



SHARE A GARDEN PHOTO OR "@HOME" TIP: newsroom@newszap.com

ADVERTISE WITH US: adsupport@newszap.com

Scotch Bonnet pepper: A tropical and spicy delight

By Andy Wetherill

When conjuring up thoughts of tropical islands, your first vision is probably of a bright blue sea and cool breezes — a relaxing respite from an otherwise hectic world. The heat from the exceptionally pungent and spicy Scotch Bonnet pepper may seem contrary to such a setting.

The Scotch Bonnet (*Capsicum chinense*) pepper is produced, consumed and used extensively in

Asian, African, Latin American and Caribbean countries. This pepper gets its name from its shape, which resembles that of a Scotsman's bonnet.

The Scotch Bonnet plant is an herbaceous perennial, which produces fruits that are red or yellow at maturity. The fruit constitutes the edible portion of the plant, which is said to be 50 times hotter than the jalapeño pepper (Hotness in peppers is based on the concentration of capsaicin, a chemical com-

pound that occurs naturally in the fruit. Hotness is measured in Scoville units.)

The smoky and fruity flavor of the Scotch Bonnet makes it one of the most highly desired hot pepper varieties in the world. It is used as a main ingredient in authentic Jamaican dishes such as ox-tail, curried goat, or jerked chicken.

Specialty crops, like Scotch Bonnet, are occasionally introduced into the agricultural landscape across America. These crops are

then tested and evaluated for their general performance under new growing conditions in the United States. Successful introduction of these crops is partially based on their potential for increased usage and consumption.

The consumption of Scotch Bonnet peppers in the U.S. is on the increase due to the popularity of hot foods in general and ethnic cuisine in particular. They have become popular for myriad reasons. These peppers accentuate the flavors of food and they are known to have anti-bacterial properties. In addition, they have possible beneficial effects on the heart. They retain their organolyptic flavor subsequent to processing.

In Delaware, Scotch Bonnet peppers are grown during the summer months. Cooperative Extension at Delaware State University is presently conducting research and demonstration work on these peppers at Delaware State University Research Farm in Kent County and at the University of Delaware research Farm in Sussex County.

On the campus of Delaware State University, the Claude E. Phillips Herbarium is Delaware's center for research, education, and outreach about plant identifications, locations, and uses. For more information about Scotch Bonnet peppers or other specialty crops, contact Andy Wetherill, DSU Cooperative Extension Small Farm educator, (302) 857-6491.



MCT photo

The Scotch Bonnet pepper is produced, consumed and used extensively in Asian, African, Latin American and Caribbean countries.