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Anthony Minniti,
owner of Camden
Apothecary

Known for its white-glove service and
imaginative marketing, **Camden Apothecary**
caters to cannabis users from the
"canna-curious" to the connoisseur.

page 56



Budding Interest

by JENNIFER UPDIKE | photos by ALISON DUNLAP

Known for its white-glove service and imaginative marketing, **Camden Apothecary** caters to cannabis users from the “canna-curious” to the connoisseur.

IN 1997, Anthony Minniti and his family purchased the Bell Rexall Pharmacy in the Parkside neighborhood of Camden, New Jersey, one of the oldest family-owned, continually operated pharmacies in the region. Founded in 1931, Bell Rexall Pharmacy has a nearly 100-year history of prescribing products to help residents care for their health. It even sold cannabis until 1937, making Camden Apothecary at Bell Pharmacy the only facility in the nation to have sold cannabis both before and after its prohibition.

Minniti resurrected that tradition in November 2023, more than a year after New Jersey legalized recreational cannabis, with the opening of Camden Apothecary. A cannabis dispensary located adjacent to Bell Pharmacy, Camden Apothecary is what Minniti describes as “one of a kind.”

While most cannabis dispensaries sell basically the same product, Camden Apothecary derives its success from the combination of inventive marketing and a unique guest experience inspired by the hospitality industry. The dispensary’s “budtenders” receive a level of training similar to that offered in hospitality courses. As a result, Camden Apothecary has become known for its white-glove service.

Whether guests are picking up online orders, taking their time to peruse their cannabis options, or benefiting from free home delivery (a signature service for New Jersey residents), Camden Apothecary’s customers enjoy a uniquely personalized experience. “Every day you have to go out and execute a model with a degree of personalization, consistency, and excellence,” Minniti explains. “We believe that our business model brings something different to the table, and that’s been largely borne out by the public response.” In fact, readers of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* honored Camden Apothecary as “Best Cannabis Shop” in both 2024 and 2025, and Camden Apothecary has become known as a favorite destination for athletes, celebrities, artists, and performers from throughout the Philadelphia-South Jersey region.

Camden Apothecary’s uniqueness is even reflected in its atmosphere,



Anthony Minniti, shown here inspecting some product, says Camden Apothecary focuses on giving each guest “the best experience possible.”



Camden Apothecary is located adjacent to Bell Pharmacy. The dispensary's ground floor provides an expedited experience for guests who are picking up online orders or purchasing pre-rolls and gummies.



an ambience it shares with Bell Pharmacy. The pharmacy's aesthetic harkens back to what Minniti describes as "the golden age of the neighborhood pharmacy from the 1940s or 1950s." While today's pharmacies sell all manner of sundries and convenience items, Bell functions more as a museum of pharmaceutical history. This distinctive branding also extends to the dispensary space. "When you go into a dispensary in Pennsylvania or New Jersey, there are a lot of kiosks and rope lines, like a cross between a cafeteria and an Apple store," Minniti observes. "That's not what we have. We focus on giving guests the best experience possible. All the fixtures and décor items are originals from pharmacies that went out of business long ago. The public response has just been incredible. People get to experience something they've only ever heard about or remember seeing as a child."

Minniti suggests that Camden Apothecary attracts cannabis consumers from every point along the spectrum, from the "shy consumer to the canna-curious to the connoisseur." Housed in a converted row home adjoining the main pharmacy building, the dispensary's two stories serve guests according to their precise needs. The ground floor caters to those who seek a more expedited visit, such as picking up an online order or purchasing pre-rolls and gummies, while the second floor caters to cannabis enthusiasts who want to learn more about the nuances of the different strains of cannabis—"people who are going to be here a while," Minniti says.



Camden Apothecary's second floor caters to enthusiasts who want to learn more about the nuances of the different strains of cannabis.

There is an added, unexpected benefit to the dispensary/pharmacy combination. "People in their 60s and 70s who can benefit from cannabis would never go to a dispensary, but they would go to a pharmacy," Minniti explains. "When they come to our pharmacy, they can walk 15 feet to the left and be in a dispensary. This destigmatizes the experience for them. We've had a tremendous response from those customers who say that this has been a very positive experience."

Minniti views cannabis in much the same way he views other beneficial herbs like ginseng, turmeric, and green tea. "We are pharmacists—that's the world we come from," he says. "In the earlier days, people looked at cannabis more as an alternative or adjunct to traditional medical care. Many often forget that the impetus for the original legalization of cannabis in California was to assist patients who had terminal conditions—cancer, HIV—and had pain that was uncontrolled by any other means. Back then, the drugs used for chronic pain were the exact opioids that created the opioid epidemic. Those drugs became overused and misused. Cannabis doesn't have the same addictive properties. We're able to lessen people's drug load with a product that has fewer side effects than traditional pharmaceutical therapy. We're able to guide patients in the proper use of cannabis as a homeopathic treatment option." While cannabis excels at addressing some health issues, it's not a cure-all. This is where Camden Apothecary's bud-tenders are especially helpful, as they are skilled at guiding each guest according to their specific needs.

Given the restrictions on cannabis marketing, Minniti has had to get creative in terms of advertising and promotion. For example, the dispensary signed an agreement to be the "Official Cannabis Partner" of Xfinity Live! across the river in South Philadelphia, making Camden Apothecary the first cannabis brand in the nation to secure a partnership deal with a major American corporation. Camden Apothecary features prominently in Xfinity Live!'s branding, right alongside established Philadelphia-area brands like Dietz & Watson, Chickie's & Pete's, Geno's Steaks, and Lorenzo

& Sons Pizza, as well as national brands such as Bud Lite, Pepsi, and State-side. The dispensary has completed similar sponsorships with the likes of

Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship, which Minniti calls "an emerging competitor to the UFC," and the National Ball Hockey League, a wildly popular sport Minniti describes as "mostly like street hockey from back in the day." In addition, Camden Apothecary has linked arms with regional celebrities such as former Philadelphia Flyer and cannabis advocate Riley Cote. Cote and Minniti work together with Athletes for CARE, whose efforts include using cannabinoid science to help athletes manage their anxiety, pain, and sleep issues, and lead more holistic lifestyles that are less reliant on opiates and other potentially harmful medications.

Camden Apothecary has also become a popular destination for members of the LGBTQ+ community, many of whom use cannabis to cope with symptoms caused by gender transitioning or as an alternative to antidepressants and antipsychotics for mental health. Likewise, Minniti says people with ADHD turn to his dispensary for guidance in migrating away from drugs such as Adderall.

"We take a comprehensive approach to the cannabis consumer," he adds. "Every guest who comes to us receives the same white-glove service. We've really tried to elevate the dispensary experience to make everyone feel like they're going to their favorite high-end restaurant or bar. It's very unique and very inclusive. We truly are the dispensary that welcomes everyone." ■



Camden Apothecary at Bell Pharmacy

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*Ample free parking adjacent to the
pharmacy and dispensary*