

Transcript: Why we learn to love spicy food

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsgpZdGVNys>

Habanero

Why is it that some people like spicy food and some people hate it? How does that work?

Most spiciness is caused by one of two chemicals.

Allylisothiocyanate, which is what you find in Wasabi or Mustard, and Capsaicin, which is what you find in peppers.

Plants usually use these chemicals to fend off predators like ants or fungi who would otherwise destroy their seeds before they had a chance to spread.

Woah, it is like a snake bit my tongue!

So, why do you feel that burning sensation? Especially when you are eating spice.

When I swallow I feel it in the back of my throat.

Almost like there is actual temperature change going on?

Yeah, if I don't talk it is actually better. You can definitely feel heat build inside of your face.

Well the way your body reacts to capsaicin is the same way it reacts to high temperatures.

A chunk just went down my throat.

So, what is the feeling that you have right now?

Regret! Starting to regulate my heart beat though.

Your body has essentially been tricked into thinking it is actually burning. Receptors in the throat, the mouth and the tongue detect the capsaicin and they send pain signals to other parts of the body.

Breathing in and out hurts.

I am starting to cry.

When you consume capsaicin your body releases endorphins which are natural stress fighters. People begin to like spice by associating the pain of capsaicin with the positive rush of endorphins.

I feel like I am gassed from a marathon.

We rate spice with the Scoville scale. Which was invented by an American pharmacist named Wilbur Scoville back in 1912. Bell peppers are at the bottom with 0. Habanero peppers rank anywhere from 2,500 to 10,000 which is actually pretty low on the scale. Jump to 2,000,000 and you've got standard US grade pepper spray. And pure capsaicin clocks in at 15 million. That's **** hot.

We've been eating spicy food for about 6,000 years. If you think about the regions of food that are usually spicy like Mexican, Indian and Thai they are all very hot regions. And there are a couple of reasons for that. Cooking with spice generally got rid of bacteria that could make people sick. Especially in places with high humidity and heat.

I'm sweating right now.

*Oh, s****. It is getting really spicy now.*

So the next time you are sweating from a particularly spicy bite don't go for water. It is almost totally useless. What you need is milk, yogurt, rice, liquor or even peanut butter. Oils, fats and alcohol all help dissolve the Capsaicin. Water just doesn't. Your receptors don't dull or get any less sensitive the more spice you eat. Your body just has to associate the pain, with pleasure.

It hurts. But it tastes really good.

Yeah, it was worth the pain. All the burps just taste like delicious spicy food.