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Why is piquant/spicy food so popular?

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**Why is piquant/spicy food so popular?**

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## ABSTRACT

The desire for piquant/spicy food has grown phenomenally over the last 500 years or so. In this review, I summarize the literature on this most intriguing of oral sensations, and summarize various explanations for why it may have become so liked by so many peoples around the world in recent years. A number of alternative hypotheses for the phenomenal rise in popularity of this plant/fruit have been put forward and are briefly discussed. These include the masochistic/thrill-seeking hypothesis, the antimicrobial hypothesis, the thermoregulation/salivation-induction hypotheses, and medicinal/health/diet-based accounts.

KEYWORDS: Chemesthesis; Masochism; Thrill-seeking; Anti-microbial; Health/Weight Control.

**Introduction**

The perception of spiciness (or piquancy; these terms will be used interchangeably in this piece) in a dish, while widely liked by many people around the world, has not received anything like as much research interest from the multisensory or, for that matter, sensory science, communities as have, for instance, the basic tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami) or common flavour experiences. Indeed, it was Harry Lawless (1989) who first

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