

Chilly Pepper - Red Chillies

Written by W.J.Pais



Chilies are the pungent fruits of *Capsicum* species. One of the world's most popular flavorings, chilies are used extensively in Indian cooking either in fresh, dry or powdered form. Chilies impart hot and pungent flavor to the dish. For a less hot flavor, deseed the chilies before use.

The chili pepper, or more simply just "chili", is the fruit of the plant *Capsicum* from the nightshade family, *Solanaceae*. The name, which is spelt differently in many regions (chili, chile or chilli), comes from Nahuatl via the Spanish word chile. These terms usually refer to the smaller, hotter types of capsicum; the mild larger types are called bell pepper (simply pepper in Britain and Ireland or capsicum in Australasia).

Chili peppers and their various cultivars originate in the Americas; they are now grown around the world because they are widely used as spices or vegetables in cuisine, and as medicine.

[Christopher Columbus](#) was one of the first Europeans to encounter them (in the [Caribbean](#)), and called them "peppers" because they, like black and white [pepper](#) of the

[Piper](#) genus known in Europe, have a spicy hot taste unlike other foodstuffs. Upon their introduction into Europe, chilies were grown as botanical curiosities in the gardens of Spanish and Portuguese monasteries. But the monks experimented with the chili culinary potential and discovered that their pungency offered a substitute for black peppercorns, which at the time were so costly that they were used as legal currency in some countries

The spread of chili peppers to Asia was most likely a natural consequence of its introduction to Portuguese traders (Lisbon was a common port of call for Spanish ships sailing to and from the Americas) who, aware of its trade value, would have likely promoted its commerce in the Asian spice trade routes then dominated by Portuguese and Arab traders. ^[11] Today chilies are an integral part of [South Asian](#)

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and
[Southeast Asian](#)
cuisines.

The chili pepper features heavily in the cuisine of the Goan region of India, which was the site of a Portuguese colony (e.g., [vindaloo](#) , an Indian interpretation of a Portuguese dish). Chili peppers journeyed from India, ^[12] through Central Asia and Turkey, to Hungary, where they became the national spice in the form of [paprika](#).

Dried chilies are often ground into powders, although many [Mexican](#) dishes including variations on [chiles rellenos](#) use the entire chili. Dried whole chilies may be reconstituted before grinding to a paste. The [chipotle](#) is the smoked, dried, ripe [jalapeño](#).

Many fresh chilies such as [poblano](#) have a tough outer skin that does not break down on cooking. Chilies are sometimes used whole or in large slices, by [roasting](#) , or other means of blistering or charring the skin, so as not to entirely cook the flesh beneath. When cooled, the skins will usually slip off easily.

[Source](#)