

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE **PEPPERS**

FLAVOR • COLOR • TEXTURE

hot

sweet

spicy

bumpy

crunchy

smooth

glossy



buttery

intense

tangy

tart

rainbow

pungent

bitter



History

Peppers, native to Mexico, Central or South America, likely have been part of our diet for more than 10,000 years. Evidence of the oldest cultivated Capsicum was found in southwestern Ecuador (near Chile, the country!) dating to 6,100 years ago. They were cultivated by Aztec civilizations in what is now Mexico before contact with Spanish explorers around 1517.



Chili or Chile?

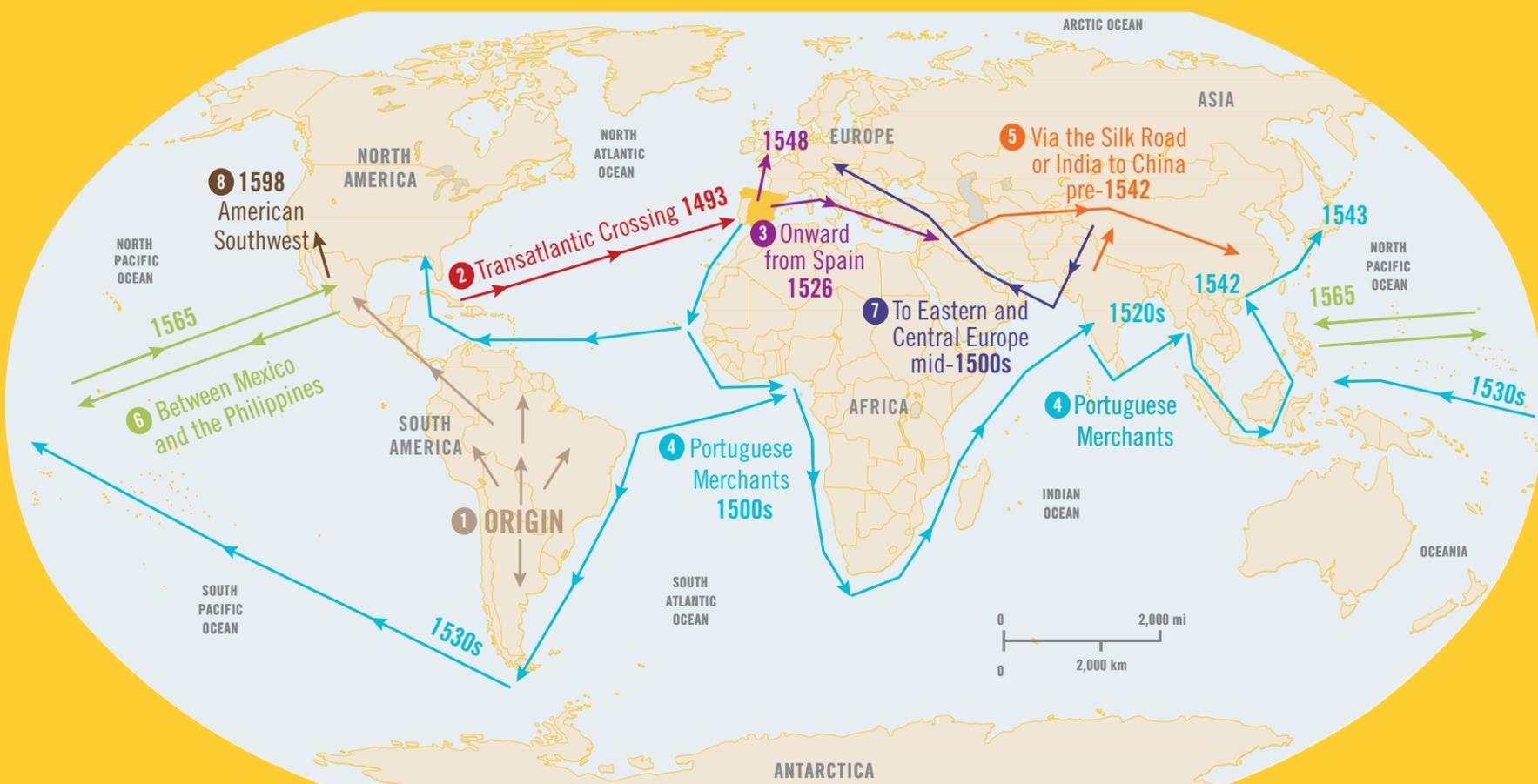
Chili (plural chilies or chilis) is the standard American English name for the hot pepper - and the spicy stew. The spelling chile is of Spanish origin and is common in southwestern areas of the US. More than 200 names are used to describe the individual chili peppers and bell peppers. Christopher Columbus and crew called Capsicum fruits "peppers" because, like black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), long known in Europe, they have a hot spicy taste.



Peppers

EARLY WORLDWIDE DISPERSAL OF CHILE PEPPERS

Most peppers dry well and their seeds remain viable for a long time, allowing long distance transport. Because they thrive in both temperate and tropical climates, they readily became established as they were introduced around the globe. New varieties specific to different regions developed and chile peppers became the primary hot spice worldwide.



1 Origin of Wild Peppers

Wild chile peppers evolved in Bolivia and Southern Brazil.

2 Transatlantic Crossing

Chile peppers traveled from the New World to Spain in 1493 with the return of Christopher Columbus from one of his voyages to the Caribbean.

3 Onward from Spain

From Spain, peppers spread west to Portugal, north as far as Britain and east through the Mediterranean.

4 Portuguese Merchants

Within 50 years of the chile pepper's arrival in Spain, Portuguese maritime merchants spread them to coastal regions of Africa, India and much of Asia. They introduced them directly from Portugal, as well as from their colony in Brazil. They also eventually carried chiles on voyages from Africa to southeast North America.

5 Via the Silk Road to China

Although the Portuguese reached the coast of China by 1542, chile peppers may have reached the interior of the country earlier, brought overland by traders via the Silk Road or India.

6 Between Mexico and the Philippines

Chile peppers reached the Philippines when the Spanish established a colony there in 1565. With travel back and forth between the Philippines and their other colony in Mexico, the Spanish also spread chiles to Hawaii and other Pacific Islands.

7 To Eastern and Central Europe

Chile peppers didn't reach Eastern and Central Europe through trade with other Europeans. Rather, Arab or Turkish traders likely transported them from India or Asia through the Persian Gulf and northwards in the mid-1500s. From Hungary, where paprika became a dominant spice, peppers spread to Germany.

8 American Southwest

Although Toltec Indians of Mexico traded with Pueblo Indians of the American Southwest, there is no evidence they introduced them to chile peppers. The Spanish certainly brought them along when they colonized the region in 1598.



Google Translates

Words for Peppers

Latin: piperis

Arabic: alfilfil, لفل فل

Cantonese: 辣椒

Farsi/Persian: felfel cpeha, لفل فله

French: poivrons

Haitian Creole: piman

Hindi: mirch, मरिच

Japanese: Piman, ピーマン

Spanish: pimientos

Swahili: pilipili

Ukrainian: perets', перець



Art

In modern art, chili peppers often signify passion and energy. Peppers, a common image on ancient Nazca ceramics, encircle this vessel depicting Inca terns, seabirds that live along the Humboldt Current off the coast of Peru and Chile.



<https://collections.artsmia.org/art/692/vessel-nasca-artist>



Botany

Peppers, a fruit, belong to the *Capsicum* genus in the *Solanacea* family and are related to eggplant, potato, and tomato. A chili pepper's heat directly corresponds to its level of capsaicin, which likely developed as a deterrent to predators.



Season's Best

Peppers, whether sweet or hot, are in season in New Jersey from July-October, and at their peak of flavor and freshness in those months.



Growing in the Garden

Grow peppers in well-drained, fertile soil in warm, sunny spots – with regular watering. The plants do best with daytime temperatures between 70°F-80°F (21°C-26°C) and nighttime temperatures between 60°F-70°F (15°C-21°C). The more stress a plant is exposed to (heat stress, water stress, environmental stress), the hotter the pepper.



Math & Money

New Jersey ranks among the top states in pepper production. In 2020, New Jersey ranked second among all states in pepper production with a harvest of nearly 105 million pounds of peppers on 3,800 acres, valued at \$60 million. Peppers are grown mostly in the counties of Gloucester, Cumberland, Salem, and Atlantic.



In the Kitchen

Chili peppers are usually dried and ground into a powder to be used as a spice or seasoning, and also are eaten fresh. Sweet bell peppers are often served raw, roasted, fried or stuffed. When handling hot peppers, always wear gloves to protect your skin from burns and never touch your eyes. Remove seeds and interior ribs to reduce a pepper's heat.



Peppers and..

At ancient sites in Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, the Peruvian Andes, and the Bahamas, chili remains were associated with corn, yuca, squash, sometimes beans, and possibly potato. In India, chili peppers were incorporated into curries. In Korea, chili peppers are a key ingredient in gochugaru, a spicy chili flake used in kimchi and other traditional dishes. To balance the heat of chili peppers with other ingredients, pair with dairy products, such as yogurt or cheese, or with sweet ingredients, like honey or sugar.

INGREDIENTS THAT GO WELL WITH PEPPERS

basil, beans, cashews, cheese, cilantro, coconut, corn, cumin, currants, eggplant, garlic, honey, lemon, olives, onion, oregano, paprika (smoked), potatoes, red pepper flakes, salt, thyme, tomato, vinegar



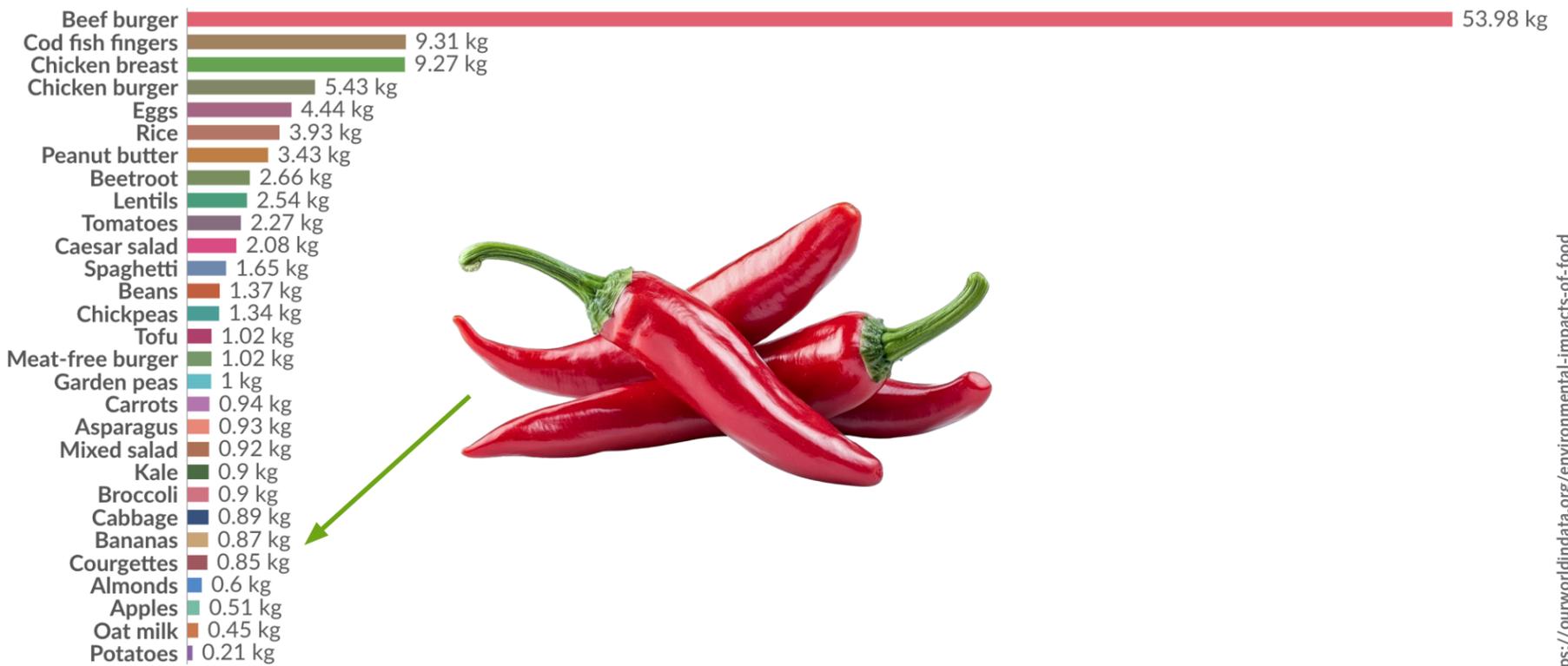
CLIMATE IMPACT OF PEPPERS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food

Our World in Data

Emissions are measured in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂eq). This means non-CO₂ gases are weighted by the amount of warming they cause over a 100-year timescale.



<https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impacts-of-food>

Choosing local, seasonal, field-grown bell peppers and hot peppers minimizes transportation costs and energy consumption that otherwise would be required for greenhouse growing and long-term refrigerated storage – and supports nearby farmers and the Garden State economy.

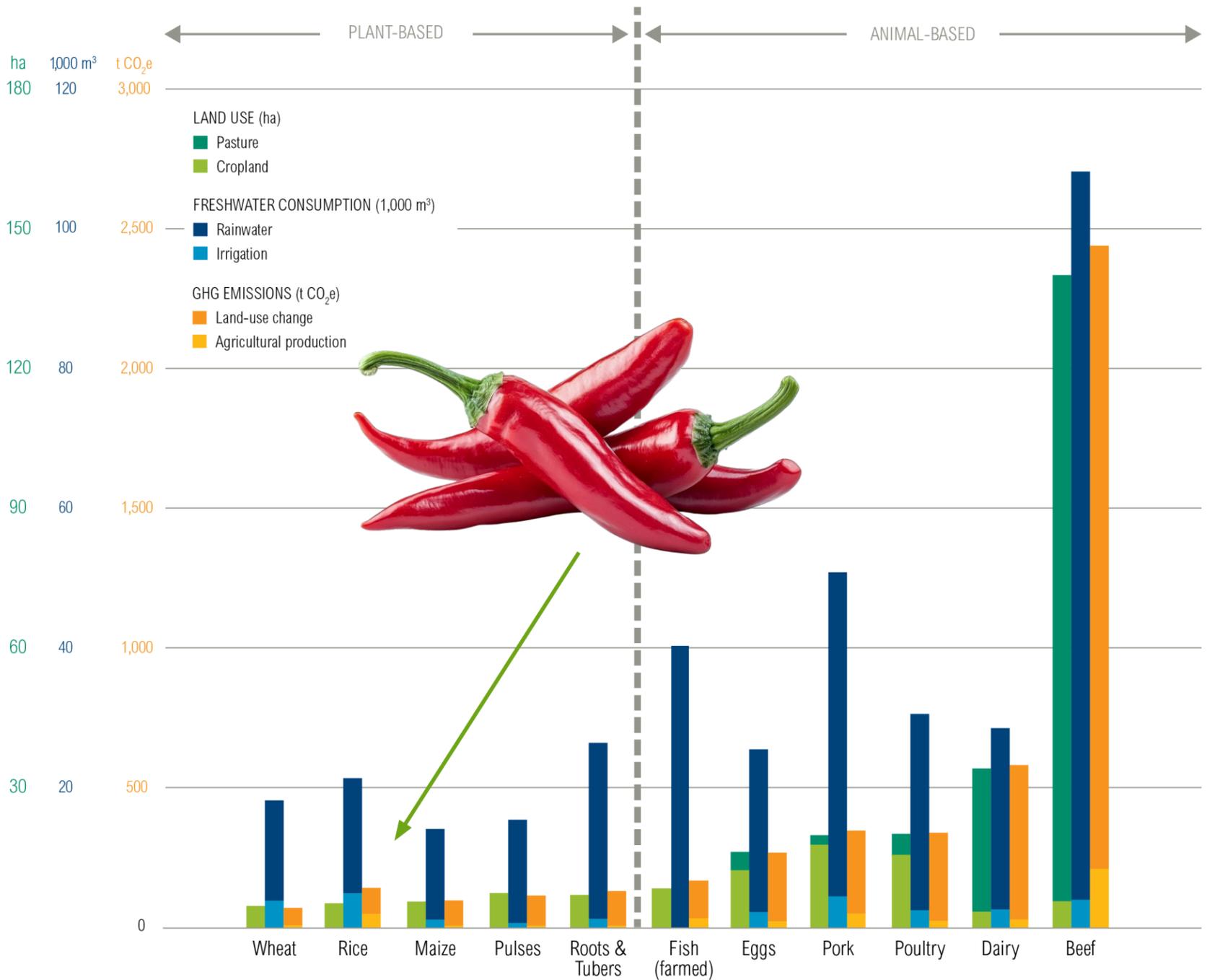


CLIMATE IMPACT OF PEPPERS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Animal-Based Foods Are More Resource-Intensive than Plant-Based Foods

PER TON PROTEIN CONSUMED



wri.org/shiftingdiets

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

https://www.wri.org/data/animal-based-foods-are-more-resource-intensive-plant-based-foods

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A Garden State on Your Plate Bell Peppers Tasting

Rinse the bell peppers, then lay out on a clean kitchen towel to dry. To taste the bell peppers, first observe all varieties whole.

Cut the pepper in half. What patterns do you see? How juicy is the flesh? What is the aroma? Cut the bell peppers into bite-size pieces, and sample each pepper, plain.

Compare and contrast sweet, bitter, sour, and salty – noting other flavors present.

Try each with a drop of lemon, a dash of salt, a drop of olive oil, both lemon and salt, and finally, a combination of some, and then, all, of the flavorings. Are flavors enhanced by any/all of the additions?

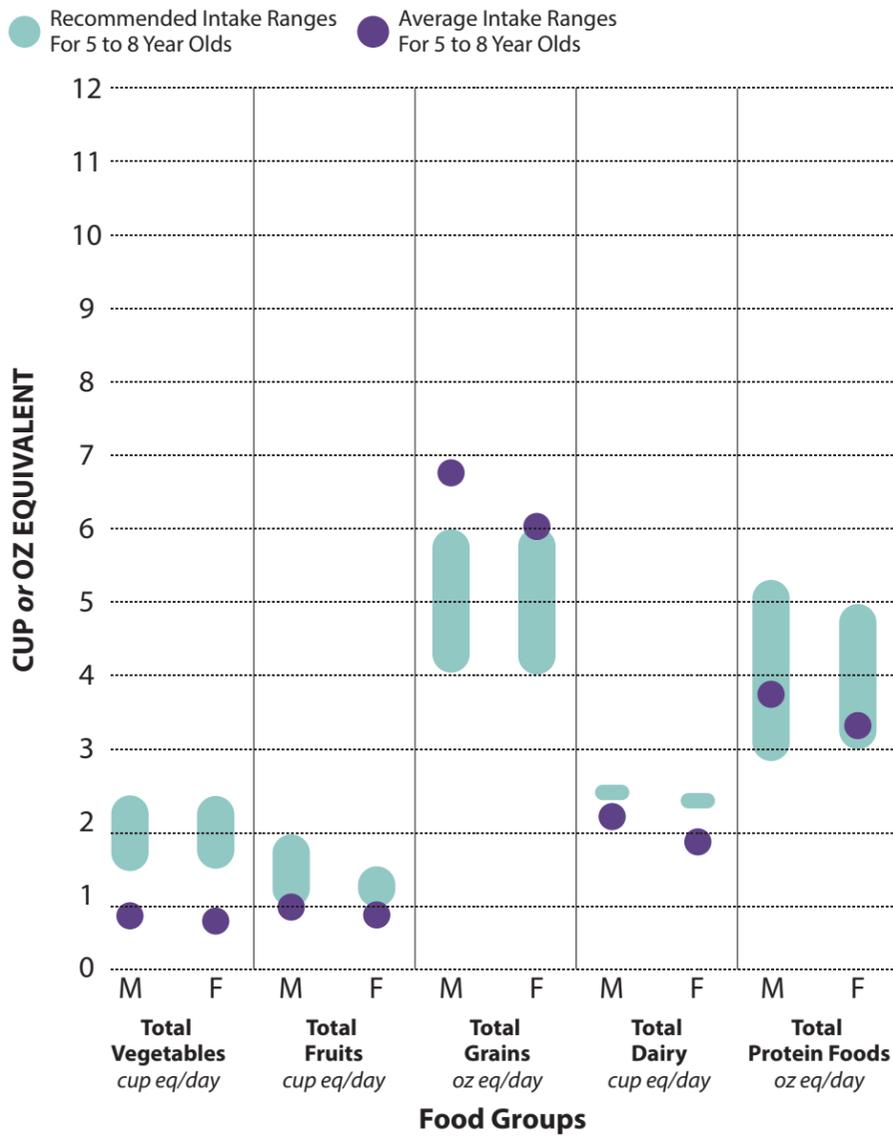
Taste the bell peppers roasted with olive oil and salt, or pickled in vinegar.



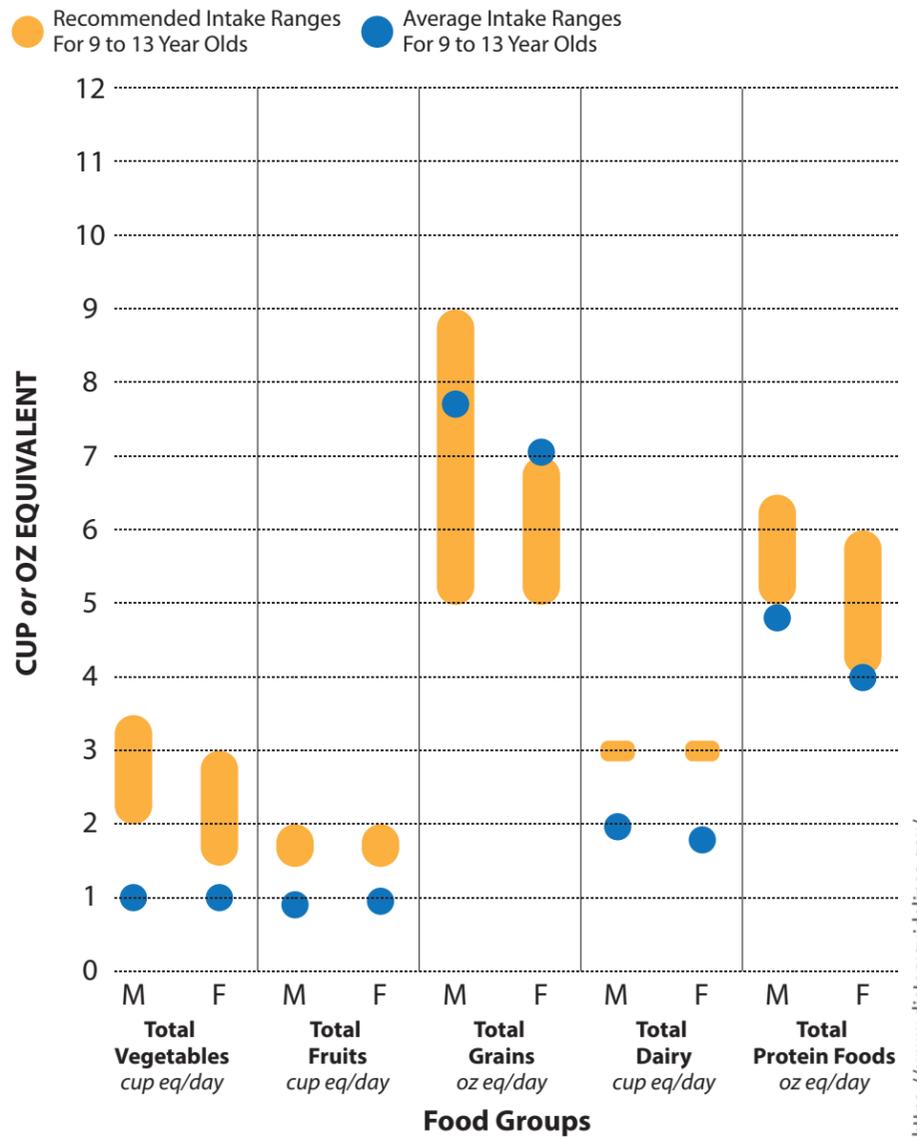
Dietary Guidelines

Peppers are rich in vitamins and minerals and are high in antioxidants.

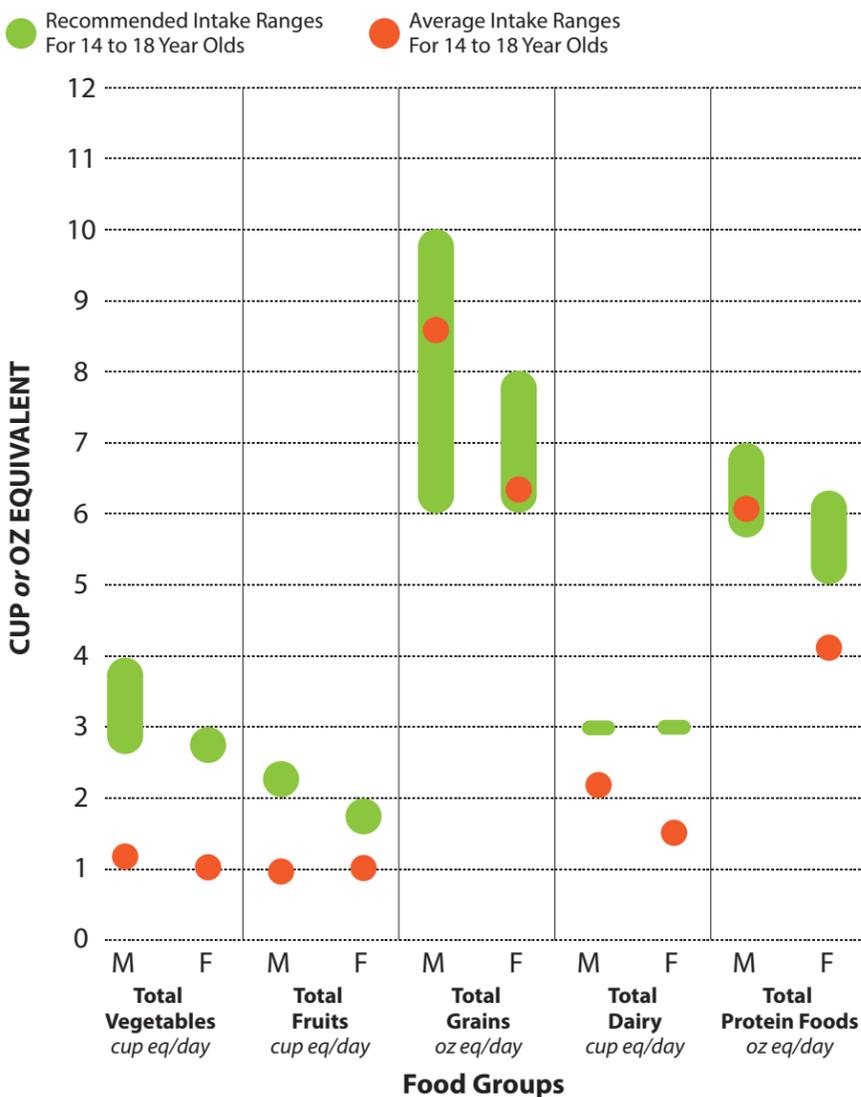
Current Intakes: Ages 5 Through 8



Current Intakes: Ages 9 Through 13



Current Intakes: Ages 14 Through 18



Credits

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/agriculture-and-agribusiness/pepper>

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/why-we-should-all-be-decorating-with-chili-peppers>

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