

# Chile KNIGHTS

Chile Lore,

Tales &

Tidbits

By SUNNY CONLEY



Courtesy photo

Actor Alan Alda and New Mexico State University professor Paul Bosland recently met in Santa Fe to discuss MASH, Bosland's mash that is. Bosland, also known as "Mr. Chile," will be a guest on Scientific American Frontiers, a PBS special hosted by Alda on Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 7 p.m., on KRWG TV22.

## Mr. Chile to appear on PBS TV show

By Sunny Conley

For the Sun-News

## Feb. 24: A Hot Night on PBS for Chileheads

Actor Alan Alda and NMSU Professor of Horticulture and Agronomy Paul Bosland have at least one thing in common: MASH.

I'm not talkin' about the TV series M\*A\*S\*H in which Alda played Hawkeye Pierce for 11 years, but the cayenne pepper mash that gives Louisiana Hot Sauce its heat.

Probably unbeknownst to most of his fans, Alda's a diehard chilehead. So much so, that he rang up Professor Bosland, also known 'round the world as "Mr. Chile," to invite him as a guest on Scientific American Frontiers, a PBS program that features some of the world's leading scientists.

Alda, who considers himself "a life-long science buff" has hosted Scientific American Frontiers for nine seasons and has appeared in segments filmed in Germany, Italy, South Africa, Central America, China, Scandinavia and most recently, Santa Fe.

In late September Alda and Bosland met in northern New Mexico during the Santa Fe Wine and Chile Fiesta. Alda was anxious to learn what makes his beloved peppers hot and addictive and why the same compound that gives chile peppers their heat, also relieves several kinds of pain such as arthritis.

"Life's Little Questions" will address these questions and others, on Scientific American Frontiers, which will air locally on KRWG Channel 22 Wednesday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. "Alda was interested in why we eat chile peppers. We also talked about pungency," Bosland said.

The fruit wall of a chile pod isn't what gives chile its heat, he explained. Rather, it's the veins attached to the wall. Bosland will also compare different chile varieties and how its pungency affects the tissues in your mouth.

Mexican green chile, for example, gives a "mid palate burn that comes quickly and dissipates quickly." A jalapeño, on the other hand, "blisters" the tip of the tongue and lips, and the habañero, the hottest of "hot," lingers, which is why some of us reach for a cup of milk or another dairy product to help squelch the pain.

The team also discussed where chile originated and the many different varieties of wild chiles. Although Alda loves hot food — "the hotter the better," he's not a "taster," which according to Bosland, is "unusual."

Not everyone has the same amount of taste buds. A taster, he elaborated, is an individual whose taste buds are extremely sensitive to pungency. "They are the ones who are most unlikely to desire hotter and hotter foods. All we could figure out was that Alan must be habituated to the pod."

Bosland said he made one blooper while giving Alda the spicy food tour at the Fiesta.

"I made the mistake of having him taste — first off — a [hot] jalapeño salsa. Alan then complained that he had trouble tasting the rest of the salsas because his mouth was already 'burnt out.' He said 'Now everything else tastes like ketchup!'" The duo "made up," however, when Bosland offered Alda chile seeds to take home to his wife Arlene, "who loves to garden," Bosland said.

### Chile Chatter

\* Las Crucens Tito and Laura Meyer emailed asking if a hot pepper sauce was available to deter their young dog, Jake, from chewing on "everything." I suggested "Hot, Hot Habañero Sauce but warned that in addition to being a messy ordeal, the dog, like many unexperienced chile chompers, would likely become addicted to the stuff after several "chews" and end up chewing more of "everything."

I instead recommended a commercial repellent. Laura later emailed thanking me. "We have been using an habañero (probably pretty diluted) sauce. But you're right. I think he likes it!" I can just see it on the market shelf now: Chile-inflamed dog bones for chilehead dogs like Jake.

\* Giving chickens cayenne pepper powder in their water makes them lay eggs better.

"Must warm up their 'nether' regions," offered one chilehead.

\* According to chilehead Brent Thompson, red chile powder is often included in chicken feed to give deeper coloration to the yolks. But neither the eggs nor the meat pick up any chile heat. (Too bad.)

### Coming up

Albuquerque will once again host the Annual National Fiery Foods Show March 5 -7 at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Now in its 11th year, the show, the largest (and oldest) for hot and spicy foods, the show attracts growers, processors, manufacturers, importers, distributors, brokers, publishers, buyers, retailer and suppliers.

If you plan to attend, look for next week's column, which will cover some not-to-miss hot sites in Albuquerque, including some unusual but tasty Mexican restaurants that will appeal to both "tasters" and "non tasters."

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*Sunny Conley*  
(<http://www.chileknights.com>) is the author of the award winning "Cafe Hopping in the Southwest," now in its second edition. If you have comments, questions, story ideas or a chile close encounter you'd like to share, Sunny can be reached at 521-9381 or write PO Box 6763, Las Cruces, NM 88006 or e-mail [Sunny@zianet.com](mailto:Sunny@zianet.com).

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