

词汇: sensation 感受

You know the feeling – your ears start to warm up, your tongue **goes numb**, you start sweating and taking deep breaths. You've just eaten something spicy knowing it would be painful, and, yet, you chose to do it anyway. Are humans just **masochistic**, or is there something else going on? The answer lies in both science and history.

Let's start with the science. Spicy isn't actually a **taste** like salty, sweet, **sour** and **bitter** – it's a **sensation**. This sensation is **triggered** by a **chemical compound** found in chilli peppers called '**capsaicin**'. When we eat foods **containing** capsaicin, our bodies are **tricked** into thinking the temperature is actually rising. In trying to **temper** the burning sensation, our bodies **release endorphins** which control pain and, at the same time, give a feeling of pleasure – like painkillers.

This is what is happening chemically, but there is also a **conscious** side to choosing spicy food. Dr Tamara Rosenbaum, Cognitive Neuroscientist at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, explains in an interview with the BBC that this is because we are **rational beings** – we know that the burning sensation of chilli does not physically harm us. Furthermore, we **derive** pleasure from the other ingredients chilli is generally cooked and eaten with – including fat, sugar and salt. So – like skydiving – eating chilli is a form of **thrill-seeking** or '**benign masochism**', where we get pleasure from a seemingly negative sensation.

This masochistic relationship with capsaicin has been a long one, starting in the Andes of South America, where chilli peppers originate. Humans were one of the few mammals on Earth that **developed a taste for** capsaicin so, archaeological evidence suggests, they started **cultivating** chilli peppers about six thousand years ago. Human **intervention** changed the chilli pepper to suit human tastes and needs – including the pepper's colour, size and capsaicin **content** – helping to explain the many different types of chilli peppers now available.

Fast-forward to today, and our love affair with the chilli pepper is **going strong**. We eat around 57.3 million tons of peppers globally each year, and chilli is a key ingredient in traditional dishes from Mexico to Korea. Maybe we are masochistic after all.

词汇表

go numb	发麻
masochistic	自讨苦吃的, 自找罪受的
taste	味道
sour	酸的
bitter	苦的
sensation	感觉
trigger	引发, 触发
chemical compound	化合物
capsaicin	辣椒素
contain	含有
trick	使产生错觉
temper	使缓和
release	释放
endorphin	内啡肽
conscious	有意的
rational being	理性的动物
derive	获得, 得到
thrill-seeking	寻求刺激的
benign masochism	良性自虐, 从不适中得到享受
develop a taste for	养成吃...的习惯
cultivate	种植
intervention	干预
content	含量
going strong	依旧强烈

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. True or False? *Spicy is a taste.*
2. What's the name of the chemical compound found in chilli peppers?
3. Why do we feel pleasure when eating chilli peppers?
4. How is eating chilli similar to skydiving?
5. True or False? *Lots of mammals like the sensation of capsaicin.*

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. I love the _____ of ginger. I cook with it all the time!

taste	sour	bitter	sensation
-------	------	--------	-----------

2. The smell of cinnamon always _____ memories of my grandmother.

triggers	contains	tricks	releases
----------	----------	--------	----------

3. Excuse me, does this dish _____ nuts? I'm allergic.

release	content	contain	derive
---------	---------	---------	--------

4. Human _____ are social creatures – we need the company of others.

thrill-seeking	tastes	beings	benign-masochism
----------------	--------	--------	------------------

5. Our son has _____ peanut butter. He can't get enough!

gone numb	gong strong	cultivated	developed a taste for
-----------	-------------	------------	-----------------------

答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. True or False? *Spicy is a taste.*

False. Spicy is a sensation.

2. What's the name of the chemical compound found in chilli peppers?

Capsaicin.

3. Why do we feel pleasure when eating chilli peppers?

The endorphins the body releases to temper the burning sensation, as well as the ingredients chilli peppers are often cooked or eaten with, give pleasure.

4. How is eating chilli similar to skydiving?

It's a form of thrill-seeking or 'benign masochism', where we get pleasure from a seemingly negative sensation.

5. True or False? *Lots of mammals like the sensation of capsaicin.*

False. Humans are one of the few mammals on Earth that developed a taste for capsaicin.

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. I love the **taste** of ginger. I cook with it all the time!

2. The smell of cinnamon always **triggers** memories of my grandmother.

3. Excuse me, does this dish **contain** nuts? I'm allergic.

4. Human **beings** are social creatures – we need the company of others.

5. Our son has **developed a taste for** peanut butter. He can't get enough!