



CHILES

Chiles originated in Central and South America, where they have been eaten for over 10,000 years. They were first introduced into Europe by Christopher Columbus in the 15th Century.

The Spanish and the Portuguese explorers carried chiles to Asia, Africa, and the islands of the Pacific. Today, there are over 7,000 varieties of chiles grown throughout the world.



Ghost Chiles

- **What are chiles?**

Chiles belong to the genus "Capsicum," which falls into the larger family encompassing potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplant. They derive their heat from a powerful chemical, *capsaicin*, produced by glands at the junction of the placenta and the pod wall. For every one hundred parts of *capsaicin* in the placenta tissue, there are six parts in the rest of the fruit and four parts in the seed.

- **What is their dietary value?**

It is believed that chiles both stimulate the appetite and cool off the body--two factors which may explain why the majority of chiles are consumed in hot climates. Through the repeated consumption of chile, people build up a tolerance to *capsaicin* and are able to eat hotter and hotter foods.

- **What about dried chiles?**

Drying is the oldest method of preserving chiles. Dried chiles are not just substitutes for fresh ones. For example, they have their own place in Mexican cuisine where they are often used when a blending of chile flavors is desired as in enchiladas, burritoos, tamales, and fajitas.

Traditionally, some chiles are used only when fresh, others only when dried. However, many chiles are used both fresh and dried. When dried they often have a different name, which sometimes causes confusion in the home and in the marketplace.

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Chile de Arbol

Dried chiles can be reconstituted in a number of ways, including roasting, frying in oil, and soaking in water, depending on the recipe. Most recipe books devoted to chiles give detailed instructions for handling them. Where appropriate, INDIA TREE includes this information on the label.

Once reconstituted, dried chiles can be stuffed whole, blended with other ingredients to form a paste for stews, soups, and sauces, or ground into powders. Mexican chile powders are always pure chile with no spices added.

However, one chile powder is often mixed with another, such as Chile Pasilla Negro combined with Chile Ancho, to form a third flavor. These powders may be added directly to a the dish or used to flavor oils and vinegars.

● ***How are chiles rated for heat?***

Chiles are rated for heat on the Scoville heat scale. However, even within each type of chile, individual chiles will vary, even when they are taken from the same plant. Use this scale as a guide, but be sure to test the pungency of your chiles every time you use them. Taste carefully as you add them to your recipe.

Chile Varieties	Rating	Scoville Units
Habanero	10	100,000 - 300,000
Thai	9	50,000 - 100,000
Pequin	8	30,000 - 50,000
de Arbol	7	15,000 - 30,000
Serrano	6	5,000 - 15,000
Jalapeno	5	2,500 - 5,000
New Mexico	4	1,500 - 2,500
Ancho, Pasilla	3	1,000 - 1,500
California, New Mexico	2	500-1,000
Medium Bell	1	100 - 500
Mild Bell	0	0

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● **How should chiles be stored?**

Store chiles and chile powders in the refrigerator or freezer to preserve their color and reduce their susceptibility to mold and infestation.

● **Where can I find recipes and more information on chiles?**

1) A World View:

Amazon.com lists 38 books written or co-authored by **Dave DeWitt**, including The Whole Chile Pepper Book, a classic and an information source for this paper.

http://www.amazon.com/Dave-Dewitt/e/B000AP7RWO/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1

2) Mexican Cookery:

Amazon.com lists 10 books by **Diana Kennedy**, including her classic, The Art of Mexican Cooking.

http://www.amazon.com/Diana-Kennedy/e/B000APFAZ0/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=1305487603&sr=1-1

3) American Southwest:

Amazon.com lists 10 books by **Mark Miller**, including his classic, Cyote Cafe.

http://www.amazon.com/Mark-Miller/e/B001KMEW1A/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=1305487819&sr=1-1

4) Mexican Flavors--Authenticity with a Modern Twist:

Amazon.com lists 7 books by **Rick Bayless**.

http://www.amazon.com/Rick-Bayless/e/B000APZF46/ref=ntt_aut_sim_3_2:



Jalapenos