manner of mixed media grace the packaging of some of my favorite brands and that really makes them stand out.”

And of course, while it feels like anything is possible, it’s still imperative that designers check the regulations for [marijuana product packaging](#) based on the location where these products will go to market. “Just as bottles of liquor need to showcase alcoholic content and cautions, cannabis packaging must contain the THC and CBD levels as well as warnings,” said Hannah Meadows. From a creative standpoint, that sounds a little stifling, but it’s not nearly as much of a hindrance as it might seem at first. She suggested, “As long as all labels are present, one can do a lot with colors and font to incorporate the needed information into the packaging design without having it look bulky or overwhelming.”

The bottom line, though: **make it economical**. “Products that tend to go the luxury route have a much harder time getting market penetration as well as sales. The cost to produce it and to assemble it [must be] so streamlined that it drives the cost down,” explained Jared Mirsky. If consumers can get roughly the same quality product for less, they will—so look for ways to drive production and packaging costs down without

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sacrificing the mission of the brand. Mirsky actually mentioned a company in Colorado printing on mylar bags. “I know mylar bags aren't super sexy, but we can turn a crappy mylar bag into something pretty beautiful.”