


## Chiles: Some Like it Hot

As American palates become more worldly and sophisticated, so does the demand for ethnic foods. And when consumers crave flavors from other cultures, they want them to taste like the real deal. According to a January 2012 report from Mintel, two-thirds of survey respondents who eat ethnic food say authentic, traditional flavors are the most important factor when buying or eating such food. In some cases, that means pumping up the heat in Mexican-inspired products. The Border Foods line of chiles from Mizkan Americas, Inc., can help food manufacturers and foodservice operators provide consumers with the authenticity they're craving.

"Chiles not only add various levels of heat, but also offer complexities and ways to develop depth of flavor, viscosity and subtle nuances to various items, including the obvious salsas, sauces and stews, but also the not-so-obvious salad dressings, side dishes, dips, sandwich toppings, ice creams, sorbets and baked goods," says Barbara Zatto, director of culinary, sales manager West, food ingredients. "Depending on which region of the country you live, you may want to substitute milder chiles for hotter chiles. Oftentimes, the American palate enjoys dishes made with chiles cooked at low heat levels for longer periods of time. This allows the end product to have rich flavor, without sharp heat levels."

Products in the line—tomatillo, green chile, green jalapeño and red jalapeño—are available in a variety of forms, including diced, puréed, frozen and IQF. Fresh tomatillo has a tart flavor and no heat, Zatto says, but "when roasted or cooked, subtle, earthy flavors develop." Green chiles are among the most widely used in the United States because they are mild, ranging from 0 to 300 Scoville units. Green jalapeños, on the other hand, are notable for their heat.

Typical jalapeños are fairly hot for the American palate, with a Scoville range of 3,000 to 5,000, she notes. But, depending on the variety and growing conditions green jalapeños can offer heat intensities ranging from zero heat, to moderate to hot heat, with a Scoville range of 1,000 to 3,000. Red jalapeños are green jalapeños that have been left on the plant to fully ripen. "As a result, the flavor is greatly influenced by the residual sugars accumulated in the red pods," she says. This results in a sweet-hot flavor with heat levels that vary similarly to that of a green jalapeño.

Zatto has successfully used the chile products in several prototypes, including traditional green chile with pork. "They are very easy to use, and can be applied to almost any production scenario," she says. "They can be roasted, frozen and retorted in the processing plant. In manufacturing, they can be used fresh, or baked, frozen, or used in a kettle-cooking process. The products keep their integrity in almost any environment. Aside from burning them, you can't really do anything to damage them." 



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