



PHOTO: SOHAIL ANWAR

## OH, TO HAVE AN ARTISTIC FRIEND

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

Have you ever found yourself sitting in your friend's room, observing a canvas filled with colours with no idea as to how you should react? Ever found yourself sitting before a stack of pages attempting to form an opinion you don't have on a topic you may not necessarily care about? Sit through a movie with the director staring straight at you observing your reaction to every scene?

### Welcome to the life of the artist's friend.

Here's a list of things you have to put up with when you decide to befriend an artist.

#### You have different ideas of fun

Making plans with your friend on the weekend may just vary when it comes to some of your artist friends. When presented with the choice of a theme park and a gallery, sometimes it could most definitely be the latter. Your friend's ideal idea of fun might be being cooped up in their rooms and coming up with their next masterpiece whereas yours might just be dinner or a movie.

#### Random outbursts of inspiration

Most artists get their ideas from personal experiences and sometimes you're part of those stories. More than once, there's a chance your friend has looked at you with that wild look in their eyes and said, "I think I'm going to write about this" after which they most definitely will proceed to explain the idea. So, good luck.

#### Mundane things have new meaning

Watching a movie or listening to a song sometimes should mean just that. But your artist friend will be blown away by something you just don't see. Before you know it, a much deeper and intricate meaning has been lifted from it and it's now a big representation of something you honestly couldn't care less about.

#### Unqualified critiquing

As I mentioned earlier, you often find yourself critiquing work you have no qualification or interest in. Be it writing, art, movies, music or the many other forms of art, you're often called upon to review their work and then come up with constructive criticism.

"So, what do you think?" They'll ask, with a mix of wonder and fear in their eyes.

And every time you try you can only come up with, "Nice."

#### Constant reassurance

More times than you can count, you've gotten a phone call from a rather defeated voice asking whether they are really on the right path. Whether their dream is too unrealistic.

The path of an artist in a tough one. You, the friend of the artist, know this better than many may fully give you credit for.

Why? Because you're the one constantly supporting your friend's dream, shielding them from the pressure of the world and the disapproving comments from people deeming these dreams as "childish" or "immature".

While it can get hard and rather frustrating, artist friends have you to thank. You don't know how much they value your opinion no matter how unqualified you may be. Your support is what has them chasing what makes them happy. Whether they make it or not will always be a gamble but they'll never regret not trying.

So, on behalf of all the artists to all of their friends — thank you!

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at [erum.noor1998@gmail.com](mailto:erum.noor1998@gmail.com)

# SOME LIKE IT HOT

All about red hot chillies and peppers

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"Mama, jhal ta ektu beshi diyen!" — A sentence we all must have heard while munching on the already spicy *fuchka* on our plates. Or maybe you can't handle spice too well, like yours truly. No matter which team you are on, you will admit that smouldering our mouths in heat is a feat on its own.

The painful yet delightful sensation of chillies make us crave more. But why do we partake in this self-inflicted culinary torture even after being aware of the agonising bathroom breaks at the end of the day? The answer to that is *capsaicin*.

Capsaicin is the chemical compound found in peppers which impart the sensation of burning in your mouth by attaching itself to the pain-receptors on your tongue. These heat-receptors, or TrpV1 for the smart ones, activate when your body is exposed to high temperatures. Compounds like capsaicin and piperine send false alarms to the brain, tricking it into thinking that your body is literally ON FIRE. The brain combats this presumed danger by releasing neurotransmitters called endorphins which ward off the pain and perpetuate pleasure. Sweating is the body's natural way of cooling down, which is why we leak from our eyes and nose after we finish off a fiery feast.

The itch for devouring spicy food is not natural but acquired. Research says that spice tolerance does not depend on genetics rather your affinity towards hot foods. Your body learns to associate with this *culinary masochism* or in other words, *hedonic reversal*.

People have been using spices since forever and when we talk "spices" we dive into the eclectic world of culinary magic. Traditionally, spices were used in the warmer climates of the world. Bacteria breed in warm, humid temperatures and interestingly spices have antimicrobial

properties. Chillies such as Naga peppers, ghost peppers and jalapeño not only possess the ability to quench the thirst of human heat-seekers but also make food safer to eat.

As much as these thrill-seekers love innocuously putting their lives in danger, the daunting task of chomping on chillies relies heavily on the circumstances and desire. The buzz that spicy food gives us is similar to a drug high. Our heart rates go up, sweat mists around our mouth while our tongue douses in molten lava. Adrenaline starts pumping and we experience an endorphin rush. We get similar effects from riding a rollercoaster or running a marathon but you don't see someone diving into a sweltering hot curry straight from the stove. Snacking on a smouldering treat simulates putting ourselves in danger without causing any actual potential jeopardy.

Most viral things on the internet grab attention because we find sincere and unguarded emotions fascinating. We are wired to enjoy risqué, over-the-top behaviours because the more the shock value, the more we're glued to the screens. Shows like *Hot Ones* and *Heat Seekers* have originated based solely on piquant platters.

And who doesn't like seeing celebrities crying out in pain from scalding their mouths with spicy food? We empathise over the social bonding from shared pain. These food challenges transfix our gaze and makes us eager to know the limit of how far they can go. *Schadenfreude*—as sinister the word sounds—is the pleasure we derive from seeing someone's misfortunes. Extreme food challenges have been circulating forever and considering our obsession with spicy food, these don't seem to stop any time soon.

Farnaz Fawad Hasan considers herself to be the fifth member of the Try Guys. Send her stuff to try at [farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com](mailto:farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com)



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