laughs Hirschkorn, a Montana herbalist, returned to Southern California recently. His skills as an alternative medicine man were in demand in the Blue Sky State, but when the federal government joined forces with the state government to outlaw what was widely accepted, he decided to go where his expertise would be appreciated.

Hirschkorn has been extracting beneficial oils from natural herbs for more than 20 years. When living in the Santa Barbara, California area years ago, he used techniques practiced by Native Americans and early settlers to create lotions, salves and tinctures from red clover, plantain, calendula and even acorns. While in Montana, he formulated cannabis-infused salves for caregivers with the added benefit of numerous herbs, including white willow bark, white oak, marshmallow root, rose hips, and burdock. Many of his herbal preparations are created sans cannabis.

“I’ve always loved herbs, herbal remedies, and things in the wild,” he said. “I’ve found cannabis to be one of those wonderfully enhanced herbs or plants that are here for our use for many things.”

Whereas a lotion requires an emulsifying agent such as lanolin to bring water-based / oil-based products together, Hirschkorn’s salves are emulsified with bees wax and coconut oil.

“We hear about other salves being too waxy and what not,” he said. “We’re dialed into a balance between each oil extract and the wax for a nice glistening salve.”

When it comes to cannabis medicine, the proof is in the numbers, according to Hirschkorn, who tests his products at SC Laboratories in Capitola and The Workshop in the Los Angeles area. He perfects his technique through testing with laboratories that use state-of-the-art scientific instruments to analyze the potency, determine the microbiological safety, and watch for harmful pesticide residues. “I’ve spent thousands of dollars on testing and that enables me to zero in on my ratios,” he said. “You figure everything out through testing.”

One thing that Hirschkorn has figured out through testing is that many in the emerging market of cannabis-infused everything are misleading patients with claims of high potency where none exists. He recently paid technicians at The Workshop to test two sodas from one of California’s well-known infused-cannabis producers, and found almost none of the promoted tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in its pricey bottles of pop.

While he continues to offer preparations such as skin salves, lip balms, sodas and infused honey, more and more his focus is on CBD capsules.

In the realm of medical cannabis, cannabidiol (CBD) is all the rage. It is credited with easing pain, inflammation and muscle spasms, and relaxing the nervous system to stave off seizures, all without the psychoactive high associated with THC. CBD has shown sedative effects in animal tests, and patients report that it soothes and relaxes. Several media outlets have reported that following two decades of research California Pacific Medical Center scientists recently announced that CBD has the ability to turn off the gene activity that causes several types of aggressive cancer to metastasize.

Cannabis capsules have always been a sensible option in any patient’s repertoire for therapeutic benefit. Dispensaries sell them, and caretakers teach patients how to make them with natural capsules found in health food stores. This form of nature’s medicine takes a few hours to kick in, and has the ability to supply hours of benefit. They are easy to transport and use.
CBD CAPSULES FOR HERBAL RELIEF

While cannabis capsules are not new, CBD was bred out of the plant long ago in deference to THC, the principal psychoactive constituent of the cannabis plant. To date, cannabis capsules have usually been THC-heavy. As CBD gains in popularity, breeders are scrambling to nurture strains with more of a balance between THC and CBD, and the CBD-rich strains are becoming easier to find. Hirschkorn acquired CBD-rich strains while creating herbal remedies in Montana, and is finding more in California. While his aim is to have his capsules CBD-heavy, they will also contain some THC, which has been known to make a person high. With an effective CBD capsule containing the optimum mix, the hoped-for result would be a mild high with significant body relief.

CBD is precious, and converting it properly takes talent. According to Hirschkorn, using a CBD-rich cannabutter in cookies is a fantastic way for an amateur to get started. Baking the cookies in a properly heated oven decarboxylates (activates) the cannabinoid. He prefers to deliver his medicine in candies and capsules, however, as he finds these preparations better suited for consistently measuring accurate dosing levels.

“When you are capturing the correct dosage levels and making the right estimates, and when you are fully decarboxylating the medicine, you are maximizing its potential,” he said. “While you do not need a lot of expensive equipment to do this, you do need to spend the money up front for testing so that you can fine-tune your products. If you are not heat activating your medicine properly, you are not going to capture its full potential, and that is a problem.”

Going by the name of Eden’s Cure, he and a partner are shopping capsules through collectives and dispensaries. His CBD formula is comprised of organic coconut oil heated with a highly-concentrated CBD-extract.

“The coconut oil acts as a carrier oil because cannabis oil is so sticky,” he said. “The plant’s trichomes are where the high concentration of cannabinoids are found, and whenever you get to the heavy part of the trichomes, you will find sticky pollen. Coconut oil also acts as a solvent for the cannabinoid oils.”

He has tried using the recipe for Phoenix Tears, but will not use anything that is not natural. Instead of Naphtha or isopropyl alcohol as solvents, he uses grain alcohol when making Phoenix Tears. Before boiling the extract down to a bitter black tar, he prefers to introduce another carrier oil for a more inviting, palatable end product.

Hirschkorn’s capsules usually contain 25 milligrams of CBD product. Again, he insists that anyone looking for consistency and accuracy must find a way to test their medicine.

After more than a year of visiting labs, collectives and dispensaries, it appears that the appetite for CBD capsules is growing. A collective at Laguna Woods Village, a Southern California retirement community with a population of 18,000, has a monthly order. Several dispensaries are reporting that patients are finding that the capsules relieve pain.

Mike, a patient with a herniated disc in his lower spine, said that the capsules relieved his back pain within three days.

“These things are easy to carry around, definitely much better than flowers, which can smell,” he said. “I know that when I take the capsules they help my back.”

Mike talked to a dispensary owner who told him that one of his patients had stopped using Toradol after using CBD capsules. That patient was not only relieved of pain, but he no longer worried that the prescription medication would damage his liver. Toradol is a short-term treatment for moderate to severe pain, and it is associated with numerous side effects.

“There is no question that these capsules helped me,” said Mike. “My opinion is that everyone and their mother should be taking CBD capsules.”

Janice, who works in a testing lab, shared what she has heard from patients.

“We have one patient who has nerve problems,” she said. “When he started taking CBD capsules he was on the verge of having a machine inserted into his body to stop signals to his brain because he was in constant, severe pain and nothing was working. Instead, CBD seems to have really helped him. He gets a number of these capsules every month.”

Another frequent customer is a patient who uses the capsules for constant back pain.

“We find that the highest praise for CBD capsules comes from patients with severe pain who tell us that nothing else helps,” she said. “For the most part these are people who have also been on different opiates and just do not like taking them because they understand what they can do to their livers. They would rather take these than Vicodin or morphine or anything else that their doctors have them on.”