

# **Solvent vs. Solventless: Which Extraction Wins?**

## **As Demand for High-Quality Extracts Rises, Consumers Focus on How Their Cannabis is Made**

As the cannabis industry matures, extraction consumers are becoming more discerning—demanding not only potency and purity but also transparency and safety in how products are made. A central debate is now heating up: Should cannabis concentrates be extracted using solvents, or should manufacturers stick to solventless methods that rely on physical processes?

### **Residual Chemical Concerns Fuel the Push Toward Cleaner, Safer Alternatives**

Solvent-based extraction methods—often using butane, propane, ethanol, or CO<sub>2</sub>—have long dominated the market for their efficiency and high yield. However, critics raise concerns about potential residual chemicals left behind in the final product. Though these residues are usually well below state-regulated thresholds, consumer perceptions are shifting.

### **The Case for Solvents: High Yield, High Purity, and Proven Efficiency**

Michael Sassano, founder and CEO of Portugal's Somai Pharmaceuticals, defends hydrocarbon extraction.

Efficiency remains a critical factor for large-scale producers aiming to meet soaring market demands.

### **Solventless Extraction Rises in Popularity as Health-Conscious Consumers Seek Purity**

In contrast, solventless extraction uses only water, heat, pressure, or mechanical separation to produce concentrates—no chemicals required. The process yields a product that some claim is closer to the natural essence of the plant. The method is gaining traction among craft producers and consumers who prioritize purity.

### **Global Cannabis Extracts Market Surging Toward \$15.5 Billion by 2030**

According to San Francisco-based Grand View Research, the global cannabis extracts market was valued at \$4.3 billion in 2023. That number is projected to skyrocket to \$15.5 billion by 2030, driven by a compound annual growth rate of 20%.

As demand intensifies, extraction methods are under greater scrutiny. Trust, sustainability, and safety have become defining metrics for consumers and regulators alike.

### **Safety Goes Beyond the Extract: Devices, Equipment, and Workplaces Also Under the Microscope**

Ferguson highlighted another overlooked issue—delivery devices. “There can be dirty or heavy metals that leach into the oil, and there are bad ceramics that have a lot of lead,” he said.

Workplace safety is also a factor. While rare, explosions linked to solvent-based methods still occur. In January, two workers were injured during an explosion at PharmaCann’s Maryland extraction facility, where butane and propane were in use.

## **Experts Say Both Methods Have a Place—But the Right Choice Depends on Product and Use**

Darwin Millard of Cannabis Safety & Quality emphasized that extraction choice should also align with product type.

Millard favors solventless methods—especially when done with stainless steel screens—but acknowledges the role of solvents in specific use cases, especially when safety protocols are followed.

## **The Bottom Line: Transparency and Safety Will Define the Future of Cannabis Extraction**

With the industry evolving quickly and consumer education growing, cannabis businesses must be proactive in how they produce, market, and explain their extraction methods.

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

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