



HANDLING *Spiciness*



HOW TO MAKE YOUR FOOD LESS SPICY- FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN'T HANDLE HOTNESS

Mouth on fire, sweat trickling down your face and light headedness are just some of the symptoms associated with the consumption of spicy foods. Living in Asia, chances are you've had your fair share of spicy food, ranging from all kinds of chili pastes, curries and even vegetable dishes that are spiced up!

Being a staple cuisine palate in many parts of the world, especially Asia, really spicy food can be a little too hard to handle if you're not accustomed to it. This article will help you better understand **what exactly makes food spicy, and how to handle its fieriness**. Read on as the food experts of Asia sets our chillies aside and dives into what makes spicy foods hot.





HOW DOES 'SPICY' WORK IN FOOD?

The compound that causes you to **sweat profusely** while your mouth feels like it's on fire is **capsaicin**. Mostly found in peppers, this is the main culprit that **enters your bloodstream** as you eat spicy foods, **convincing your body that it is hotter than it actually is**, thus triggering all sorts of reactions that are meant to cool down your body (sweating included).

Capsaicin is a natural defence mechanism that has been developed by certain plants that prevents other animals and insects from eating them. Most animals take the hint and move on, but not us humans.

There are **two factors** that are normally taken into account when it comes to the level of spice: the **amount of capsaicin** in the chillies/peppers and **the sensitivity of your mouth's receptors** to capsaicin (everyone is different).

Capsaicin is **most concentrated in the membranes and seeds of peppers**, which is why most recipes often advise you to remove these if you want to limit the spiciness of your favourite dishes.

The Scoville Scale is the universal scale when it comes to judging the heat of peppers. **The higher the Scoville Heat Units (SHU), the hotter the pepper is**. For instance, bell peppers are the least hot with an SHU of zero while the Carolina Reaper, which is the hottest pepper in the world has an SHU of 2,200,000!





HOW TO LESSEN THE SPICY LEVEL IN FOODS

If you're cooking at home or have received a really spicy dish, the quickest and simplest way to lessen the spiciness is by **adding more ingredients**.

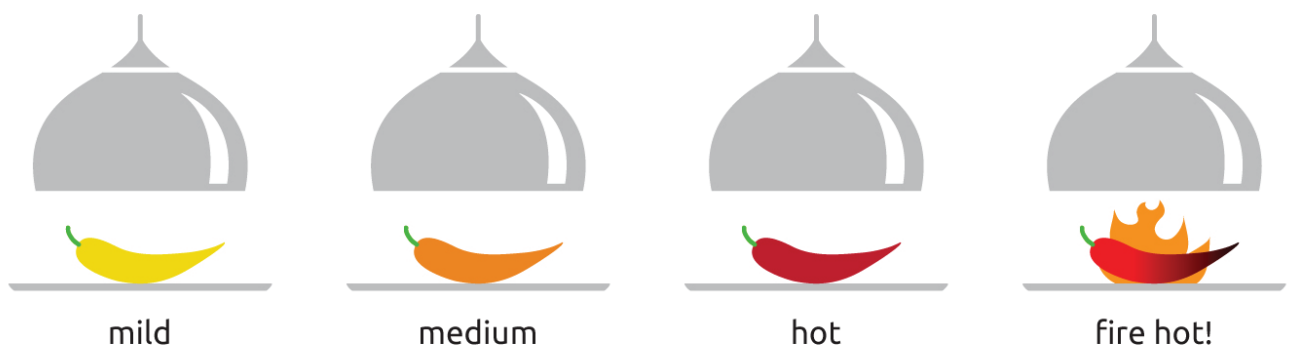
If you're making a soup or curry, **add more water** to lessen its levels of spice. Just don't forget to balance out the other ingredients as well like salt & pepper. If not, your soup might taste a little bland.

Another effective ingredient that combats spiciness is **dairy**. This works because of the **casein protein** that is normally contained in milk **bonds to, surrounds, and washes away the capsaicin (spiciness) molecules in your body**. So if someone passes you pasta that is too spicy, you could try adding cheese or a nice helping of sour cream to your meal.

For those of you who are lactose intolerant or have no love for dairy, you could try adding **sugar** instead. Sugar can balance out the spiciness of a dish, giving your receptors a **much needed sweetness** to combat the spice. You do not necessarily have to use plain old sugar, but you could opt for **honey, natural sweeteners** or even **ingredients that are naturally sweet**.

You could also try giving your dishes a little more **acidity** to lessen its spice. **A few squeezes of lime** would go a long way in making your dishes less tongue searing. If lime isn't your thing, you may also use balsamic vinegar.

Lastly, and this is Asia's Food Experts' favorite method, just add **eggs**! If you are an egg lover like we are, just **crack open an egg and stir it** into your soup, curries or dishes to quickly lessen the heat. Much like adding water, don't forget to balance out the other ingredients if needed as too much eggs could make your dish bland and too eggy.



HOW TO EAT SPICY FOODS



Above were 'hawl' tips on how to make your dishes less spicy but here are some handy tips on how to handle spicy food as you are eating them. For starters, **eat slowly**. The more capsaicin you consume, the more severe the symptoms are going to be. Take your time and stop if you can't handle the heat.

Most of you have probably heard that drinking water is a bad idea as it just spreads the spiciness throughout your mouth. But extremely **cold water** could **numb the receptors** in your mouth and even trick your body into thinking it's cooling down.

Another way is to give your mouth a different kind of texture to focus on by consuming some **crackers, bread** or **plain rice** which can interrupt the intensity of the heat. Starchy foods are known to be able to **absorb some of the capsaicin**, thus keeping it from entering your body too quickly.

As explained above, **dairy** or **milk** could also help lessen the fire in your mouth as casein proteins found in milk are able to bond with the capsaicin and wash them away, giving you a near instant relief.

Lastly, our favourite method, eat some **sweet dessert!** Eating something sweet not only balances out the spiciness in your mouth but also tricks your brain into focusing on something else (like creamy smooth chocolate).

SPICE OF LIFE

It does not matter if you love spicy food or don't, either way you are going to be consuming them whether its with your friends, office gatherings or rightly on your own. If you want to consume spicy food but can't handle the heat, you can **start by slowly building your tolerance** levels. Take your time, and eat increasingly hotter foods on a weekly basis. You'll build up your tolerance level gradually and really come to appreciate all the various 'hotness' chillies have to offer.



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