

FOOD CHILLI

of a recipe and completely transform your dish. It also happens to be one of the major spices that is readily available all around the year.

The secret is to 'use them as you need them'. Chopping the chillies tends to give your dish a higher pungency level whereas slitting it tends to reduce the pungency of a dish. "In gravies, we puree the green chillies, even taking the seeds out sometimes to use them as a garnish against a contrasting background. To be honest, even thinking about cooking an Indian meal without adding a dash of green chillies to it would be termed as pure sacrilege. We often use chopped green chillies while cooking as compared to the sliced or grounded form; but we always ensure that we add few green chillies to the dish to bring out that delicate balance of flavours. You will also find acclaimed chefs making good use of this humble ingredient in its grounded form to enhance the taste and aroma of the recipe," says Chef Surender Mohan, Executive Chef, The Leela Mumbai.

One good thing about green chilli is that it is mostly used raw and can be eaten directly or added to the food in paste, chopped or sliced form; most of the Indian curries are garnished with sliced chillies. "Green chili tastes even better when roasted dry – that gives it a nice flavour. Chillies are known for their heat, which is caused by capsaicin, a potent chemical. The amount of capsaicin in a chilli determines its fieriness. Generally, the smaller the chilli, the hotter it is. Smaller chillies have a larger amount of seeds and vein than larger chillies as up to 80 per cent of the capsaicin in a chilli is contained in its vein and seeds. You can always choose the type of chilli according to your choice and the level of spice required, removing seeds out of chilli also helps to cut down fieriness," says Vineet Manocha, Head Chef, Lite Bite Foods.

Green chillies vary from region to

region. To pick the right one for the right dish and to gauge its hotness level before adding it to a dish according to an individual's palate is an extremely tricky process. Green chillies can cause your hands to burn when you are working with them. So it is best to make sure you wear gloves when preparing food with them and wash your hands thoroughly after you use them. Chef Manish Uniyal, Head Chef, Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore avers, "I use green chillies not just to bring in the heat to my food but also for its peppery note. The best way to do so is by removing all the seeds, veins and pith after splitting it lengthwise and soaking it in milk. Infusing split chillies in neutral oils and specialty vinegars is another way of using them."

For recipes which use a lot of chillies, acid from citrus fruits can counterbalance the spiciness. Dairy products like cream and milk are good to tone down the spice factor in a recipe. Coconut milk can also lend a great creaminess and cooling effect to your

From top: Dhaniya Mirch da Kukkad; and Kosha Mangsho



NOVOTEL KOLKATA (KOSHA MANGSHO);
LITE BITE FOODS (KUKKAD)