

## NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute wheels out its newest chile pepper education tool



New Mexico State University student and Chile Pepper Institute employee Sarah Murphy is seen holding the institute's latest creation, the chile flavor wheel.(NMSU photo by Harrison Brooks)

*Date: 2011-10-27*

*Writer: [Justin Bannister](mailto:jbannist@nmsu.edu), 575-646-5981, [jbannist@nmsu.edu](mailto:jbannist@nmsu.edu)*

Exactly how hot is a Bhut Jolokia chile pepper? What's the flavor profile of a jalapeno? What are the uses of Hungarian paprika? The answers to each of these questions, and more, can be found on the newest invention from New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute – their chile flavor wheel.

"We're just excited about educating the public about chile flavors," said Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute. "Over the last few years, taste has become more important when talking about chile pepper characteristics."

The wheel is similar to flavor and aroma wheels designed for wine, only for chile peppers instead. The chile pepper wheel covers 14 of the most popular types, including New Mexican, habanero, cayenne, bell and even the fiery Bhut Jolokia. It describes each species, the various cultivars, the pod types, the heat profiles and the peppers' uses in food. The project is a partnership between the Chile Pepper Institute and the NMSU Alumni Association.

"The Alumni Association has had a strong connection to chile, almost from the very beginning," said Debbie Widger, associate vice president for advancement. "Fabian Garcia, the 'Father of the New Mexican Chile Pepper,' graduated from NMSU in 1894 and was very involved in forming the alumni association in 1898. Today we have many alumni who are affiliated with the chile pepper industry."

The release of the wheel is timed to correspond with NMSU's Homecoming, Saturday, Oct. 29.

"Chile becomes a large part of students' lives while they are here at NMSU," said Danise Coon, a senior research specialist for the Chile Pepper Institute and an NMSU graduate herself. "We get calls all the time from alums wanting to know more about green chile."

Coon and Bosland said they started talking about the project 15 years ago when people began calling the Institute, asking if they had considered hosting chile pepper tastings. The project picked up momentum in the last few years after the institute introduced its "Heritage" line of chile, grown to have five times the flavor and aroma compounds of similar chile grown today.

The chile pepper wheels are \$10 and available at the Chile Pepper Institute. All proceeds go towards an endowed chair for chile pepper research at the institute.