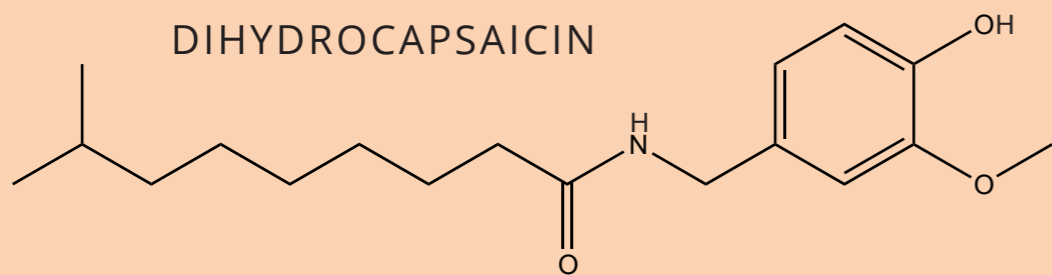


THE CHEMISTRY OF A CHILLI

CAPSAICINOIDS

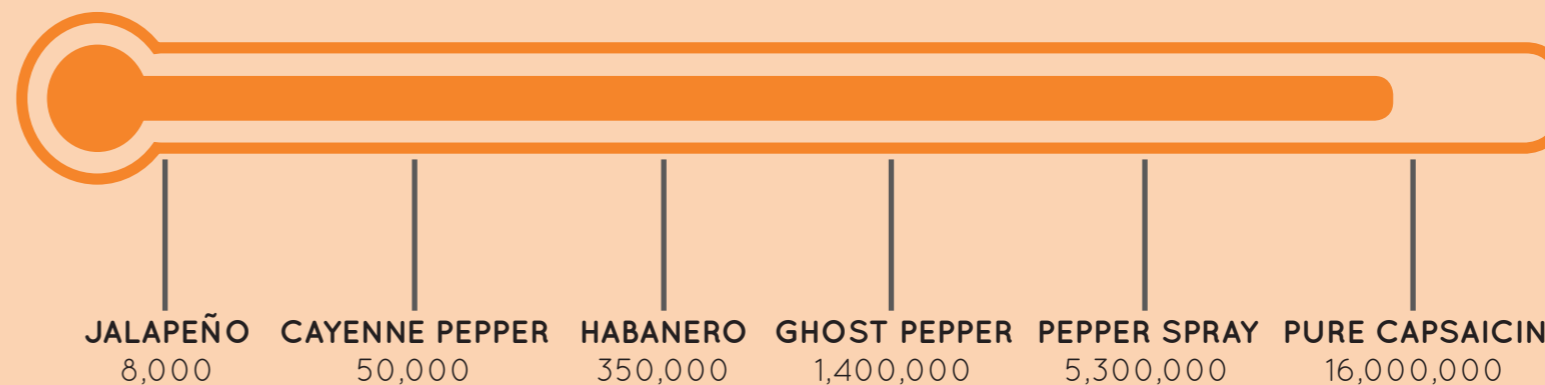


The spiciness of chillis is due to the presence of compounds called capsaicinoids. The two compounds above are the main capsaicinoids in chilli peppers. They cause a burning sensation when they come into contact with mucous membranes, due to their interaction with pain and heat sensing neurons.

Capsaicin is also used in some brands of pepper spray, and studies have shown it may be capable of killing prostate and lung cancer cells. It is toxic in large quantities.



THE SCOVILLE HEAT INDEX



The Scoville scale is a taste detection based method for rating the heat of chilli peppers. A measured amount of pepper extract has sugar added to it incrementally until the heat is undetectable through taste. Though it is an imprecise method, it has been estimated that 1 unit corresponds to 18 μ M.