Peppers

DID YOU KNOW?
When Christopher Columbus set out for the New World, he hoped to find black pepper, a spice that grew in Asia. Instead he found the Arawak Indians eating another plant that was spicy, but not related to black pepper. He called it "red pepper" because it had red pods.

ORIGINS
Peppers are native to South America. People there ate wild peppers nearly 10,000 years ago, and farmers began growing the plant over 7,000 years ago.

CLASSIFYING PEPPERS

FAMILY
Solanaceae
(Nightshade family)

The Latin name "solanum" means nightshade.

GENUS
Capsicum

This name comes from the Greek word "kapsa" meaning to bite. Hot peppers have a taste that bites your mouth!

The heat in hot pepper is from capsaicin, a substance mostly found in the tip of the fruit, in the ribs, and in the seeds.

SPECIES
Three capsiicum species are widely cultivated.

Most varieties belong to the species Capsicum annuum.

Capsicum frutescens
Capsicum chinense

THE PEPPER PLANT

In temperate climates, pepper plants last only one growing season. In tropical areas, they are woody shrubs that grow from year to year.

Pepper plants have pointed leaves and small, star-shaped flowers.

The fruits come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors.
**USES**
Peppers are used raw in salads or in cooking. They can be used fresh or dried, whole or ground into spices. The capsaicin in hot peppers is also used in medicine.

**Paprika** is a spice that is made from any dried red pepper that is not hot.

Fresh, dried, whole or crushed, cayenne peppers are used in fiery dishes in many parts of the world.

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**GROWING AND HARVESTING PEPPERS**
Peppers thrive in well-drained, fertile soil. They must have a constant supply of water in order to set fruit.

*These peppers are ripe and full of flavor. I’ll leave the green peppers on the plant until they ripen fully and turn red, yellow, and orange.*

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**NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF PEPPERS**
Peppers are an excellent source of vitamins A and C.

As green pods turn red, the vitamin content increases. One red bell pepper has...

... the same amount of vitamin C as 3 oranges.

... the same amount of vitamin A as 1/3 of a carrot.

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