



BROOK STOCKBERGER / SUN-NEWS

**Danise Coon**, program coordinator of the Chile Pepper Institute at NMSU, peeks through a couple of the gift packages featuring Holy Jolokia hot sauce and salsa that are for sale at the institute's office.

# Sizzling!

## Hot sauce sales beat expectations and bring in money for NMSU

By Brook Stockberger  
LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

LAS CRUCES — You may cringe at puns, but this ballad of Holy Jolokia cries out for such a literary device.

So, with apologies to no one, here it goes:

*Institute catches fire with hot sauce  
Holy Jolokia sings expectations  
Chile lovers burn for the new flavor*

OK, we'll stop right there, but you get the picture.

In case you have not heard of the product, Holy Jolokia is a hot sauce, and now a salsa, too, made from the hottest chile peppers on the planet, the Bhut Jolokia, also known as the "ghost chile."

Digonta Saikia, a farmer in India who grew up around the pepper, once told The

Associated Press that, "When you eat it, it's like dying."

The folks at New Mexico State University, though, hope your experience will be more pleasant than that. And for them, it has been a fun and surprising run.

NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute has teamed up with Ohio-based CaJohn's Fiery Foods to create the hot sauce, and sales have been brisk.

Since it first hit the shelves in April 2009, about 35,000 bottles of Holy Jolokia hot sauce have been sold around the world, with some of the proceeds going directly to the Chile Pepper Institute.

"We had no idea there would be this much interest," said Danise Coon, program coordinator of the Chile Pepper Institute at NMSU. "We are constantly running out. We already have our Holy



COURTESY OF NMSU

**Holy Jolokia** is a hot sauce made from the hottest chile peppers on the planet, the Bhut Jolokia.

Jolokia addicts."

John Hard, the owner of CaJohn's Fiery Foods, which has 12 employees at its base in Columbus, Ohio, said he did not expect such a response in the first year.

"It's one of our top two selling sauces," Hard said. "We are very surprised by it."

In New Mexico, you can purchase the hot sauce, which costs \$10 per bottle, at

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## Hot

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the institute's office in Room 265 in Gerald Thomas Hall on the NMSU campus. Also, the product is available at the NMSU bookstore, at Solamente de Mesilla near the Mesilla Plaza and from Lytle Farms in Hatch.

Mark Gladden, the major gifts officer for NMSU's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, said there are efforts under way to get the product in more stores in Southern New Mexico.

"We thought it was, frankly, too hot for wide distribution," Gladden said. "We thought it would do well, we were optimistic, but we didn't know it would happen so quickly."

Outside of the Las Cruces area, Holy Jolokia can be found in more than a dozen of The Paradies Shops, which operates stores in more than 70 airports and hotels across the U.S. and Canada. In fact, the company, along with NMSU and CaJohn's Fiery Foods, had an event Friday at the El Paso International Airport to celebrate its success.

Sylvia Hendrickson recently tried some of the sauce at the Farmer's Market on the Downtown Mall in Las Cruces.

"This has got some bite in the tongue," she said. "It's good, though."

Jimmy Zabrskie said he liked the taste.

"I would describe it as more full-flavored than Tabasco sauce," he said. "The hot kinda gets me at the end."

### Genesis

The Chile Pepper Institute reports on its website that it "is a



### To get it

- ▶ **Chile Pepper Institute:** [chilepepperinstitute.org](http://chilepepperinstitute.org)
- ▶ **CaJohn's Fiery Foods:** [cajohns.com](http://cajohns.com)
- ▶ **The Paradies Shops:** [theparadiesshops.com](http://theparadiesshops.com)

research-based non-profit organization devoted to education, research, and archiving information ... (and) we are dedicated to educating the world about the wonders of chile peppers."

**Paul Bosland** co-founded the institute and spearheaded the effort to recognize the world's hottest chile pepper, and, in 2006, the Guinness Book of World Records confirmed the fact that, at more than one million Scoville Heat Units — which is about 100 times hotter than the average jalapeño — the Bhut Jolokia is the world's hottest.

Hard said that when he and his wife, Sue, learned about the Chile Pepper Institute, they decided to pay a visit. They were so impressed with the institute that they wanted to help out.

"We came up with an idea and approached the institute," Hard said.

Coon said the concept was very welcome.

"We're working on an endowed professorship chair for the chile institute," Coon said. She said if, one day when Bosland decides to retire, the in-

stitute was ever closed, "that could be devastating for the state."

Coon said they need to raise \$1 million to endow the chair.

"We want to keep chile pepper research at NMSU indefinitely," she said.

NMSU worked closely with CaJohn's to develop the product and even came up with the marketing plan and the label.

### The future

The story of Gatorade, which was developed at the University of Florida and has now made the school a lot of money through royalties, is legend on many college campuses.

Is it possible NMSU could have similar success with Holy Jolokia?

Gladden said he does not mind thinking big.

"In five years, we might have our own Tabasco," he said.

NMSU keeps all the proceeds from what it sells on campus and also makes about \$1 a bottle from what CaJohn's Fiery Foods sells. Each bottle contains the logos of NMSU and the Chile Pepper Institute on the label as well as a paragraph to inform customers that some of what they spend will help support research. The institute's website, [chilepepperinstitute.org](http://chilepepperinstitute.org), is also included.

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Christine Rogel contributed to this story.

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

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## SIZZLIN' SAUCE



With the appearance of the competition posting over his shoulder, Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute at New Mexico State University, samples Holy Jolokia hot sauce Tuesday at the school. The sauce is made with Bhut Jolokia chile peppers, which were certified by NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute as the hottest peppers in the world.

### New 'Holy' hot sauce tempers ghost chile's heat with flavor

By Amanda L. Husson  
SALTNESS REPORTER

LAS CRUCES — Though we may disagree on the "red, green or Christmas?" question, Las Cruces are of one mind on a key point: No one takes their chiles as seriously as we do.

So a new hot sauce blend produced by Cajohns Fiery Foods that's made from Bhut Jolokia chile peppers — certified by New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute as the hottest peppers on the planet — is the next logical step in the quest to give everything we eat a little more kick.

At more than 1 million Scoville heat units, Bhut Jolokia, or ghost chile, is nearly twice as hot as the previous world holder, the Red Savina. And in terms of New Mexico green chile can't hold its own with 1,500 Scoville units and an average jalapeno measuring

But while just a dollop of the Bhut Jolokia chile may be spicy enough to blister your lips, Holy Jolokia hot sauce is all about flavor, rather than numbing your face off heat.

"It's not like those instable sauces that are a gimmick," said Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute and widely recognized as the world's foremost authority on chile peppers. "It has a fruit overtone and a smoky flavor. All the chiles of this class have that delayed heat, but it's not uncomfortably hot."

Bosland admits that spicy foods differ greatly in capsaicin, the chemical that gives chile its fire, so one person's "not uncomfortable" may be another person's scorching. Bosland said using medium heat, those who've tried the new sauce report that they're still feeling the burn 15 to 20 minutes later.



It may be made using the super hot Bhut Jolokia chile, which rates at 1 million Scoville heat units, but Holy Jolokia hot sauce is more about flavor than it is about melt-your-face-off heat.

## Taste the heat!

### SUN-NEWS REPORT

LAS CRUCES — Time to fire up the barbecue, quite literally, with New Mexico State University's Holy Jolokia barbecue sauce. The sauce, produced by Cajohns Fiery Foods, is the latest in a line of spicy condiments made from the world's hottest commercially available chile pepper, the Bhut Jolokia. Sales from the barbecue sauce, along with Holy Jolokia hot sauce and salsa, benefit chile pepper research at NMSU.

"John and Sue Hard at Cajohns have really made us a special barbecue sauce," said Paul Bosland, director

of NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute. "We've taste-tested it on chicken, steak and even tofu and it tastes great on each of them."

Holy Jolokia hot sauce was first released in 2009 and continues to be the best-selling product for Cajohns Fiery Foods.



### Where can I get it?

Like the other Holy Jolokia products, the barbecue sauce is available at NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute, online at [www.chilepepperinstitute.org](http://www.chilepepperinstitute.org) or at the Paradises Shops in airports and hotels across the Southwest.

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## Hot

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The Louisiana-style Holy Jolokia sauce is hotter than Tabasco, Bosland said, and can be used in the same way, spicing up everything from hot wings to fish dishes or even brownies.

Chris Reyna, general manager of Wingstop restaurant in Las Cruces, hadn't heard of the Bhut Jolokia pepper or the new sauce, but as a fan of all things spicy, he said his interest was piqued.

"I would definitely try that," he said without hesitation. "I'd like to see how hot it really is. I'll probably check it out."

Reyna noted that, when it comes to hot sauce, once you get past the heat, there's a big difference in flavors between sauces made from Tabasco peppers and jalapeños or even habaneros, which, at 200,000 to 300,000 Scoville units, give Wingstop's "atomic" sauce its flavor.

John Hard, owner of Ohio-based Cajohns Fiery Foods, approached the

*"It has a fruit overtone and a smoky flavor. All the chiles of this class have that delayed heat, but it's not uncomfortably hot."*

Paul Bosland

director of the Chile Pepper Institute

institute about developing products featuring the Bhut Jolokia pepper and wanted to help support the research that Bosland and his colleagues are doing.

"Our whole business is predicated on chile peppers, and this wouldn't have happened if not for their efforts," Hard said. "They've had such great things come out of the Chile Pepper Institute, we felt we needed to show our support."

"This is the first time the Chile Pepper Institute has partnered with a private company to make a chile product. A portion of the sales will help fund research and education at the institute, the only organization in the world devoted to education, research and archiving information

related to chile peppers.

The Chile Pepper Institute is part of NMSU's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. The institute's Fundraising Leadership Council is in the process of raising \$10 million for an endowed chair to continue the legacy of NMSU's chile pepper research and to establish a new, expanded Chile Pepper Institute facility featuring a tourist venue, conference, seminar and teaching rooms, a sustainable teaching and demonstration garden, and a state-of-the-art greenhouse.

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# NEW MEXICO BUSINESS WEEKLY

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## Red hot Jolokia brings in the green

'World's hottest' chile stokes NMSU research; fires up the made-in-New-Mexico brand

BY KEVIN ANDERSON-AVILA | MARY SENIOR REPORTER



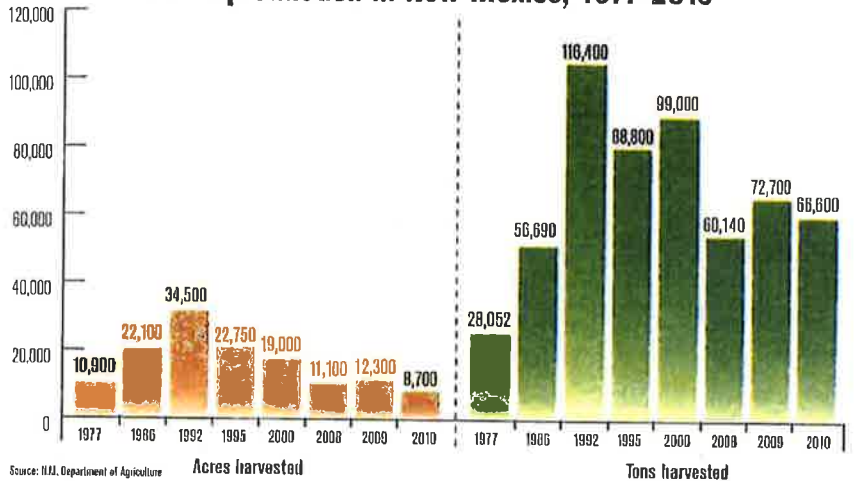
Holy Jolokia chile sauce is one hot item at Cajohns Fiery Foods in Ohio.

The wholesale and online retail business has sold 50,000 five-ounce bottles of the sizzling brew since 2009, when it inked a marketing deal with New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute.

NMSU brought the Bhut Jolokia pepper from the remote highlands of India,

SEE JOLOKIA 21

### Chile production in New Mexico, 1977-2010



Source: N.M. Department of Agriculture

Acres harvested

Tons harvested

## JOLOKIA: An average jalapeño scores 10,000 scovies, but the Jolokia registers more than 1 million

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certified the pepper as the world's hottest known chile, and then helped Cajohns develop its Holy Jolokia brand, said Cajohns founder and President John Hard.

The chile registers more than 1 million Scoville Heat Units, which makes it nearly twice as hot as the Red Savina, the pepper once crowned the hottest on the planet. An average jalapeño achieves about 10,000 Scoville Heat Units.

At \$10 per bottle, Cajohns has raked in a half million dollars in Holy Jolokia sales.

"It's our best-selling product," Hard said. "We distribute nationwide, and in Europe and Asia."

That's good news for NMSU, which earns 10 percent royalties on each bottle Cajohns sells. The company also donates thousands of bottles annually to the Chile Pepper Institute to sell on its own.

The proceeds will help finance a \$1 million endowed chair in research, said Mark Gladden, director of development for NMSU's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

"We've raised about \$60,000 in total dollars through the partnership to date," Gladden said. "Cajohns thought it would be just another one of their salsa products, but it's really taken off."

That's good for the local chile industry, because it helps the Institute continue its research and education on new pepper varieties. That work helps to improve quality, expand product offerings and build a "Made in New Mexico" brand recognition, Gladden said.

The industry needs all the help it can get, given the surge in foreign competition since the 1990s. About 82 percent of chile consumed in the U.S. is now foreign-grown, according to the New Mexico Chile Association.

That's caused a dramatic drop in production. Chile fell from a peak of 34,500 acres in 1992 to 8,700 in 2010. Last year alone, acreage plummeted 41 percent (see graph, page 1).

A 26 percent decline in chile prices last year discouraged growers from planting, said Terry Crawford, head of NMSU's Agricultural Economics Department.

"It's price competition from foreign imports," Crawford said. "That's one of the main reasons growers planted so much less last year."

Production declines might have knocked bottom, but acreage isn't rebounding, said Stephanie Walker, a vegetable specialist with NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service.

"It's kind of leveled off," Walker said. "This year is pretty similar to last year."

To better compete with low-cost labor in other countries, NMSU is helping local growers mechanize harvesting, but they have a long way to go.

The N.M. Chile Association has spearheaded a "buy local" campaign. The group worked with state officials this year to pass a new law that makes it illegal to market any product as New Mexico chile unless it's actually grown in the state.

To support those efforts, the Chile Pepper

Holy Jolokia sauces and salsas are available online through Cajohns Fiery Foods at <http://www.cajohns.com>, or through the Chile Pepper Institute website at <http://www.chilepepperinstitute.org>.

For more information, call the Chile Pepper Institute at (676) 648-3028 or email [hotchile@nmsu.edu](mailto:hotchile@nmsu.edu).

Jolokia peppers (at right)



at \$40 per pound since 2009. "Those varieties have brought back more of the original rich flavor that was missing in the past few decades," Blad said. "They're growing more and more popular."

Meanwhile, the success of Holy Jolokia could boost the Institute's efforts to negotiate more partnerships with other companies.

Cajohns sells three Holy Jolokia condiments, which include its original Holy Jolokia sauce, a new specialty salsa and a barbecue sauce the company released in May.

Cajohns distributes to specialty stores and national chains, such as Whole Foods Market in the Northeast, Le Gourmet Chef and Paradise Shops at airports and hotels. Cajohns contracts growers in Ohio and North Carolina to supply Jolokia peppers, but Hard is working with the Institute to establish a New Mexico supply chain. So far, only niche growers produce Jolokia locally, in part because it grows best at higher altitudes and needs more climatic adaptation.

"We're working to find someone in New Mexico willing to grow it for us," Hard said. "If we get that, we'd look at opening a local, seasonal facility in Las Cruces to process it."

per Institute is reinforcing New Mexico's brand recognition through research and education, said Program Coordinator Danlse Coon.

"The Institute has a demonstration garden with more than 200 chile varieties, plus the most extensive website on chile peppers in the world," Coon said.

It works with growers and processors to produce new varieties and products, such as "super-flavored" Heritage chiles that it released in 2009. Those varieties are reportedly much more tasty and aromatic than similar peppers grown today, many of which lost their original quality because of years of breeding practices to increase plant yield and disease resistance.

Blad Chill Products LLC in Las Cruces grows Heritage for sale as fresh green and frozen chile. The company inked a royalty deal with the Institute last September similar to the one with Cajohns.

Partner Chris Blad said his firm has sold more than 100,000 pounds of Heritage

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