

The art of science: Inside Granite Peak's lab and kitchen

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Inside Granite Peak Distributing's lab and kitchen, cannabis enters its most intentional stage, where responsibility and trust guide every step.

Once the harvest leaves the grow room, the work does not become easier; it becomes more deliberate. Here, science and human care converge, where the plant is no longer just cultivated but purposefully refined with the user in mind.

For Keith Lewis, Granite Peak's head of laboratory operations, this work is deeply personal. A Montana native and U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq, Lewis understands firsthand what it means to search for relief that actually works. "When I came home, the VA wanted to give me medication," Lewis said. "It didn't work for me. Cannabis did."

Lewis found that cannabis helped ease his PTSD, particularly sleep disturbances and emotional regulation — areas where traditional pharmaceuticals fell short. With a background in chemistry, he saw an opportunity to apply science to something he believed in, something that worked. "This lab and this product are applied chemistry," Lewis said. "It's the same principles I learned in college, revolving around isolating, refining and controlling outcomes."

With a philosophy rooted in purity and safety, Lewis uses tightly controlled hydrocarbon extraction methods to isolate cannabinoids and terpenes — compounds shown by research to play meaningful roles in sleep, inflammation, appetite and mood — while leaving behind unwanted impurities. "We know what these compounds do," Lewis said. "My goal is to make the cleanest concentrates possible so people can use them safely and intentionally."

That sense of responsibility extends beyond the product. Lewis is meticulous about lab safety, redundancy and training. "People have been hurt in this industry because corners were cut," he said. "That's not acceptable here. Everyone's safety matters."

Just steps away from the lab, science takes on a different form.

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Army paratrooper and 82nd Airborne veteran, Haagenson transitioned from professional kitchens into cannabis with a simple goal: enhancing quality of life.

"I wanted to try something new and I wanted to help," Chef J said.

For Haagenson, edibles aren't about novelty. They're about nourishment, consistency and trust. He approached cannabis the same way he approached food: through repetition, refinement and respect for the ingredients. "I know how food works," Haagenson said. "This was about practice. Trying it. Fixing it. Starting over. Perfecting."

Working side by side with Lewis, along with owners Tanner Halseth and Drew Stensland, allows Haagenson to see the entire process unfold, from plant to distillate to finished product. "There's no middleman," he said. "I get to see how it's made. That matters. This matters."

Many of Chef J's products are born directly from conversations with customers: people struggling with insomnia, managing pain, navigating cancer

treatments or simply searching for a better night's sleep. "Everything I've created has come from someone's problem," he said. "When someone tells me something helped them, that's humbling, and I'm honored to have been part of the process."

The shared military background between Lewis and Haagenson is never the headline, but it's always present. Precision. Accountability. Care for others. The uniform may be gone, but the mission remains; helping others just looks different now.

At Granite Peak, the lab and kitchen aren't about mass production. They're about intention. Science becomes a safeguard. Cooking becomes an act of care. And cannabis becomes what it was always meant to be: a plant handled with respect, transformed with purpose and offered to people with honesty.

This story is Part Two of a three-part series on Granite Peak Distributing. Part Three will explore the retail experience and the people who connect these products to Montana communities.

Visit granitepeakmt.com for more information.

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