



The big debate

Has food gotten too spicy?

Some say the extra heat is a positive change, but others say it's over the top.

HOT STUFF!
Pepper X, which is 337 to 897 times hotter than a jalapeño, holds the world record for the hottest chili pepper.

What you need to know

- The heat level of chili peppers is measured by Scoville Heat Units (SHUs). Peppers are ranked from 0 to 3.2 million SHUs, with the average chili having about 6,000 SHUs.
- A chemical compound called capsaicin in chili peppers creates a sensation of heat in the mouth.
- One study found that in 2025, 95.3% of restaurants in the US had spicy food options. Another found that 48% of people would choose a spicy version over an original menu item.



These days, spicy food is a big and growing trend. Restaurants are kicking up the heat on their menus—and just in case the options aren't spicy enough, some customers bring hot sauce with them when they dine out. Eating hot chilies has become an extreme sport and social media challenge. NASA (the US space agency) planted red and green chili peppers on the International Space Station. There are even new words for the various types of spicy food, like *swicy* (sweet and spicy), *swangy* (spicy, sweet, and tangy), and *fricy* (fruity and spicy). Some people love this trend, but others say enough with the heat already. What do you think? Has food gotten too spicy?

Yes—it's too hot to handle

Some dishes have always been spicy, but now it seems like everything has to have a hot version. Sure, people (especially younger generations) have developed more adventurous palates, but do we really need spicy ice cream? There are even eating contests to see who can tolerate the most heat. But when people eat a lot of spicy foods, they build up a tolerance and have to eat even spicier stuff to get the same sensation. That's fine for them, but it also means that chefs and food companies have to increase the heat on their options to appeal to them—which is unfair to those who prefer milder flavors.

No—people can take the heat

It's all in good, flavorful fun! There's no way to definitely say that food is too spicy because everyone's taste buds are different. Tolerance to heat can depend on many factors, like a person's genes, so what's spicy for one person may be mild to another. Sure, there's more spicy food in the world—and what's out there is getting spicier—but there's still something for everyone. Besides, spicy is standard in many other countries, like India, Thailand, and Nigeria. It's about time people in the US broadened their horizons and embraced the heat. With more options to choose from, people might find something they really like.

YES Three reasons food has gotten too spicy

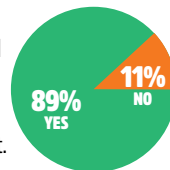
- 1 It's good for people to have adventurous palates, but it has all gone too far.
- 2 Foods keep getting spicier as people's heat tolerance grows, and they need more in order to feel the kick. When will it end?
- 3 Chefs and food companies have to amp up the heat to meet demand, which isn't fair to those who prefer milder flavors.

NO Three reasons food has not gotten too spicy

- 1 It's difficult to declare that food is too spicy because what's super hot for one person is mild for another.
- 2 Spicy flavors may be getting stronger and more common, but there's still plenty of regular food out there too.
- 3 Spicy foods are common in other countries. Americans need to embrace the heat.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if it's OK to put ketchup on a hot dog. A majority of you (89%) voted in favor of the controversial topping, but some (11%) are against it.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think food has gotten too spicy or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.