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secret natural ingredient

What's Hot About chili powder

This spicy seasoning can rev up your metabolism, ease indigestion, and even fend off garden pests.

How cool is that? **By Leslie Barrie**

BODY SLIMMER

Spice up your summer meals *and* slim down with a little help from chili powder. Studies show that compounds in this seasoning can actually boost your metabolism. For a zippy dessert, sprinkle a little of the hot stuff on a slice of cantaloupe, recommends Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, *Health's* Senior Food and Nutrition Editor.

FOOT REVIVER

Been on your dogs all day? Chili powder can help ease the ache. "Capsaicin [the stuff that gives chili powder its kick] increases blood flow to your feet, helping to soothe and warm them," says James McIlrath, spa director at The Spa at Encantado in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Try this DIY version of the spa's foot scrub: In a bowl, mix 1 teaspoon honey, 1/8 teaspoon chili powder, 2 teaspoons Epsom salts, and 1 tablespoon unscented jojoba oil to make a creamy paste. Apply a dollop to each foot, and rub for 1 minute; wrap in warm, wet towels, leave on until cool, then wash clean. Note: Skip this treatment if you have sensitive skin; if you feel burning rather than tingling, rinse ASAP.

STOMACH SOOTHER

You may worry that indulging in spicy cuisine will give you tummy troubles, but regularly seasoning your food with chili powder over time could actually help relieve the symptoms of stomach woes such as chronic indigestion and acid reflux, suggests a review of research published in the *Journal of Neurogastroenterology and Motility*. If you suffer from serious GI issues, though, check in with your doctor before trying this move.

GARDEN AID

Pest-proof your veggies this summer with you know what! "Sprinkle chili powder around the edge of your garden or base of your plants to repel insects and animals—they don't like the hot flavor," says Erin Bried, author of *How to Build a Fire: and Other Handy Things Your Grandfather Knew*. To up the ante, mix a tablespoon of chili powder with 2 cups of water in a spray bottle, and spritz it on your plants once a week. Rinse before eating. 🍴

pick the right powder

The "chili powder" sold at your local grocery store is often a blend that contains other ingredients like cumin, garlic, and oregano. To pack your food with the healthiest punch, pick up pure varieties like cayenne or ancho that aren't diluted with other spices, advises Marissa Lippert, RD, owner of Nourish Nutrition Counseling.