



The Cannabis Spectating Score™: TAG™ **INTRODUCING THE WORLD'S FIRST CANNABIS QUALITY CERTIFICATION!**

Grading and judging cannabis is a big deal that is overburdened with too much smoke and mirrors. Many headies say cannabis cups are total bullshit; *and they're right*... Bragging about cannabis has been a part of the culture since well before the legal industry, and it's a bigger deal than you may think. *But is it real?* How could judging something so subjective have any amount of legitimacy to it? How could there be science behind something so personal? How can you judge anything while intoxicated? Who are these judges, and what are their qualifications?

The Trichome Institute is the first to solve the cannabis-judging quandary. To understand the solution, you must first understand the problems. Typically, strain reviewers and cannabis cup judges smoke cannabis, and then explain what they think about it. You may be surprised, but most cannabis cups have both the public, and paid people, judge the cannabis! These are usually superstar stoners who are much better at getting high than researching the science behind what quality equates to chemically, and biologically. Most people who judge cups are entirely unqualified.

The unqualified judges are responsible for competitions whose outcomes make, or break, multimillion-dollar businesses; which is a serious *thing*... Even if intelligent industry members, and long time growers who know cannabis are selected to judge; their personal taste preferences, and individual tolerances, make their judgments subjective, and thus, inconsistent and inaccurate. If your dispensary, or grow, depended on winning the cup, would you appreciate an inconsistent and inaccurate judging process? What process qualifies the judges and ensures that they are judging on an even scale and understanding?

The industry is growing up quickly and getting wise, and so judging cannabis is turning to more consistent methods, which include lab testing. There are two main types of lab testing that people are aware of and one type that people don't know much about. The two main tests are chemotype and genotype. Phenotyping has occurred, but is currently very rare in the industry. A genotype test uncovers the plants genetics and essentially maps the cannabis's DNA. This proves the parents and current genetics are what they are. A gene test is highly questionable, and controversial at this period in time; but that's another article. The chemo test analyzes the chemical composition of the sample, such as the terpene and cannabinoid ratios and strengths.

Imagine judging a car: If you think the gene test is important for the sake of quality, just know that all you would see is the vehicle's 2 inch VIN number under the hood... Whereas, a phenotype test result would explain the shape of the car, the types of wheels, and the color of the vehicle. The chemotype test is meaningful in the sense that it would explain if the car runs on gas, electric, or racing fuel, how fast it can drive and turn. Does speed equal quality though? Those ugly, impracticable, super long, and bizarre cars you see racing in the desert are insanely fast; but when it comes to overall vehicle quality, it's not going to win a quality competition.

Just because a sample has the most potent THC%, does not mean it is of good quality. THC does not mean quality whatsoever. What if the sample with the highest cannabinoid content, and most diverse terpene profile, has the worst flush and is covered in microscopic spider mites, webs, eggs, and more? **Chemotype, genotype, and phenotype tests do not equal quality!** Cannabis cups should, and will, start using some of these lab tests in their judging process, but it's still not 100%. So, if the chemo, geno and pheno tests don't equate to quality, then what is used to judge quality, and who judges that?

There is a new type of lab test in our industry that is specific to judging quality and it's coming out of the TAG™ lab. TAG™ stands for Trichome Assurance Grade, and the Trichome Institute stands behind the numeric score that assures the quality of cannabis samples tested. How does Trichome prove the quality of cannabis accurately, and consistently, every time? The TAG™ process has rigorous standards, but it all starts with the TAG™ technicians. You can't TAG™ bud unless you are a proven cannabis expert, a Level 3 Interpening® certification proves that you are.

In the world of wine, through taste, smell and sight, level 3 sommeliers can taste the year, zip code, and weather pattern out of just about any wine ever made. Their knowledge base is mind-boggling and so is that of a Level 3 Interpenner. People fly in from around the world to learn Trichome Institutes' techniques of detecting the psychotropic properties of flower with just sight and smell. Interpening® methodology includes expert dissection of cola quality, and Level 3's are masters at this in every way.

Once you have a team of qualified experts you can trust, it's time to get to work. Trichome has a world-class standard operating procedure that includes grading blueprints and a homemade calculating app that weighs 3 classes of quality values amongst each other. The three value categories have a total of 12 inputs, rated numerically, and weighed in order of importance, based on scientific evidence and expert examination. The judging is conducted in a non-intoxicating way, and analyzes more important consumer values than what the state of Colorado requires with its mandatory lab testing.

Isn't the Interpening® expert's opinion still subjective? Not with inter-rater reliability. In statistics, **inter-rater reliability** is the concordance of the degree of

agreement among **raters**. It gives a score of how much consensus there is in the ratings given by judges. A TAG™ score must have two Interpeners come up with the same numerical score within 5 points out of 100; or the test must be re-done. Each tested sample is stored in a library in the event someone wants to challenge the score within a 7 day period of the test.

Each grader takes microscopic and regular photos of the trichome health, shape, and ripeness of each flower or extract sample. Each sample is evaluated with a fine toothcomb, not once, but twice. Each bud is crushed, sniffed, and smoked. The judges take a micro-puff to gauge burn-ability and flush degree. They don't inhale to judge the degree of intoxication, and these judges don't get intoxicated from such a tiny inhalation with such high tolerances. Everything from insects, and their remnants, molds, pre-ripe harvests, and un-flushed product is evaluated and nothing escapes this judging process. Everything is documented, and each sample comes with two independent report cards that match. The mean of the two numerical values is assigned as the TAG™ score and then it is official. Essentially, the Trichome Institute has created the *"wine spectating score"* for cannabis!

Imagine if cannabis cups and judges used the TAG method so the judging is uniform across the board. Imagine if wholesale pounds were priced with a TAG score instead of whatever the grower thinks his product is worth? What if celebrity and mega product brands insured their brand reputation by only distributing 75.0-TAG or higher? Every grower and business will tell you their product is the best; but does it have a TAG? Instead of apps telling you where every dispensary is, how about a search option for where the best third party verified quality cannabis is? Soon, you will be able to search for bud with a TAG score at a shop near you via app, social media, websites and more.

Did you know TAG bud is currently available in stores? Check out trichomeinstitute.com - Interpening – TAG Cannabis Locations: You can also check out the whole TAG and Interpening tours to learn more about those programs. Want to sign up for a class or TAG your bud? Contact the Trichome Institute today!

By Max Montrose