

F&B

Food & Beverage



THE CAROLINA REAPER PEPPER

THE FIREMAN PRESENTS THE CAROLINA REAPER PEPPER HOT, HOT, HOT!

Photography Supplied

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Its potential uses include self-defence and revenge. Needless to say, this pepper is not for the faint of heart. The Carolina Reaper is the hottest pepper in the world according to the Guinness World Record it has held since 2013.

In Couva, Central Trinidad, amateur agriculturist Leon Philip gave new meaning to his day-job title of 'fireman' when he began importing the Carolina Reaper seeds and cultivating them in his backyard.

"I was doing some research on the nutritional aspect of pepper in food and in blended shakes, and I realised that the hotter the pepper is, the more health benefits it has," says Philip, explaining his interest in the record-breaking pepper.

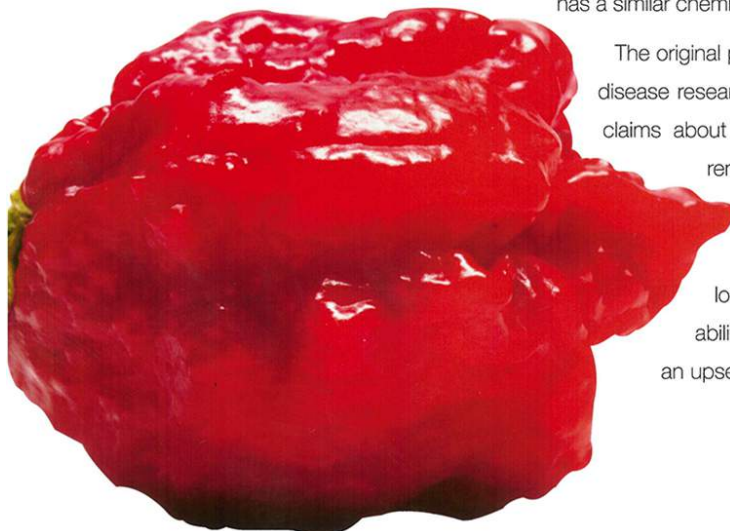
The Carolina Reaper is a crossbreed of other hot peppers and made by the PuckerButt Pepper Company in South Carolina in the United States.

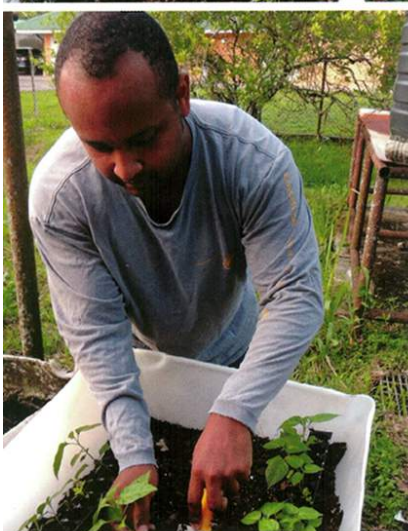
It averages approximately 1.5 million, and can reach over 2.2 million on the Scoville Heat Scale which quantifies a substance's spiciness by determining the concentration of capsaicinoids, the chemical compounds responsible for the peppery sensation. By comparison, a jalapeno pepper can hit 10,000; cayenne pepper 50,000; and our local claim-to-fame peppers, the Trinidad moruga scorpion pepper and the Trinidad scorpion butch T pepper, around 1.2 million and 1.4 million respectively.

In appearance, the Carolina Reaper looks decidedly unfriendly: a one- to three-inch tall and equally wide fruit, gnarled, with rough, angry bumps and a stinger-like tail—not to mention the dead giveaway of its name: 'Reaper'. Make no mistake: in high concentrations, this pepper has a similar chemical makeup to pepper spray, and can do some serious damage.

The original purpose of the pepper's cultivation was to aid in cancer and heart disease research. While there is a long way to go in terms of certified medical claims about treatments connected to pepper, peppers of all varieties are renowned around the world for their numerous health benefits.

Peppers are excellent sources of vitamins A and C, potassium, folic acid and fibre; they can even promote weight loss through appetite suppression and by increasing the body's ability to metabolise food. It is a natural decongestant, and can ease an upset stomach, sore throat or cough. Pepper can also help normalise





blood pressure and reduce atherosclerosis, preventing factors that can lead to a heart attack or stroke. It can also be used topically in creams to relieve joint pain, stimulate circulation to improve skin tone, treat snake bites, and alleviate rheumatism, sores, strains, sprains and wounds.

To get hold of the peppers, Philip had to wait several months for a phytosanitary certificate and provide Customs clearance documents to his skybox company. He then laboured a further six months until he was finally able to negotiate some fertility from the soil through trial and error, as our climate here is not naturally conducive to the plant.

Now the proud owner of several blooming Carolina Reaper plants and with many more on the way, Philip is expanding his horizons. He has partnered with a family friend, the owner of a successful pepper-sauce business, to add an additional blaze to the product line. He is also working on a proposal to seek approval from the Ministry of Agriculture to grow the world-record-holding peppers on a larger scale, and he hopes to one day develop nutritional supplements through the extraction of capsaicin (the active chemical ingredient) from the pepper.

THE HOTTER THE PEPPER IS, THE MORE HEALTH BENEFITS IT HAS

So, what's his advice for anyone who'd like to try their hand at sampling the world's hottest pepper?

"A spoonful of olive oil before ingesting helps... but even so, be prepared... it is extremely hot," he says. "Some of my friends and co-workers have been a little too adventurous, and regretted it. It's flavourful at first taste, but the heat soon clings to your taste buds and holds on for dear life!"

That's 'the Fireman's' official word—you've been warned! ■

For more information, please contact Leon Philip at 1-868-729-4877.

