

# ANGEL OF DEATH

Fernando G. introduces takes us on a tour of Puerto Rico's spicy side.



Piquedeme Madre Salsa  
Picante Bohio Goya Del  
Monte Angel of Death  
Screaming Rasta Lost  
in Sulfur Springs Blair  
Mega Death Sudden  
Death Sauce Possible  
Side Effects Blair's 16  
Million Pure Capsaicin.

Many misconceptions come about a culture and society's dietary needs, especially for the need of spices of the hot fiery kind.

But first a history lesson:

Columbus never landed on the 'Island of San Juan' as he called it, seeing it as a minor island and speaking with the natives of the other islands, was told that vicious headhunters lived on the island. San Juan, or Saint John the Baptist in English, was the one who baptized Jesus Christ, and was later beheaded. The story goes, Herodias' daughter Salome dances before Herod, who offers her a favor in return. Herodias tells her to ask for the head of John the Baptist, which is delivered to her on a plate (Mark 6:14-29).

It was not until the Spanish Explorer Ponce de Leon, was The Island of San Juan landed. He went there with a great army to take on vicious headhunters and colonize the island. The island itself holds strategic importance to this day, being on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, from its North Eastern point- the view of the Atlantic Ocean stretches for thousands of miles and can warn the locals of possible invaders. Instead of headhunters, Ponce de Leon discovers "naked peaceful savages who shared in their small possessions and their food." Before going to Florida to find the Fountain of Youth, Ponce de Leon enslaves the local population and renames the island to Puerto Rico, "Rich Port" in English.

At the time, the native population of Puerto Rico has a diet consisting of fish,

meat from rabbits and monkeys, fruits such as pineapple, lemon, oranges and berries, and tuber roots like Casaba or Yucca. What spices they had were grown on the island and limited. Before Columbus, the natives had sea trade with the other islands of the Caribbean Sea, which give them items such as Papaya, Corn, Sugar Cane, Chocolate and assorted peppers from the Aztec Nation to name a few. Ponce De Leon brought Salt, Pepper Corns, and meat from pork and later beef. Their style of cooking was to put the items on a wooden grill over an open fire, which is where modern Barbeques come from.

Aztec use of Chocolate was to mix it with hot peppers such Jalapenos in a liquid slurry and drunk from mugs. The Natives from Puerto Rico used the slurry mix as a dressing or marinades for their meats that were cooked on the grill. It is said that the Puerto Rican usage of the Aztec drink was weaker than that in the Aztec Empire. Many reasons could be for this but we'll not speculate on them.

Since then Puerto Rican have their foods spiced to some degree or another, as how hot it can be is more of a personal choice than a cultural one. Of all the hot sauces out there, the most widely used and well known from the island is called Pique (pron: PEE Kay), which literally translates as "The Itch," but is better known as "The Heat." It comes in varying degrees of heat, the most popular being at a slightly higher rating than the popular American Tabasco Sauce. Other names of Pique include: Pique de mi Madre (My Mother's Hot Sauce) which is a 3.5 - 4 scale from 1-10 in heat, and Salsa

Picante Bohio (Hot Sauce from Bohio, a small mountain town on the island) which is said to be a 6. Companies such as Goya and Del Monte make their own hot sauce from the island, which range a 2.5 - 3; Tabasco is a 2 on the same scale. All of these goes great with meats, beans and rice dishes.

Since the Americanization of Puerto Ricans and Latinos in general in the 1950s, they brought and shared their culture with the rest of America, and in turn, America shared with its newly adopted culture. Many Puerto Ricans found that though their hot sauces were for flavor, in some American circles there were hot sauces made or just heat. Many Americanized Puerto Ricans took to these hot sauces with open arms. From Puerto Rico and in a small part, Mexico, to the rest of the Caribbean, Central America and South America these hot sauces spread thus creating a world market for hot sauce around the world.

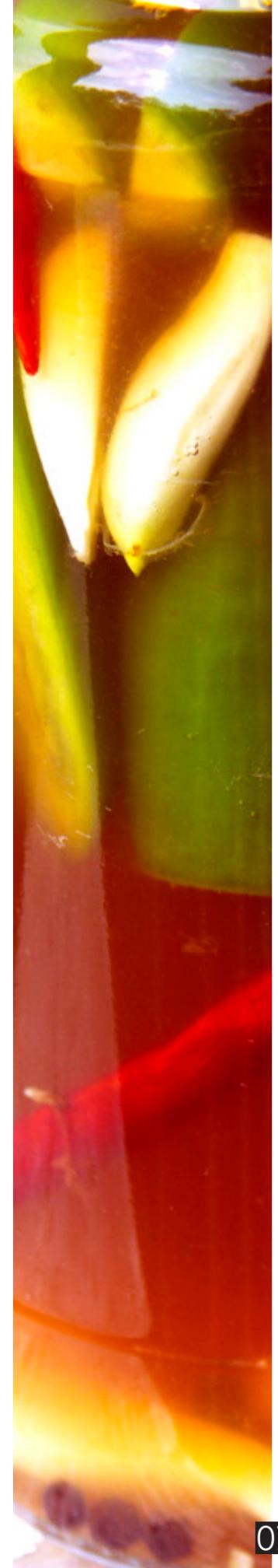
Personally, I take hot sauce for taste and not for heat. Thus my consumption of food varies as the use and kind of hot sauce, if any. I find that certain rice and meat dishes can be bland, and requires a little kick to it. Other times, certain spices on foods do not taste right without added heat. A typical pasta tomato sauce it just find on its own but having too much of it requires a little adventure thrown into it.

Angel of Death is a sweet hot sauce, made with molasses and honey with assorted peppers, giving it a 6 - 6.5 on the 1-10 heat scale. It is best on pork and chicken. Its dark brown color and sweet smell hides the fact that a nuclear reactor core lies in waiting for power up. Brushing it up on some slices pork shoulder roasts gives it a bit of life the meat needs. Though succulent a properly done roast pork shoulder can be, it can also be very bland. Angel of Death here can be a nice condiment to the meal if lightly added. For the daring and those with cast iron stomachs, you can glop it on.

Screamin' Rasta Lost In Sulfur Springs is a very hot mustard and pepper sauce that goes great with most meats including beef. It goes well with Curry and other sauces. If you're a crazed digestive adventurer you can put it on your vegetables as well. Many I know tend to mix it with rice and meat gravies. Leon says, "Its an acquired taste." It is a high 7 on the scale.

The Blair Series of Hot Sauces includes titles such as "MegaDeath" (which is a 5+), "Sudden Death Sauce (with Ginseng!)" (a 6+), "Possible Side Effects" (a 6.5 - 7), and "Blair's 16 Million Pure Capsaicin" (a 10+++!) which is just pure heat extract and is the Guinness Book of World Records! These series of hot sauces have different flavors ranging from woody to mustard, peppery and anything in between can go to a whole range of foods. But caution must be given to "Blair's 16 Million Pure Capsaicin" because Capsaicin in its pure form can kill. One drop is all anyone will ever need!

These are just a few of my favorites, as there are thousands of hot sauces out there with each one catering to their own cultures and diets. Since the majority of Puerto Rican Dishes are usually some kind of rice, beans, and meat dishes, with some starchy vegetable on the side, hot sauce adds to the flavors of the meals. Now I don't mind sharing my stash, but own up to the fact that you can take the heat. Jose's nagging of how little Henrietta's tummy becoming a new source of energy for Italy after she swiped my Angel of Death Sauce was one day I do not want to relive. As I told him, hot sauce creates a fire that water can not put out!☹



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