



Get to know: Chilies

Chilies are the fruit of plants from the genus *Capsicum*, a member of the Solanaceae (nightshade) family. Chilies were domesticated in Mexico more than 6 000 years ago, and were brought to Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1494. Spanish monks quickly discovered that the spicy chilies made a good substitute for black peppercorn, which was very valuable in Columbus's time. Since then, traders have spread chilies to every continent except Antarctica.



Nutrition

100g of raw chilies contains 40 calories, 9g of carbohydrates, 2g of protein, and 1.5g of fibre. They also have 0g of cholesterol and a mere 0.4g of total fat. Their lack of cholesterol, low calorie count, and abundant vitamins and minerals mean chilies are a healthy addition to any meal.

Fun Facts

The Scoville scale uses Scoville heat units (SHU) to measure the spiciness of chilies based on how much sugar water it takes to dilute a dried chili extract to the point where a trained taster can no longer detect its heat. Jalapeño peppers rate between 3,500 and 10,000 SHU and bird's eye chilies rate between 100,000 and 350,000 SHU. The hottest chili in the world is called the Carolina Reaper and comes in between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 SHU. This is a higher Scoville rating than some law-enforcement-grade pepper spray.

Birds are immune to the effects of capsaicin, the chemical that makes chilies hot. Because of this, chili based repellents can be an effective way to keep rodents out of bird seed without bothering the birds.

Health Benefits

Just 100g of fresh chilies contain more than 200% of the recommended daily amount of Vitamin C. That 100g also contains 29% of your recommended Vitamin B6, 32% of recommended Vitamin A, 14% of copper, and 13% of iron. Early laboratory studies suggest that capsaicin has the ability to fight bacteria, pain, diabetes, and even cancer.

source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chili_pepper, [en.wikipedia.org/Scoville_scale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scoville_scale), <http://www.nutrition-and-you.com/chili-peppers.html>

image: <http://themastercleanse.org/cayenne-pepper/>

What you can try with chilies:

Spicy Red Stew

By: Chili Pepper Madness

Serves: 2

What You Need:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2-3 small yellow potatoes, cubed
- 2 small red beetroots, peeled and cubed
- 5 Sucette du Provence chili peppers, chopped (or other mild to low heat red chili pepper)
- 3 large collard greens, chopped (or substitute another green, such as spinach or kale)
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 cups vegetable broth (or chicken broth for a non-vegetarian version)
- Salt and pepper to taste

What to do:

1. Heat a large pan to medium heat. Add oil and swirl.
2. Add onion, potatoes, and beetroot. Cook about 5 minutes to soften.
3. Add chili peppers and collard greens. Cook another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Add garlic and cook 1 minute.
5. Add vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
6. Cool slightly, add salt and pepper as desired, and serve

<http://www.chilipeppermadness.com/chili-pepper-recipes/soups-salads-stews/spicy-red-stew>

Try these other recipes

- Roasted Tomato Salsa: http://www.finecooking.com/recipes/roasted_tomato_salsa.aspx
- Chicken with Rice (arroz con pollo):
http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/chickenwithricearroz_92264
- A selection of ways to prepare and preserve fresh chilies:
<http://www.thaitable.com/thai/food/to-do-with-chilies>