

World's Hottest Chili Pepper Identified

The Trinidad Moruga Scorpion is about 240 times hotter than a jalapeño.

By Samantha Grossman @sam_grossman Feb. 17, 2012

The Trinidad Moruga Scorpion. Its name alone would cause many people to question putting it in their mouths. But now there's no question, as it's been identified as the spiciest pepper on the planet.

After months of searching for the hottest chili in existence, experts at New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute have officially bestowed the title upon the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion, the Associated Press reports. The golf-ball-sized pepper is native to the central south coast of Trinidad and logs a score of more than 1.2 million units on the Scoville heat scale. This scale measures the amount of capsaicinoids – the compounds that produce heat sensation – present within a pepper. The average jalapeño, for example, ranks at about 5,000 units.



Researchers determined the golf ball-sized Trinidad Moruga Scorpion pepper has a mean Scoville Heat Unit value of 1.2 million

In other words, the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion is about 240 times hotter than a jalapeño.

"You take a bite. It doesn't seem so bad, and then it builds and it builds and it builds. So it is quite nasty," Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute, told the AP.

Hot sauce manufacturers and seed distributors requested that the institute conduct the study in order to scientifically identify, for the first time, which of the planet's peppers is truly the spiciest. According to Bosland, this type of experiment has never been done before, largely because chile heat is complex, with a variety of variables which could affect the outcome.

Along with the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion, Bosland's team planted other types of peppers, including the Chocolate 7-pot and the Bhut Jolokia, which had won the Guinness World Record in 2007. Once mature, the fruits were dried and ground into a powder. The researchers then extracted and examined the capsaicinoids, which would often soak right through their latex gloves, a senior research specialist told the AP.

Though none of the researchers would even consider placing a whole Trinidad Moruga Scorpion in their mouths, they're aware of its effects. Faces go red, sweat pours, and a fiery sensation travels through the mouth and throat.

One family, for example, could use two of the peppers to flavor their meals for a week, Bosland said. In small doses, the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion is reportedly quite flavorful. And according to Duffy, its new status as the world's spiciest pepper will make it a particularly "hot" item. (See what he did there?)

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