

# Personality may predict if you like spicy foods

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Certain aspects of an individual's personality may be a determining factor in whether they like their food plain and bland or spicy and hot, according to research presented at the 2013 Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting & Food Expo.

Nadia Byrnes, MS, a doctoral candidate at Pennsylvania State University, presented her research that set out to determine whether there was a correlation between personality types and hot-spice preferences. She conducted a study of 184 participants—nonsmokers ages 18 to 45 without any known issues that would compromise their ability to taste, primarily Caucasian and slightly more women than men (63 percent).

Byrnes assessed the group using the Arnett Inventory of Sensation Seeking (AISS), a test for the [personality](#) trait of sensation-seeking, defined as desiring novel and intense stimulation and presumed to contribute to risk preferences. Those in the group who score above the mean AISS score are considered more open to risks and new experiences, while those scoring below the mean are considered less open to those things.

The subjects were given 25 micrometers of capsaicin, the active component of chili peppers, and asked to rate how much they liked a spicy meal as the burn from the capsaicin increased in intensity. Those in the group who fell below the mean AISS rapidly disliked the meal as the burn increased. People who were above the mean AISS had a

consistently high liking of the meal even as the burn increased. Those in the mean group liked the meal less as the burn increased, but not nearly as rapidly as those below the mean.

"Theoretically, we know that burn intensity and liking are linear related. The more irritating a compound or food gets, the less people should like it," she said. "But that's not always the case."

Also during the same panel. Shane McDonald, Ph.D., principal flavor chemist at Kalsec, discussed the addition of "tingling" spices to foods, which is not very prevalent in the U.S. diet outside of carbonation. He said "Ma La," a traditional Szechuan cuisine that combines chili peppers (the heat) and Szechuan peppers (the tingle), shows promise for American [food](#) manufacturers.

The combination of the two sensates enhances the tingling while reducing the heat, which could make certain traditionally spicy foods more appealing to consumers, he said.

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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