

Cover Story

Worried about your addiction to chile? Don't sweat it. There are healthful benefits from the ...

HEAT IN THE VALLEY

By S. Derrickson Moore

HEALTHY U

Jim Hawman is a fan of chiles in all their savory forms.

"Those endorphins are always good. Who doesn't enjoy a good endorphin rush?" said Hawman, who believes that chiles have all sorts of health benefits in addition to their feel-good effects.

"I've read that the incidence of ulcers in this area is one of the lowest anywhere, and it's due in part to the capsaicin in chile," he said.

He estimates his three-person Fairacres household goes through four, 40-pound bags of green chile each year.

"And that's just the green chile, we eat red chile, too, virtually every day," Hawman said.

Do you have the sniffles, sore joints or miscellaneous aches and pains? Would you like to lower your cholesterol or boost your metabolism? Maybe you've been feeling blue and could use an upper without narcotic or addictive side effects. Perhaps your capsaicin levels are running a bit low and what you need is a little of the green — or red — hot stuff.

Your remedy could be ripening in the fields right now, right here in the Mesilla Valley, the chile capital of the world.

Chiles can deliver a wide range of health benefits, according to New Mexico State University professor Paul Bosland, director of NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute. He's been studying the peppers here for 21 years.

Bosland and his colleague Danise Coon have investigated scientific journals, compiled research at NMSU and created a poster, "How Chile Peppers Help Your Body."

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PHOTO BY NORM DETTLAF

Chile in your shampoo? Chile in your shoes? Chile for breakfast, lunch and dinner? It's all good.

Especially when the chile starts working inside your body. The health benefits of green chile are myriad, and people in Doña Ana County have access to the best green chile in the world.



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The poster, (see page 12), includes everything from nutritional benefits to cutting-edge medical research.

"There's more to chiles than just bite or heat. We're trying to educate the public that chile has multiple benefits. One red chile pepper a day provides all the vitamin A you need and one green chile pepper has more vitamin C than six oranges. The most surprising thing for me was realizing how many products use chile," Bosland said.

MYRIAD USES

Capsaicin, the active component in chiles, is used in creams for arthritis, and in patches and creams to relieve sore and aching muscles.

"One of the most interesting recent studies, from UCLA Medical School indicates that capsaicin kills prostate cancer cells," he said.

While the poster notes that "some information has not been scientifically

tested," chile also reportedly aids in motion and sea sickness, treatment of ulcers and "helps 'draw' the poison out and reduce swelling of fresh insect stings and bites."

Some people may be starting their day out with a hit of chile even before breakfast, when they take their morning shower.

"One of the more exotic uses is in dandruff shampoo. It's what gives your scalp that tingling effect," Bosland reports.

HOT AND HEALTHY

Research has established that chiles "can help lower cholesterol and help burn calories by triggering a thermodynamic burn, which speeds up the metabolism," Bosland said. "When you eat chile your body's immune system begins to be kicked up a notch, and inducing your body to raise your immune system creates a prophylactic effect that your whole body reacts to and gives you overall health benefits," Bosland said.

CHILE RESOURCES

- *The Chile Pepper Institute*
NMSU's nonprofit Chile Pepper Institute Center for Chile Education, Gerald Thomas Hall, room 265, corner of College and Knox streets, 646-3028, www.chilepepperinstitute.org

Hours: 8 a.m. to noon, and 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

The institute offers information, seeds, posters, books, videos, guides, research articles and more.

- *NMSU/Doña Ana Cooperative Extension Office*, 530 N. Church, 525-6649; online: nmsu.edu

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

Free information includes pamphlets on making ristras, chile recipes, chile cultivation and preservation.

He's always learning about new chile perks.

"I just recently read in a journal about research on chile to reduce obesity. It supposedly kills off fat cells," he said.

For Bosland, a therapeutic dose of chile is "one or two jalapeños a day. And I have salsa every day and hot sauce on most things. There are so many ways to enjoy chiles. I like to have salsa on eggs for breakfast, green chile stew for lunch and chile relleños and red enchiladas for dinner."

But health-conscious diners should keep in mind that even the metabolism boosting, fat-fighting powers of chile could be curtailed by expecting them to work miracles in dishes loaded with cheese, lard, butter and other unhealthy ingredients.

Luckily, all sorts of low-fat, heart-healthy chile recipes are available, in specialty cookbooks, from local sources like the Chile Pepper Institute, the Doña Ana Cooperative Extension Office and online sources like chile-recipes.com

And if you'd like to conduct your own research, you're in the right place.

"Southern New Mexico produces and processes most of this country's chile peppers. We're No. 1 in the United States and we're No. 1 in the world

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when it comes to the numbers of different kinds of peppers we produce and research in the field.”

He said the crop is looking good this year and about 150 varieties are ripening in the Chile Institute's test gardens at NMSU's Fabian Garcia Science Center.

New maps for self-guided tours are available at the Chile Pepper Institute Center for Chile Education, room 265, Gerald Thomas Hall at the corner of College and Knox streets. The institute is open from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5



PHOTO BY NORM DETTLAFF

New health discoveries about chile continue to flow from scientific research.

p.m., Monday through Friday, and also offers seeds, posters, books, videos, guides, T-shirts, research articles and other information. For information, call 646-3028 or visit online at www.chilepepperinstitute.org

To learn more about chile's health benefits, get the institute's new poster for \$15 or pick up a copy of "The Healing Power of Peppers" by Dave DeWitt, Melissa T. Stock and Kellye Hunter (Random House).

To find regional sources for fresh and shipped processed chiles, check the Yellow pages under "produce" or online with keywords "fresh chile peppers."

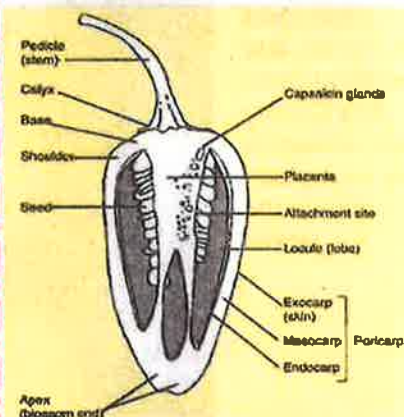
S. Derrickson Moore is a self-confessed chile addict, continually seeking the perfect green chile enchiladas. She can be reached at dmoore@lcsun-news.com

WE'RE NO. 1

"Southern New Mexico produces and processes most of this country's chile peppers. We're No. 1 in the United States and No. 1 in the world when it comes to numbers of different kinds of peppers we produce and research in the field."

Paul Bosland, director
NMSU Chile Pepper Institute

CHILE PEPPER ANATOMY



Microscopic pictures of capsaicinoid vesicles located on the placenta of a *Capsicum chinense*, habanero.



On the left a microscopic picture of a non-pungent bell pepper showing the placenta wall, on the right the capsaicinoid vesicles located on a *Capsicum annuum*, jalapeño.

CHILE HEALTH BENEFITS

- Capsaicin creams made of chile can help in pain relief.
- Anti-inflammatory effects benefit those with arthritis.
- Used in patches for sore and aching muscles.
- Cleans sinuses.
- Chile decreases cholesterol absorption so more is expelled from the body.
- Chile peppers increase the enzymes respon-

sible for fat metabolism in the liver.

- Chile burns calories by triggering a thermodynamic burn, which speeds up the metabolism.
- Chiles help thin the blood, treat blood clots and increase blood circulation.
- Chiles help treat hypothermia, frostbite and heartburn.
- Aids in many skin conditions, including psoriasis, itchiness and bruising.

- Teas and lozenges help treat sore throat.
- Chile peppers may help prevent the growth of certain cancers.
- A teaspoon of red chile meets the recommended daily allowance for vitamin A.
- One green chile pod has as much vitamin C as six oranges.
- Chile peppers are rich in vitamins E and P complex and a good source of iron, potassium and dietary vitamins, as well as antioxidants.