

# HEAT FLAVOR EXPRESSIONS

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOOD  
AND BEVERAGE SPACE

TREND REPORT BITE

Embarking on a fiery journey, beloved foods and drinks are undergoing a sizzling transformation, surprising consumers with an unexpected heat. Creative expressions of heat are permeating even the most familiar categories, elevating the likes of frozen meals to ice cream. The demand for elevated heat continues to rise – partly due to social media, but also consumers' urge for new experiences. People are looking for spicier – not mouth-burning heat – but rather, more nuanced flavor profiles offering sensorial complexity and depth.

#### HEAT FLAVOR THEMES:

- Pepper Appreciation
- African Cuisine Heat Expressions
- Sweet & Spicy
- Indian Cuisine Heat Expressions



**82%**

of consumers are drawn to foods and  
beverages with hot and spicy flavors

*FMCG Gurus' 2023 Flavor, Color,  
Texture Global Trends report*

# Pepper Appreciation

Seeking a sophisticated heat opposed to a pure tastebud burn, many consumers are recognizing the distinct and complex flavors that come from chili peppers. There are hundreds of varieties of chiles grown throughout the world, each with their own unique flavor characteristics, heat levels, and uses. For example, though both found in Mexican cuisine, the guajillo pepper has a mild heat with slight smoky, fruity flavor, while the jalapeno offers a bright, grassy flavor with more heat. This creates an opportunity to explore pepper flavor nuances in product innovation.

## SMOKY & SPICY DRIED PEPPERS

“After the rapid rise of chipotle peppers, many other dried peppers and dried pepper flakes have started to trend. The balance of smoky and spicy offers versatility.”

- DATASSENTIAL, THE WORLD OF SPICY FLAVORS, FEB 2024



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



SOUTHERN RECIPE SMALL BATCH PASILLA CHILI CHEESE FLAVORED PORK RINDS is described as having a “seasoning that’s got just the right balance of cheese and heat.”



UNCLE WAITHLEY’S GINGER BEER WITH A SCOTCH BONNET BITE features the Scotch bonnet pepper. “Named after the Tammie, a bonnet style hat traditionally worn by Scottish men, which the pepper resembles, it is ubiquitous throughout the Caribbean and West Africa and prized for its heat and sweet flavor.”

# Sweet & Spicy

A safe way to deliver heat is to offer flavor combinations that evolve from a familiar starting point. Embarking on a journey with a familiar sweet flavor opens the door to exploration and invites experimentation with heat. Bold chilies, pungent wasabi and other hot flavors can be tempered or balanced with the sweetness of fruit or sweet brown notes. These sweet & spicy combinations are versatile as they can be utilized for both savory (meals, snacks) and sweet (drinks, desserts, dairy) applications to create a novel taste experience.

Mexican cuisine is well-known for its use of sweet & spicy pairings. **Mangonada**, a fruity drink that features chamoy (sweet, spicy & sour chili sauce) has grown **+400%** on U.S. menus over the past 4 years. – DATASSENTIAL

BASKIN ROBBINS, MANGONADA →



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



BOMB POP EXTREMES FIRE CHERRY is described as pairing “sweet and heat, blazing colors, all in the iconic Bomb Pop® shape.”



WEGMANS FOOD YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT HOT HONEY can be used to “add a drizzle of sweet heat to pizza, fried chicken or roasted veggies.”

## African Cuisine Heat Expressions

There has been a rise in exploring the flavors from the continent of Africa, especially those found in foods like West African suya (smoked spicy meat), South African peri-peri sauce and spicy stews from Ethiopia. Viral videos from TikTok and an increase in travel since the pandemic have sparked an increase in wanting to experience these flavors. Replicating these bold, complex, and often hot profiles allows consumers to travel with their taste buds and enjoy layered, complex cuisine-inspired flavors.

### “SUYA IS NIGERIAN STREET FOOD

at its finest—think nutty, spicy beef threaded onto skewers then grilled, the finished sticks cradled in paper or foil with a side of fresh tomatoes, sliced red onions, and a sprinkling of yajin kuli.” - SERIOUS EATS, OZOZ SOKOH

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serious eats

### PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**CLARK AND HOPKINS HOT SAUCE: ETHIOPIA BERBERE** is inspired by the East African cuisine that is widely available in the DC metro region of the U.S. The deep fragrant heat comes from habaneros, jalapeños and their aromatic curry called Berbere.



**CORNITOS PERI PERI NACHO CRISPS** provide an opportunity to “experience the heat of peri peri chili with tangy lemon flavour and then feel the warm African glows.”

## Indian Cuisine Heat Expressions

People are increasingly drawn to authentic regional flavors, seeking profiles that capture the essence of specific cuisines, especially Indian. From rich curry sauces to pickled chutneys, Indian cuisine offers heat layered with a variety of flavors. Exploring Indian profiles can also cater to individual heat and spice preferences: from mildly spiced options to intensely hot varieties, there’s something for every spice enthusiast within Indian flavors.

### Want more Indian flavor inspiration?

Check out our [Food Story: Indian Date Night](#) for communal dish recipes with customizable heat levels and layered flavor.



### PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**LA PIMENTERIE BOLLYWOOD CURRY-COCONUT HOT SAUCE** “Inspired from the subcontinent, this sauce has a rich, powerful taste softened by a hint of maple syrup. Delicious with Asian dishes, soups, grilled chicken, stir-fries and rice, or even just to spice up a little mayo or sauce. As intense as a journey through India!”



**BROOKLYN DELHI SPICY MANGO CHUTNEY WITH KASHMIRI CHILI** is described as a one-of-a-kind mango chutney features single origin, heirloom Kashmiri chili peppers known for their warming sweet heat.

# THE TAKEAWAYS

In the quest to embrace the evolving landscape of adventurous taste preferences, heat can be harnessed for its ability to deliver flavor complexity and sensorial experiences. Developers can utilize the heat themes mentioned to guide their innovation: Consider crafting pairings that blend the allure of heat with elements like sweet to create contrast or build layers of flavor. Recognize the role chilies can play in offering unique flavor nuances, beyond a burn. Explore the bold, exotic tastes of Indian and the regional African dishes to deliver meal-inspired heat that is multi-dimensional. Want to spice up your next product? We're here to help you deliver heat flavor expressions in your innovation!

## YOU DESERVE MORE. LET'S GET STARTED.

What does true partnership look like? You deserve a flavor partner ready to turn these trends into the tangible.

Let McCormick Flavor Solutions market insight and research experts get to work for you. Translate these trends into bold new ideas for your brand. Increase market share and get to your "what's next." Our technical flavor, seasoning and product development experts are also at your service to help meet the labeling and flavor profile needs for your products to capitalize on this consumer trend.

From concept to manufacturing, we're here for you — every step of the way. Contact your sales representative or [click here](#) to chat us up.



### FROM OUR CHEFS:

#### THREE-CHILE MOLE FONDUE

For a Mexican inspired dessert sauce with a smoky kick, check out this mole recipe that includes guajillo, chilies de arbol and chipotle chilies plus cinnamon. Great for complementing fruit, churros, and other sweet snacks. [Click](#) for recipe.



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