

Creating rare marijuana compounds with GM yeast could lead to a ‘blockbuster drug or two’

[Genetically modified brewer’s yeast] is churning out cannabinoids, the compounds found in marijuana. Researchers led by Jay Keasling, a professor of chemical engineering and bioengineering at the University of California, Berkeley, have genetically modified brewer’s yeast to produce two of the most common cannabinoids, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). They claim their method could also produce microorganisms capable of making any other naturally occurring cannabinoid as well as some brand-new varieties. Certain cannabinoids have potential as treatments for a variety of disorders, but require more research to separate hype from medical reality.

...

Marijuana contains [more than 100 different cannabinoids](#), but most of them are at much lower concentrations than CBD and THC. Because plants yield very small amounts of the rarer substances, they are more expensive to produce. Even when researchers successfully extract them, the compounds are often contaminated with traces of their more common cousins. Yeast could produce purer versions of these cannabinoids, bringing the price of rare varieties to the same level as more popular ones.

...

“There might be a blockbuster drug or two in some of those rare ones or unnatural” cannabinoids, Keasling says.

Read full, original post: [Rising High: GM Yeast Generates Known and Novel Marijuana Compounds](#)