

Chapter Four

Hand Pipes

More Than Just a Pipe Dream

Rolling papers first rolled onto the scene in the sixteenth century. Until then, when people intentionally inhaled burning herbs, they sniffed them ambiently, like sage in a sweat lodge, or they smoked them directly, like pot in a pipe. Pipes sculpted from stone have been unearthed in archaeological digs throughout the world, some dating as far back into the misty past as six millennia ago. In our present Stoned Age, pipe-smoking traditionalists can take comfort knowing that they are reenacting ancient rituals first practiced by our prehistoric ancestors.

PUT THIS IN YOUR PIPE AND SMOKE IT

The act of smoking a pipe provides several advantages over smoking a joint, including enabling you to be less hurried, less wasteful, less toxic, and less irritating to your respiratory tract.

Less Hurried: Different herbs combust at differing rates. When smoked leisurely in a pipe, tobacco leaves tend to stay lit, while cannabis flowers easily extinguish. That's not necessarily a bad thing. By snuffing out between tokes, that allows you to sit back and relax and take your sweet time. Time for what? Time to think heavenly thoughts, to ponder your daydreams, and to conjure up a few pipedreams.

To solve problems, the 1930s cartoon character Grampy, granddad of Betty Boop, used to put on his thinking cap. When he hit upon a

solution, the light bulb in his cap would light up. In real life, we smokers can light up our thinking pipes.

Less Wasteful: Once you light up a joint, you tend to rush the act of smoking, continuing until you've reduced the joint down to a roach whether or not you really need any more of the rest of that joint. While you are exhaling or daydreaming or philosophizing with your smoking companion, the joint continues burning, so the smoke that is lost to side stream is wasted. In contrast, with a pipe in between puffs you can cap the bowl to prevent smoke from escaping into thin air, thus conserving your precious and usually costly cannabis. This holds especially true if your smoking session is solo rather than social.

According to one estimate, a pipe transfers 40 to 50 percent of the cannabinoids in cannabis, while a joint relays to your mouth only 10 to 20 percent.¹ Expressed in terms of THC alone, up to half is lost to side stream in a joint.² Thus a pipe can be two to four times more cost efficient. A precise calculation of the cost savings is possible only with laboratory analysis of the cannabinoid level in your blood. Lacking a nearby lab, I estimate that to reach the same degree of medication or same level of euphoria, I need less than half the amount of cannabis when stuffing a pipe than when rolling a joint. Expressed as an automotive metaphor, to drive to Nirvana in a joint, I need two fill-ups, while in a pipe I need only one tankful of the same octane gasoline. Your own mileage will vary.

The choice is not between getting twice as high or medicated once or getting half as high or medicated twice. Rather, it is between consuming the same portion of cannabis in one session or spreading it out into two. Smoke one pipeful, and get one free.

Less Toxic: While pipes also happen to spare you the slightly extra cost of rolling papers, more importantly they spare your lungs the extra risk of extra smoke from burning papers. That added smoke might be warranted if the papers were medicinal or psychoactive, but papers do not contribute to any relief or any high. No, not even rolling papers made from hemp contribute, as hemp paper is derived from the fibrous stalk rather than from the cannabinoid-rich flower.

As discussed in detail in chapter 2, a less toxic load applies here only if great care is taken when reigniting the bowl. Matches or butane lighters do not pass muster. Caution is more effectively exercised with toothpicks lit from candles or with flameless lighters.