

Transparent Rolling Papers: What Are They Made Of?

By Marc Emery

All rolling papers are made from cellulose, a polymer that is a synthetic or natural substance of interconnected molecules. Wood, paper, cotton and hemp all contain cellulose. Wood pulp is used to make most rolling papers, and is brown in its natural state. The pulp is processed with caustic acids that extract lignin, whereupon by-products are dumped in waterways; calcium carbonate is added to give paper its white appearance and slow burn. Because of the toxic processes involved in pulping trees to make rolling papers, a market



Trip and Aledinha transparent papers

emerged for papers made from rice, hemp, and other cellulose bearing plants.

Recently, a new type of rolling paper hit the scene: transparent cellulose “papers”. In the first four months of 2007, transparent papers were among the most popular at “Marc Emery’s Cannabis Culture Headquarters” (CCHQ) store. The top selling brands of rolling papers are RAW, Juicy Jays, Rizla, Skunk, blunts of all brands – and now Aleda/Aledinha, Smokeclear, and Trip, which are made in Brazil. Other transparent papers include Smokin’ Clean and Pure. Most regular-sized rolling papers (100 leaves) cost \$1.75, and king-size (33 leaves) \$2.25, whereas transparent Trip or Aleda regular (50 leaves) cost \$2.25, and



king (40 leaves) \$3.25. Smokeclear blunt-size transparent papers (20 leaves) are \$3.25.

Although transparent papers appear to be plastic, they are made with wood pulp. Aleda and Smokeclear are made from reforested hybrid Eucalyptus trees in Brazil. According to Smokeclear owner Anthony, “reforested” means a tree is planted for every one harvested. Smokeclear and Aleda are 80 percent plant cellulose, 14 percent glycerin, and 6 percent water; Aleda papers are 0.35mm thick, and Smokeclear 0.28mm thick.

When we asked buyers of the transparent papers what they liked, they cited a couple things. First, you can see the weed inside the joint, which is definitely the “cool” factor. Second, joints should burn slowly; and third, they don’t burn unevenly or “canoe”. Transparent papers don’t have glue, but simply seal with moisture, like a blunt. People who didn’t like the papers said they “taste weird” and “smell strange”. Some commented that joints go out too easily and are difficult to relight, while others felt apprehensive smoking something that “looks like plastic”. There were a few concerns expressed about the burning of glycerin, which transparent papers contain as a binding agent.

To investigate concerns about the safety of burning glycerin, I did some research. First I went to the website Journeytoforever.org/biodiesel_glycerin.html, which is a pro-glycerin site. There, glycerin is promoted as a very useful, safe, non-toxic molecule, but with one potentially disturbing caveat: “The glycerin by-product burns well, but unless it’s properly combusted at high temperatures, it will release toxic acrolein fumes, which mainly form at between 200 and 300 degrees Celsius (392-572 degrees Fahrenheit). Professor Michael Allen thinks complete and clean combustion of the glycerin by-product requires a

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RAW papers are translucent, not transparent. RAW is our favorite brand of all rolling papers.

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burning temperature in excess of 1,000°C (1,800°F).” Acrolein is described as a colorless or yellow liquid with a disagreeable odor that dissolves easily in water, burns very easily, and quickly changes to a vapor when heated.

When I spoke with Anthony at Smokeclear about the glycerin concern, he cited a study found online at Physlink.com. They had performed a series of experiments in order to determine the actual temperature of a lit cigarette: “Temperature without drawing: side of the lit portion where the paper is, 400°C (or 752°F); middle of the lit portion, 580°C (or 1,112°F). Temperature during drawing: middle of the lit portion, 700°C (or 1,292°F). A standard Fe-CuNi digital thermocouple thermometer was used in all trials. Numbers represent the average we obtained by performing several trials and can be considered accurate to within 50°C.”

Cannabis Culture wanted to run our own test so we got out a \$45.00 Tempgun.com heat sensor, which is accurate within approximately 10°F. This version of the Tempgun heat pen only reaches 475°F, and anything above that registers as “hi”. When we burned a joint rolled with a Trip transparent paper, the Tempgun registered 456°F at one-quarter of an inch away from the cherry (the “lit portion”) while the joint was being inhaled. Once the heat pen got within one-eighth of an inch of the cherry, the temperature registered “hi”. We can assume that as the cherry consumed the paper, some cellulose glycerin may have burned between 300 and 600°F, and some of the fumes may have contained acrolein – however, very small amounts of acrolein also enter the air when trees, tobacco, plants, gasoline and oil are burned. It has not been determined if acrolein vapor exposure leads to anything more serious than throat irritation, runny noses, and eye irritation. We can conclude that when smoking with transparent rolling papers, burning glycerin isn’t an urgently serious health hazard.

There still remains a drawback with transparent papers: they are wood pulp based and, as such, require more caustic chemicals to process than hemp or flax. If you want to use truly natural, unbleached, chemical-free, vegan rolling papers, RAW brand’s thin translucent brown paper – with patent pending – is for

you. (Translucent means light can pass through but is diffused, whereas transparent means completely clear.) Visit www.rollingsupreme.com for RAW information. www.smokeclear.com www.papertrip.com www.aleda.com.

Major Rolling Paper Company Convicted for Using Carcinogenic Materials

It should be pointed out that you might not be safer with conventional paper even if it advertises itself as a hemp, linen, flax, organic or ‘all natural’.

The world’s oldest rolling paper business was founded in Spain by *Miquel y Costas Hermanos* in the early 1800s. Cigarette paper booklets first appeared in the 1860s; *Miquel y Costas Hermanos’* specialized experience and research into pulp, paper and booklet production produced new cellulose-based products that burned safely at temperatures between 250 and 1,800°F. (Spanish law requires rolling papers to produce the fewest possible negative by-products.)

Miquel y Costas Hermanos’ international brand “Smoking” was introduced in 1924, and the company adopted its present name, *Miquel y Costas & Miquel* (MCM), when it incorporated in 1929. MCM is now one of the largest paper manufacturers in the world, producing the following brands: Smoking (including Deluxe, Red, Blue, Green, Eco, etc.); Bambu (Hemp, New Flavored papers, etc.); Randy’s (paper by MCM, wires by CTC); Mantra (new flavored paper); Pure Hemp; Skunk; 4:20; Rips Rolls; Guarami; Bugler Papers; STYX; and Bob Marley.

In May of 2006, MCM was convicted of a “crime against the public health”. The Spanish Health Authorities accused MCM of replacing safe materials with carcinogenic ones to save costs. After hearing overwhelming evidence from a six-year investigation, the Judge in Barcelona Court #9 concluded that the director of MCM, Jordi Merchant, consciously allowed components like linen and hemp to be replaced by wood and esparto to save costs. Over time, smoking esparto, wood,

and inferior fibers can cause cancer of the larynx, lip, and lung, and is banned from the production of smoked rolling papers in Europe. The Judge affirmed that these rolling papers were a “danger for the health of the consumers” because of this willful contamination, and convicted Merchant. In addition to major brands like Smoking and Bambu containing carcinogenic materials, even the Bob Marley brand is affected, which is profane!

This news, affecting potentially 25,000,000 North Americans, was never widely circulated and is still virtually unknown to almost everyone who should have been told – the consumers of these papers. The contamination took place over several years and is just now being heard about. Not only are Bambu papers made prior to 2006 suspect in their composition, their flavored papers were very recently advertised in *High Times* as 100% natural. On May 10, 2006, Bambu wrote a letter to consumers – not about the discovery of carcinogenic materials in Bambu brands, but to confess, quote: “our paper products have been promoted as ‘100% Natural’ and ‘All-Natural’”. It has recently come to our attention that some of our paper products – specifically the flavored paper – contain saccharin, which is not a natural product. We are in the process of removing this part of the advertisement for this part of the product line. Our products are high quality products, and we hope we can earn your loyalty in the future. Sincerely, Bambu Sales, Inc.”

www.miquelycostas.com
www.smokingpaper.com
www.purehemppaper.com



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