

EVE & CO IN THE GARDEN OF CANNABIS

CEO MELINDA ROMBOUTS TALKS ABOUT PASSION, SUCCESS AND WOMEN IN CANNABIS

For those who have not yet been introduced, meet **Eve & Co**, one of Canada's leading licensed cannabis producers. Under the direction of CEO and founder **Melinda Rombouts**, Eve & Co is a premiere female-focused cannabis brand. Through the wholly-owned subsidiary, Natural MedCo Ltd., Eve is a licensed producer and seller of dried cannabis and cannabis plants under the *Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations (ACMPR)*.

Prior to her current role, Ms. Rombouts was the president, manager and owner of numerous large-scale businesses producing agricultural food and pharmaceutical-related products. Through this experience, she gained extensive expertise that is crucial to the growth of a healthy plant and high-quality product. Ms. Rombouts has grown hundreds of varieties of plants and has experience with quality assurance and good production practices program development, implementation and improvement, with strict adherence to the regulations governing the pharmaceutical industry in Canada and abroad.

As the cannabis sector continues to grow globally, Ms. Rombouts has shared insight on how to stay focused, how women can thrive in the space and what's next on the horizon.

In today's dollar-driven cannabis sector, how have you been able to stay true to your passion for cultivating and producing a quality product?

As the representative for Eve, I am pulled in many directions, but I always look forward to my time at the greenhouse. I spend much of my time inspecting the plants and working with the

growers to continually improve the quality and health of our plants using the science developed from the greenhouse industry. I've spent my life in the agriculture and horticultural industries, as well as completing my education in plant biology. My passion has always been around plant life.



How and why did you identify your niche of focusing on women clients, and how (in your opinion) has this positioned Eve & Co in Canada and internationally as a unique producer?

Early into our application process, we realized that women were dramatically unrepresented in leadership within the Canadian cannabis industry. It was a struggle

to be recognized in this industry, not unlike the struggles many women face across other business sectors. I believe that we are approaching this industry with a perspective and understanding that only women can truly bring. Eve is not one of our many brands - it is our only focus, and we are dedicated to educating, assisting and changing the story for women and cannabis. Women can only become stronger when their health and wellbeing are addressed first, and our focus will be assisting women with this.

What are some of the things that women look for in their cannabis products?

There are some limitations on what can be legally offered to the Canadian consumer now, but as the industry develops, there are so many possibilities. There is a wide variety of female-oriented products that have great success in legalized states, and we hope to bring those inspiring products to the Canadian market and internationally. Women have unique needs,

and we recognize and will be addressing those needs as we grow. As women, we want to be able to address our pain naturally while still being able to be alert and present for our families and children. It is the nature of women to look after everyone else, and Eve hopes to help women look after themselves.

What are some of the advantages that you bring to the table as a woman CEO of an LP and what are some of the challenges you have had to overcome?

I feel that at Eve, one of our greatest accomplishments has been the development of our team. We have spent much of our efforts to ensure our team is strong and happy, and the result is a loyal group who cares about each other and the success of the company. I believe that this is one of the greatest differences and strengths, and that this results from woman leadership. We approach the development of our company with a different perspective with our people being of primary importance. There are quite a few challenges. I don't think that women, including myself, exude an inflated level of confidence – it's just not who we are. Due to this, I do feel that we are perceived differently and perhaps differently as leaders.

Reflect on how far the Canadian cannabis industry has come in the last five years. At what point did you realize that the industry was going to take off?

This has been a growing experience for all participants in the industry: the regulators, producers, financiers and consumers. Health Canada has set high standards, and international markets recognize these high standards, which makes the Canadian industry and products respected and desirable. There will be many more possibilities for Eve and female consumers and we expect this opening to happen in 2019 as edibles and other products are allowed.

What advice do you have for other women entering or already in the cannabis sector?

Give it 100% and expect to work harder than you ever have. We have helped a number of women entering the industry, and I would hope that we continue to support each other. It is a competitive market and industry, but women don't need to compete with each other. I hope we can support all women, not only in the industry, but also on our teams, all women leaders, all those struggling to grow forward, and, of course, the consumers.

After going public in Canada, how has your business changed (if at all)?

I used to say I was always going 100 miles an hour, but now it's more like 200. The industry is changing and developing so quickly, and you have to move with it. It's work, but it's exciting – we're never bored.

How will Eve stand out from competitors in light of restrictions on marketing and branding?

Our focus is really about changing the story around cannabis for women, and I think that by using the experience and knowledge we have gained in the last 5 years in the cannabis industry, as well as our perspective as women and as female leaders, we can bring knowledge, understanding and an outlook that only women and women leaders can bring to female consumers and truly be able to help them.

What's next for the cannabis sector in Canada and in other noteworthy jurisdictions?

We will be shipping across Canada and portraying our message to as many women as we can touch with this positive message. We are also focusing on international medicinal sales.

Eve & Co calls one of the largest Southwestern Ontario cannabis greenhouses home and is run by an enthusiastic and talented group. Their collective mission is to make an impactful difference in the lives of their clients. Ms. Rombouts and her team are inspired to produce an optimal product that assists clients with enhancing, exciting and balancing their everyday. Promoting self-care and stigma-free indulgence for women is at the root of their work.

For more information on Melinda Rombouts and Eve & Co, please visit vecannabis.ca.