

CHAMPS

SHOW MAGAZINE

ISSUE 85 - SEPTEMBER 2026

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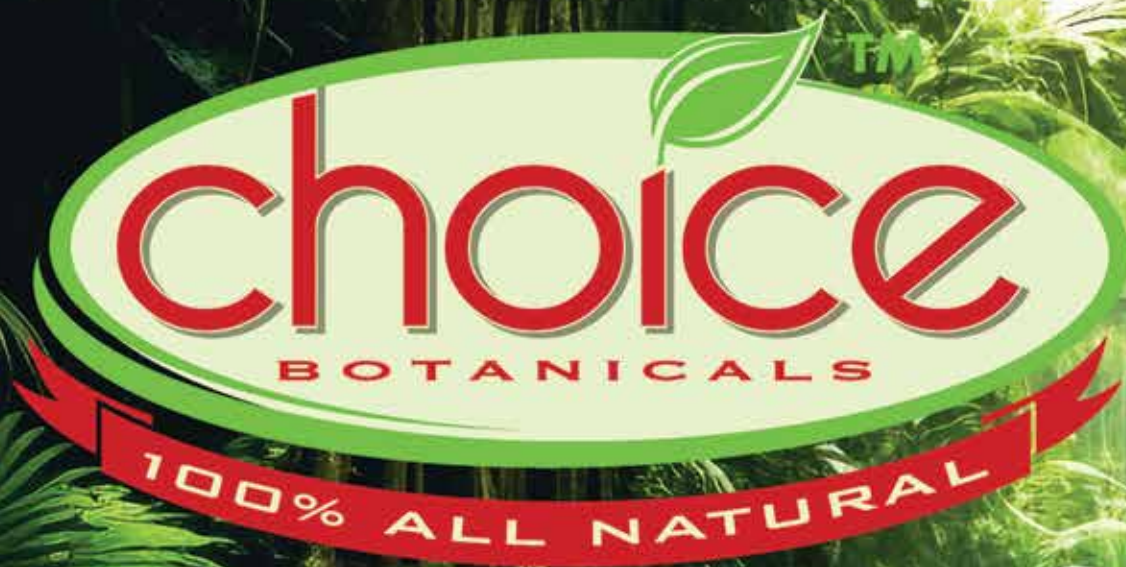
Austin, Texas,
Palmer Events Center,
October 13-15, 2026

INSIDE:

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Pg 64: Beyond the Smoke Shop

COVER STORY:

Pg 43: CHAMPS Returns
to Austin This Fall



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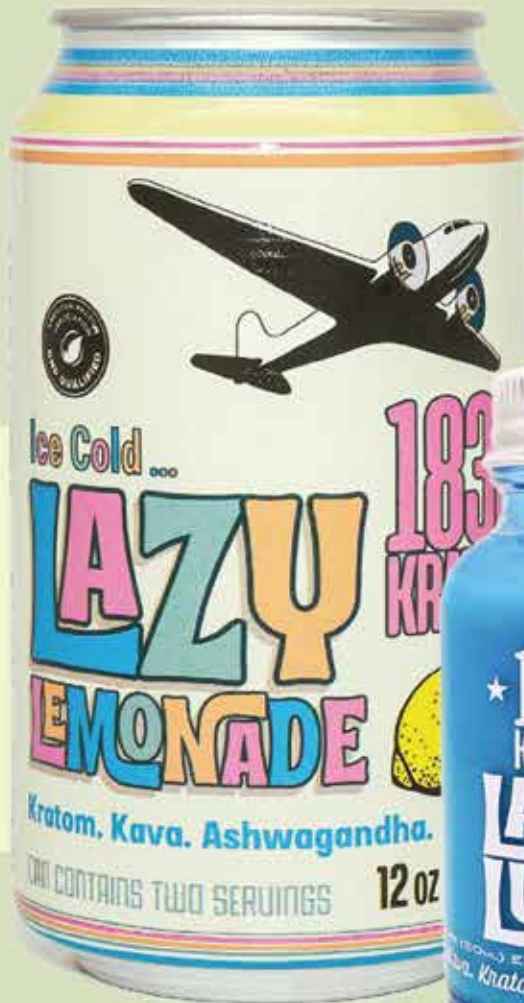
Beyond the Smoke Shop

By Mick Burnwell

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CHAMPS SHOW MAGAZINE

ISSUE 85 - SEPTEMBER 2026

STREET
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BACK TO THE SUNSHINE STATE: PREVIEWING CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE THIS NOVEMBER!



By Kevin Dankman

There's nothing quite like heading south to Fort Lauderdale in November. With perfect ocean breezes, sunny skies, and pleasant late-autumn weather replacing the gloomy forecasts elsewhere, the coastal backdrop sets the ideal stage for another incredible show week.

Whether you're starting your morning with a walk to the convention center or wrapping up the day checking out the yachts along the harbor, Fort Lauderdale delivers the ultimate venue to connect, do business, and unwind.

Continues On Page 20

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BACK TO THE SUNSHINE STATE: PREVIEWING CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE THIS NOVEMBER!



Major Star Power & Action Sports Integration

Florida always brings heavy hitters, and November will be no exception.

• Culture & Community:

Expect major celebrity appearances and guest walk-throughs across the floor. From **Smoke Nation** bringing out icons like **Bam Margera** for face time with attendees, to high-profile figures supporting brand roll-outs, the celebrity roster stays stacked.

• **Action Sports Live:** The **CuRB Show** is back, bringing live mini-ramp sessions, skate culture, and street activations right to the heart of the trade show floor. Keep your eyes peeled for guest skaters and special appearances—you never know who's dropping in next!

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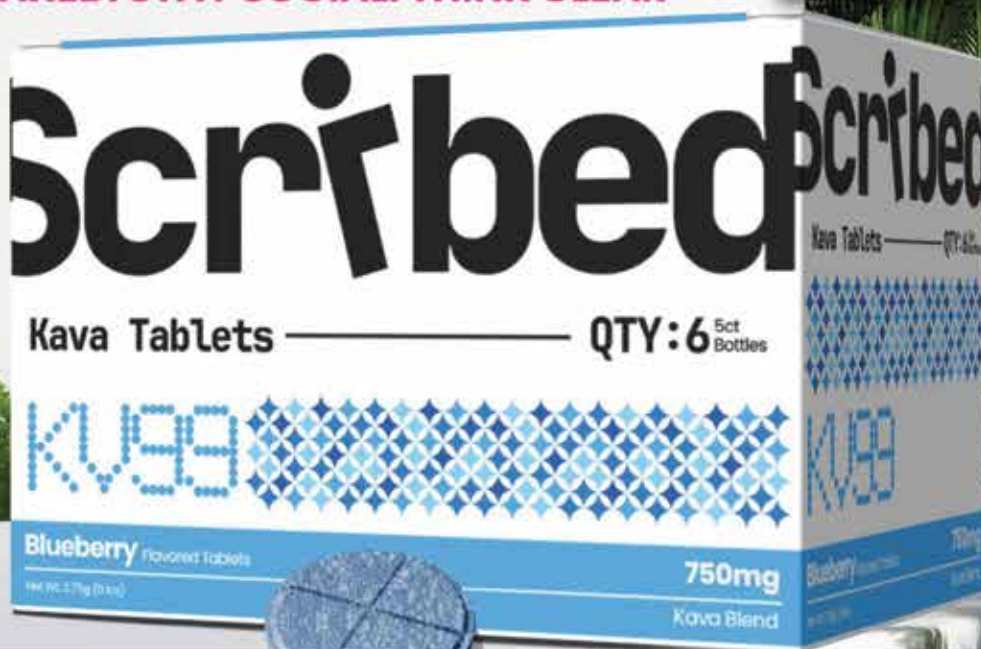
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TREAT

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When I first read the ingredients list on Treat, my curiosity was instantly piqued. The formula combines three totally distinct botanicals that are rarely seen together: **Kava, Kanna, and Cat's Claw**.

Because these three herbs work on completely different physiological pathways, their combined effect is intentionally designed to offer a full-spectrum wind-down. You get physical tension relief from the Kava, mood elevation from the Kanna, and overall systemic support from the Cat's Claw. It sounded like the absolute perfect formula for a laid-back weekend experiment.

The Initial Test: Saturday Afternoon (½ Tablet)

The label wisely recommends starting with a conservative initial dose of ½ tablet. I took my half dose on a Saturday afternoon and settled in to relax.

- **The First Impression:** You definitely get that classic "Kava mouthfeel" almost instantly. If you've never tried real Kava before, it gives your mouth and lips a distinct, slightly tingly, and numbing sensation. It can be surprising at first, but it immediately lets you know the active ingredients are potent and the real deal.

- **The Come-Up:** It took a little while for the systemic effects to fully kick in. When they did, I could feel a gentle wave of calming energy, but what impressed me most was that I maintained a completely clear head. It wasn't a heavy, groggy feeling—just a peaceful, stress-free baseline.

Upping the Ante: Sunday Off (1 Whole Tablet)

Since that half-tablet on Saturday left me feeling so clear-headed and comfortably calm, I decided I wanted to see what these botanicals were really capable of.

I went ahead and took a full tablet, and that was a significantly more relaxing experience. The effects were much more pronounced—you could actually feel the different herbs doing their job. My physical tension completely dropped off, but my mood stayed elevated and light. It didn't knock me out or make me groggy, but it definitely put me in the perfect headspace for a lazy Sunday.

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, this blend delivers exactly what it promises. It's a great, natural option if you want to legitimately unwind, chill out, and de-stress without losing your day to brain fog. If you're looking for a new way to kick back on the weekend, it's definitely worth picking up—just don't be surprised by that instant Kava tingle!

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BACK TO THE SUNSHINE STATE: PREVIEWING CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE THIS NOVEMBER!



High Energy, High Volume: The Business Floor

If past shows have proven anything, it's that regional CHAMPS events drive serious ROI for brands of every scale. Expect non-stop traffic and active order-writing from doors open to close.

- **Industry Leaders:** Expect high-volume booths like **Mellow Fellow** to keep the energy buzzing with steady buyer crowds.
- **Essential Staples:** Core brands like **Smoke Odor** and top-tier vendors across the board will be writing orders continuously throughout all three days.

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BACK TO THE SUNSHINE STATE: PREVIEWING CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE THIS NOVEMBER!



Interactive Fun: Glass Games Arcade

The show floor isn't just about writing orders—it's about having a blast while doing it. **The Glass Games Arcade of Fun** is returning to keep buyer engagement through the roof!

- **The Price is Wrong BOB! Think Plinko:** Drop a chip for a chance to take home free inventory.
- **RC Crawler Challenge:** Test your skills on the obstacle course—if you navigate the terrain, you win the custom glass featured on the truck!
- Live demos by amazing artists, **Babedriane, Burtoni, and Chad G.**

These activations keep the room smiling and buzzing all day long, right down to the final minute of the show.



Fred Morledge



Charisma

Regional Impact That Delivers

CHAMPS Trade Show continues to prove why its regional calendar is essential for the industry. Unmatched networking, top-tier buyers, and an unforgettable atmosphere make the November Fort Lauderdale show a can't-miss event.

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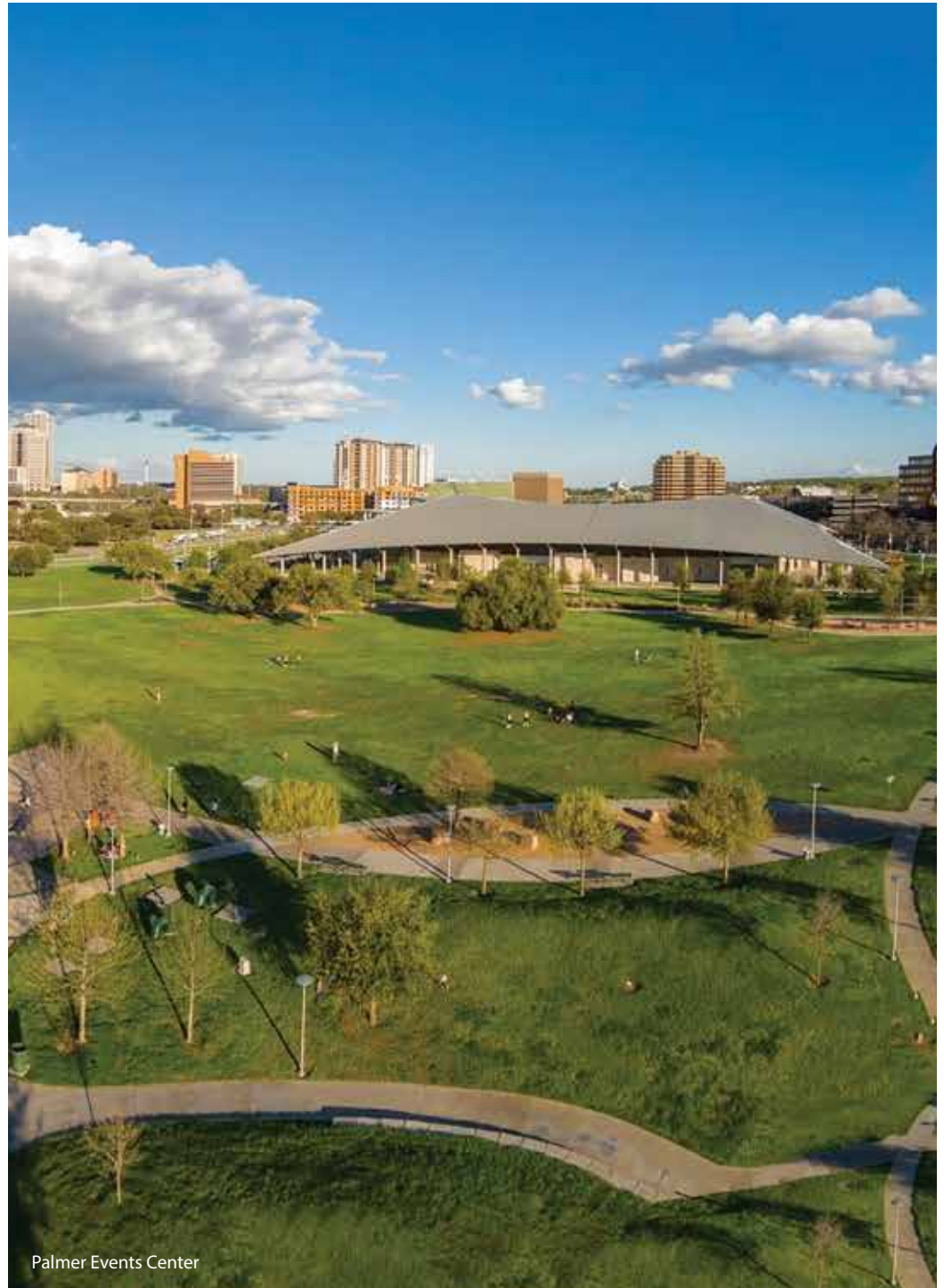
By Editorial Staff

If round one in the Lone Star State proved anything, it's that Texas knows how to do business—and they do it big. Following a massive kickoff earlier this year, **CHAMPS Trade Show** is heading back to the Texas capital to close out the autumn sourcing season.

Whether you need to lock in early fourth-quarter inventory, secure exclusive end-of-year pricing, or catch the latest drops from top-tier counterculture brands before the holiday rush, Austin is officially the place to be.

SHOW DETAILS AT A GLANCE

- **Dates:** October 13–15, 2026
 - **Venue:** Palmer Events Center | 900 Barton Springs Rd, Austin, TX
 - **Show Hours:**
 - Tuesday & Wednesday:**
11:00 AM – 6:00 PM
 - Thursday:**
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- Continues On Page 48





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CHAMPS RETURNS TO AUSTIN THIS FALL: DEEP IN THE HEART OF RETAIL

Accommodations & Host Hotel

Stay close to the action! A dedicated room block has been reserved at the **Embassy Suites by Hilton Austin Downtown South Congress** for show attendees and exhibitors.

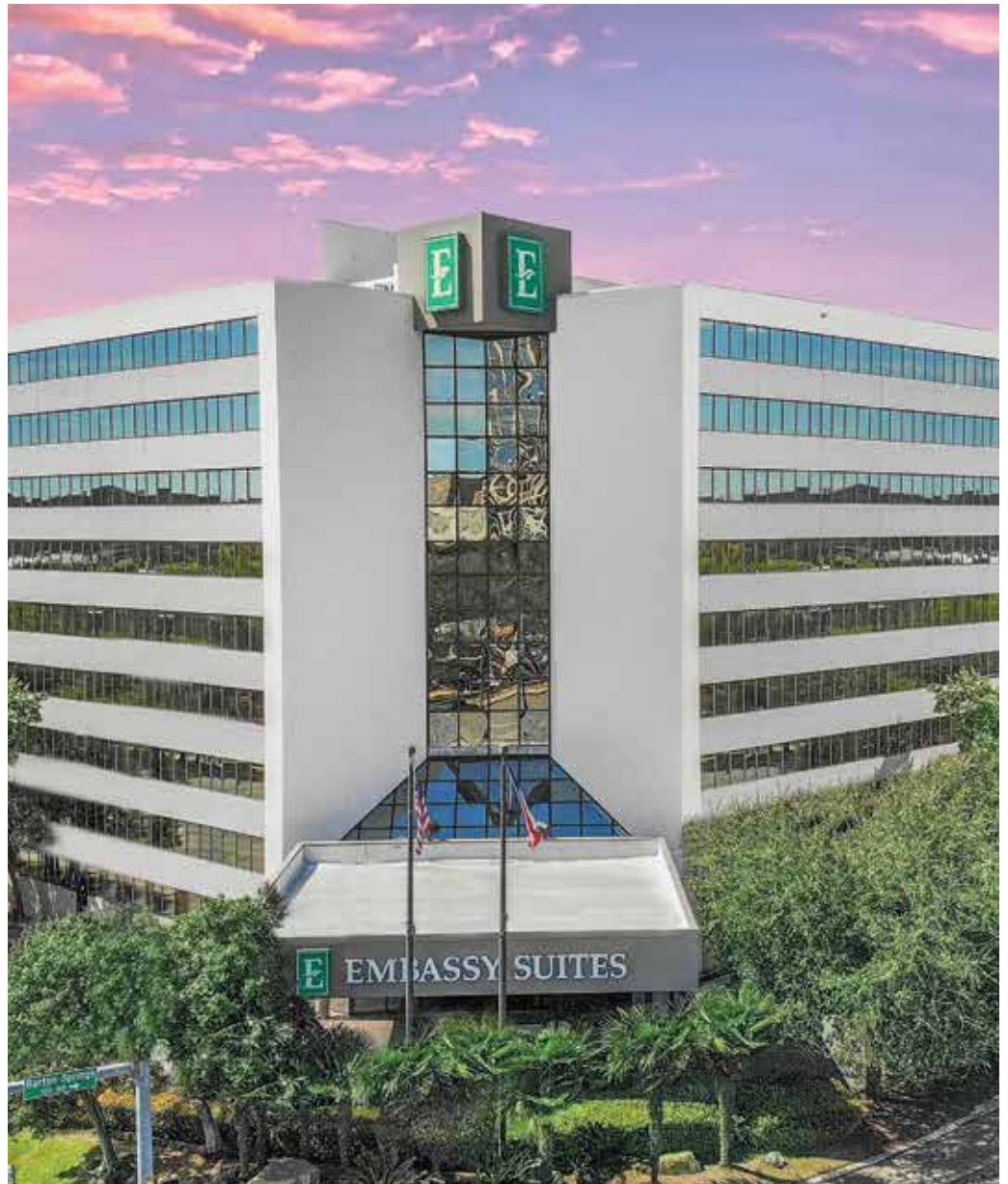
- **Host Hotel:** Embassy Suites by Hilton Austin Downtown South Congress
- **Block Dates:** October 12, 2026 - October 16, 2026
- **Perks Included:**
 - Complimentary Daily Breakfast
 - Complimentary Wi-Fi
 - Discounted Self-Parking (\$30/day)



Booking Cutoff:

September 19, 2026 (Select "Book a Room" on the CHAMPS registration portal to lock in the preferred group rate before the deadline).

Continues On Page 53



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CHAMPS RETURNS TO AUSTIN THIS FALL: DEEP IN THE HEART OF RETAIL

What's on the Floor

Unrivalled Sourcing & B2B Networking

Hundreds of vendors and thousands of brands are taking over the Palmer Events Center. Expect full product lines spanning American-made glass, functional art, vape technology, lifestyle accessories, and counterculture retail essentials. Retail buyers can negotiate direct face-to-face deals to give their shop floor a distinct competitive edge heading into Q4.

CHAMPS Glass Games: Goblet Grab & Off-Site Action

It wouldn't be a CHAMPS show without the absolute elite of the functional glass scene. This fall, the Glass Games arena will host live artist showcases and high-stakes competitions throughout the show, including the fan-favorite **Goblet Grab Contest!**



- **The Prize is wrong, Bob:** a plinko-style game. Buyers can win free product for the store!

- **Daily After-Hours Event:** When the show floor closes for the evening, get your grub on and then head over to **The Glassmith** for an exclusive off-site Glass Games event. Connect with fellow collectors, shop owners, and glass artists for live action and community networking off the main convention floor. The winner will go to the CHAMPS Masters!

Continues On Page 56

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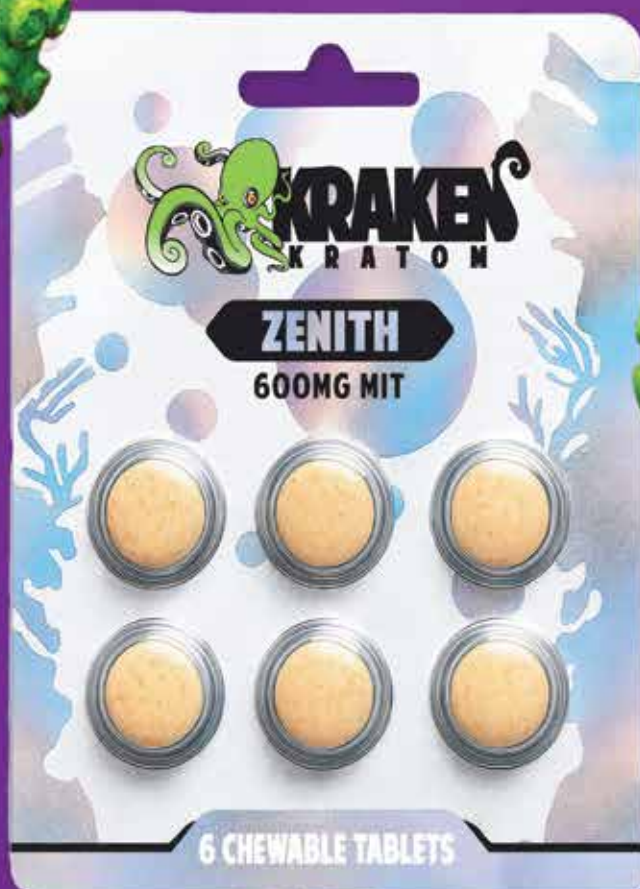


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CHAMPS RETURNS TO AUSTIN THIS FALL: DEEP IN THE HEART OF RETAIL

The Austin Pit Stop: Fueling Up Near the Palmer

A trip to the Palmer Events Center puts you right in the sweet spot for some of the best culinary stops in the city. When the floor closes, check out these crew-favorite spots:

- **Terry Black's BBQ:** Located just minutes down Barton Springs Road. The brisket is famously moist, and the massive beef ribs are legendary.

Pro Tip: The aroma is powerful—enjoy every bite at the pit before heading back onto the show floor!

- **Sandy's Hamburgers:** An Austin staple since the 1950s. If you need a fast, nostalgia-packed lunch break, grab a classic double cheeseburger and a frozen custard shake.

- **Thundercloud Subs:** Fast, affordable, deli-quality subs made right in town. Ideal for a quick, reliable lunch run between vendor meetings.

ATTENDEE & EXHIBITOR DIRECTORY

Ready to secure your buyer badge or lock in booth space? Visit the official portal at **champstradeshows.com** for buyer pre-registration, updated vendor floor maps, and official group hotel booking links.





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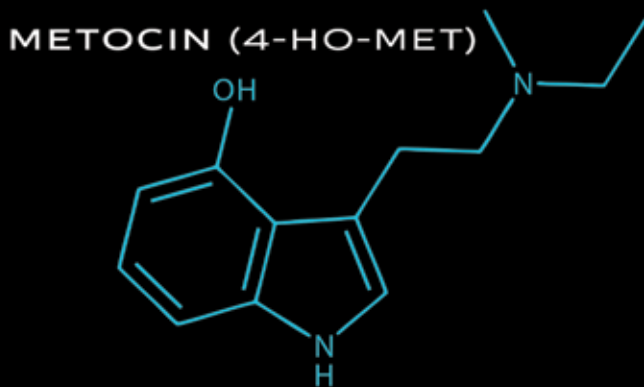


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BEYOND THE SMOKE SHOP: ADDING NEW PRODUCT LINES THAT GROW YOUR BUSINESS

By Mick Burnwell

Today's most successful smoke shops are becoming more than places to purchase smoking accessories. They are evolving into complete culture shops—destinations where customers can discover apparel, adult gifts and novelties, skateboard equipment, lifestyle accessories, and products that reflect their personalities.

Adding new product categories can increase sales, attract new shoppers, and give existing customers more reasons to visit. The key is choosing products that fit your store, your neighborhood, and the culture you have already created.

First, Become the Expert

The first rule when adding a new product line is to educate yourself about the market and the merchandise you plan to sell. As the owner or manager, you should become the store's first expert so you can properly teach your team.

Learn the major brands, product differences, terminology, pricing, customer expectations, safety considerations, and related products customers may need. Ask vendors for demonstrations, samples, training materials, and answers to the questions customers ask most often.

Create a simple cheat sheet for your staff that explains:

- What each product does
- Who it is designed for
- Its most important features
- The differences between available options
- Important safety information or age restrictions
- Common customer questions
- Related products that should be recommended
- Answers to common objections

Hold a short training session before the new merchandise reaches the sales floor. Employees do not need to know everything immediately, but they should be able to explain the basics confidently and know where to find additional information.

Customers can tell when employees understand what they are selling. Product knowledge creates trust, produces better recommendations, increases add-on sales, and makes the new category feel like a deliberate part of the store instead of random merchandise filling an empty shelf.

Reach New Customers

Every new product category gives another group of shoppers a reason to walk through your door.

Adult gifts and novelties may attract couples, bachelor and bachelorette party shoppers, and customers searching for humorous or unusual gifts. Clothing can bring in shoppers who connect with streetwear,



counterculture fashion, music, art, or your store's brand. Skateboard equipment can introduce your business to skaters, parents, and customers looking for decks, wheels, bearings, hardware, tools, and accessories.

These shoppers may initially visit for one item, but once inside, they are exposed to everything else in your store.

Increase the Value of Every Visit

Diversifying your inventory creates natural opportunities for additional sales. A customer purchasing a skateboard deck may also need grip tape, hardware, bearings, or a skate tool. Someone shopping for a novelty gift might add a greeting card, T-shirt, or small impulse item. A customer buying a hoodie may also notice a hat, bag, sunglasses, or another accessory near the register. This can increase the average

transaction without raising prices. You are simply giving customers more relevant products to purchase during the same visit.

Staff education plays an important role here. When employees understand how products work together, they can make useful recommendations rather than relying on aggressive sales tactics.

Create More Reasons to Return

Some traditional smoke-shop products are purchased only when customers need replacements. Clothing, gifts, novelties, and skateboard products can create a different shopping cycle.

Customers may return to see new shirt designs, limited-edition decks, seasonal gifts, fresh accessories, or the latest novelty products. Regularly rotating a portion of your

inventory makes the store feel new, even to customers who visit frequently.

A changing selection also gives you something fresh to promote through social media, email, window displays, and in-store events.

Become a Culture Shop

The term "smoke shop" may describe part of your inventory, but it does not have to define your entire business.

A culture shop serves the broader interests of its customers. It combines functional products with fashion, art, humor, entertainment, and personal expression. This creates a stronger identity and separates your store from competitors carrying much of the same traditional merchandise.

Continues On Page 70



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HERE ARE 10 CORE STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT LAUNCH

1

Lock in your core identity first.

A debut needs a cohesive theme—like a unified colorway or a tightly focused design aesthetic—so people instantly recognize what the brand stands for before you expand the catalog.

2

Leverage existing B2B relationships.

Before focusing solely on direct-to-consumer sales, secure buy-in from independent brick-and-mortar specialty shops to build authentic, grassroots credibility.

3

Time it with industry momentum.

Align your drop with major trade shows, conventions, or summer event sessions where your target demographic is already gathered, energized, and looking for what is next.

4

Engineer scarcity with limited runs.

Introduce special, limited-edition batches—such as hand-numbered or spray-stenciled items—to create urgency and drive collector appeal among early adopters.

5

Seed the product to authentic voices.

Get the product directly into the hands of real talent, like top-performing skaters or local wildcards, who organically live the culture and validate the gear.

6

Build a digital runway.

Use your website to capture emails early and tease the visual identity of the upcoming drop well before the shopping cart actually opens.

7

Form cross-promotional alliances.

Partner with established events, festivals, or complementary brands to tap into their existing audience and multiply your reach without inflating your ad spend.

8

Create a frictionless B2B wholesale kit.

If you are pitching to shop owners, have your line sheets, pricing tiers, and inventory ordering processes completely streamlined and ready to hand over at a moment's notice.

9

Stress-test your logistics.

Ensure your inventory tracking, packaging materials, and shipping workflows are completely dialed in before the first order drops to guarantee a flawless initial customer experience.

10

Capture data for the next phase.

Treat the launch as a learning exercise to track exactly which specific items, sizes, or variants move the fastest, allowing you to optimize the production run for your next series.

BEYOND THE SMOKE SHOP: ADDING NEW PRODUCT LINES THAT GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Clothing and skateboard products also provide valuable display opportunities. Graphic T-shirts add color to walls, while skateboard decks can function as artwork until they are sold. Adult gifts and novelties can be organized into a tasteful, clearly identified section that encourages browsing while remaining appropriate for the store's layout and clientele.

Build Sales Beyond a Single Category

Retail conditions and consumer trends change. A store that depends heavily on one category may be more vulnerable when demand slows, regulations change, or new competitors enter the market.

A broader product mix creates additional revenue streams. If one category has a quiet month, another may perform well. Clothing can benefit from back-to-school and holiday shopping. Skateboard equipment may see more activity during warmer weather. Adult gifts and novelties can perform well around Valentine's Day, Halloween, bachelor and bachelorette season, and the holidays.

Diversification does not eliminate risk, but it can prevent your entire business from depending on one type of product.

What If Your Store Is Already Packed?

A full store does not necessarily mean there is no room for a new category. It may mean your existing space needs to work harder.

Identify slow-moving products, excessive duplicate inventory, and outdated merchandise occupying valuable space. New lines can be tested using a single wall display, clothing rack, countertop section, or endcap. Clothing and skateboard decks can also be displayed vertically, turning unused wall space into productive selling space.

The objective is not simply to carry more inventory. It is to make every square foot more profitable.

Start Small and Learn

You do not need to redesign the entire store or place a huge opening order. Begin with a focused test.

Choose one category that feels natural for your customers and dedicate a small, visible section to it. Start with proven basics and a few attention-grabbing products. Track what sells, what customers pick up, what they ask about, and which price points perform best.

For clothing, begin with a limited size range and a few strong designs. For skateboard equipment, start with frequently replaced products such as bearings, wheels, grip tape, hardware, and tools before investing heavily in complete setups. For adult gifts and novelties, test a curated selection that matches your store's personality and local customer base.

Ask customers what they would like to see, but let actual sales determine your larger purchasing decisions.

Keep Teaching Your Team

Staff training should continue after the initial launch. Update the team when new brands and products arrive, share customer questions that employees had difficulty answering, and review which items are selling. Encourage team members to use the cheat sheet and add useful information as they gain experience. If possible, invite vendors or sales representatives to provide product demonstrations and answer questions directly.

A knowledgeable employee does more than complete a transaction. That employee helps the customer make the right purchase—and gives that customer a reason to return.

Merchandise Each Category Properly

Presentation can determine whether a new department succeeds.

Give every category a clear home. Clothing should be organized by style and size. Skateboard components should be displayed so customers can easily understand what works together. Adult products should be presented professionally, with consideration given to age restrictions, visibility, local regulations, and customer comfort.

Use signs to introduce the department and explain what is available. Cross-merchandise complementary items, but avoid overcrowding displays. If customers cannot understand the section within a few seconds, it may need to be simplified.

Promote What Is New

Do not assume regular customers will automatically notice that you added a new product line. Announce it.

Feature new arrivals on social media, place a display near the entrance, update your website, and include the category in your advertising. Consider a launch weekend, product demonstration, local skate event, fashion drop, or themed shopping night.

A new product line is more than inventory—it is a reason to contact your customers and invite them back.

Give Your Store Room to Grow

Adding adult gifts and novelties, clothing, skateboard equipment, or other lifestyle products can transform the way customers see your

business. It can expand your audience, increase the value of each transaction, create repeat visits, strengthen your identity, and reduce dependence on a single category.

The strongest additions will feel connected to the people you already serve. Educate yourself first, train your staff, begin with a manageable selection, listen to customer feedback, study the sales, and build from there.

Your shop may already be part of the culture in your community. Expanding your product mix gives customers more ways to experience—and support—that culture.

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