

WHY DO PEOPLE LOVE THE BURN? PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND SPICY FOODS.



What's the fun of eating chili? Folks who love chili pepper neither have superpowers nor lack taste buds compared to those that can't stand the stuff. Hot peppers trick the brain into thinking that your mouth is on fire. It is a false alarm caused by capsaicin and several related chemicals collectively known as capsaicinoids.

Capsaicin

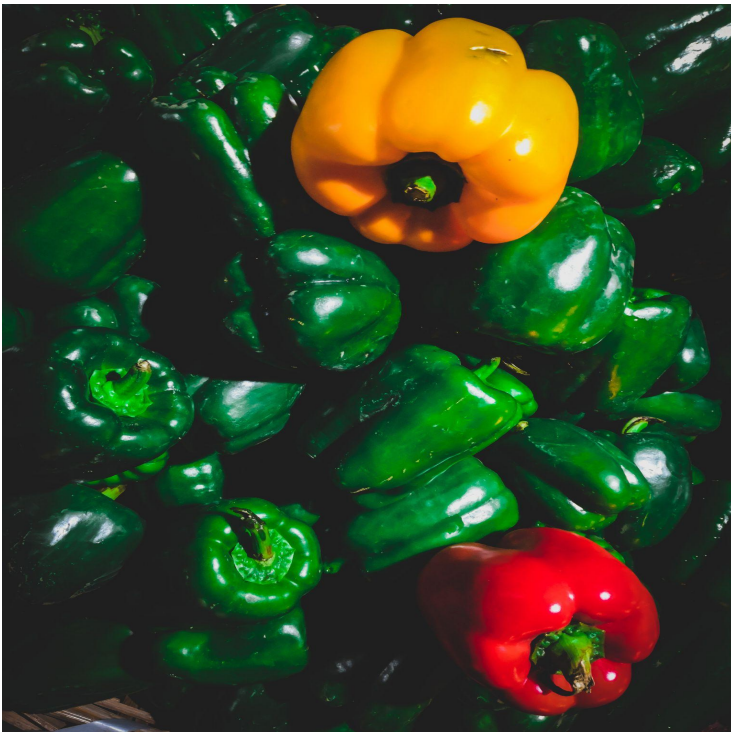
The pepper plant produces capsaicin as a defense mechanism against predators and microbes. Sensory scientists have known chili burn as something more like pain and related it to heat through the decades. Still, a fascinating breakthrough shed light in 1997 when a pharmacologist, David

Julius, at the University of California identified the receptor for capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili heat. So, how does the chili burn? Capsaicin binds with pain receptors on nerves called TRPV1 in the mouth and gut, sending signals to the brain evoking pain hence heat and discomfort. TRPV1 is also the heat receptor that rattlesnakes use to detect their prey during the night. Your body then responds by trying to cool off through sweating, face turning red, and eyes tearing up to remove the threat.

A quarter of the world's population uses chili pepper in many cuisines as a spice. Why are humans the only mammals with this taste? Why do folks enjoy the chili burn? [Paul Rozin, professor emeritus in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, answers these questions by researching the intersection of gaining pleasure from pain.](#) He compares the thrill of chili burn to the joy of going on a rollercoaster. His research concludes that chili lovers tend to seek the sensation of fear through pain.

Intensity

The intensity or “hotness” of chili can be measured using a method known as high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC).



Securing a place at the bottom of the scale are the bell peppers, scoring 0SHU. Climbing, we have jalapeños rating 6000 SHU then bhut jolka 1,000,000 SHU. Holding a record in the Guinness book of a world record is the Carolina reaper scoring a whopping 2.2 million SHU. You can give it a shot and try beating the record holder of most reaper peppers eaten in one minute, Greg Foster, who came out to 16 peppers.

Conclusion

When you are looking for a better way not to die or prepare a meal, consider a dash of chili. The burn might be worth its health benefits, such as weight loss by improving gut health and metabolism and fighting colds and flu due to its richness in pro-vitamin A, which is vital in maintaining a healthy respiratory system.