

The Science Behind Our Favorite TexMex Snacks

You've been walking all day in the sun, shopping at La Cantera, or your nearest flea market — when suddenly you have a craving: lemons in pickle juice, chamoy drizzled raspas, mangoes, watermelon, cucumber, [sour candy, and gummy bears ...](#)

Sour, Salty, Sweet, Spicy, savory all in one! Sounds like the best treats of San Antonio. Did you know, there's actually science behind why we like these treats, especially in this hot and humid climate ...

A. Consider The Climate and our Bodies ...

The hot humid air of San Antonio can cause one to become unusually lethargic, and takes a toll on the body.

June 2023 saw [record breaking heat indexes](#) that make it hard for the body to find relief.

Risks of such Extreme Heat include the possibility of:

- Heat Stroke: possible loss of consciousness, coma, and even death without medical attention or intervention. Symptoms include unusually high body temperature, profuse sweating, shallow breaths, and slurred speech.
- Heat Cramps: muscle spasms, usually in the abdomen or calves, that might occur alongside ardent sweating, inadequate water intake, and lethargy.
- Heat Exhaustion: characterized by dizziness, headaches, vomiting, and dark urine, especially after intense physical activity in the heat without enough water and salt intake.

B. Three Common Ingredients in TexMex Snacks that aid in Muscle Activity in the Heat:

1. Citric Acid:

Citric acid is especially abundant in sour fruits and processed seasonings like Chile Powder. It increases the absorption of minerals, such as those found in water, and keeps the blood fluid. As a result, the heart and blood vessels can deliver oxygen to the muscles more efficiently. Citric acid also helps our bodies convert carbs, fats, and proteins into energy.

If you're working on your yard in the sun or at the gym, you may at some point feel a burning sensation in your shoulders. This is the result of [lactic acid slowing muscles down](#) so that they do not overexert themselves.

[Citric acid on the other hand](#), decreases the lactic acid in your body, so that your muscles can keep performing longer without that burning sensation ... which could lead to a binge on TexMex treats like Chamoy or lemons in pickle juice. Citric acid also releases an enzyme in our stomach that makes us ready for a good meal, giving us more motivation to stay active and alert instead of retreating to rest.

2. *Vitamin C:*

A powerful antioxidant found in fruits—[also known as ascorbic acid](#)—which builds collagen, boosts immunity, and aids in hormone and neural functioning. The collagen in our skin, which gives skin its elasticity, can break down with excessive sun exposure. Vitamin C helps rebuild collagen and also maintains other internal connective tissues in the body, such as ligaments, tendons, cartilage, and bones.

If you notice that your wounds take a long time healing, you bruise easily, and/or your gums bleed easily, this could be a sign of Vitamin C deficiency that leads to weak connective tissue. Our bodies are unable to make Vitamin C, so we must ingest it from the foods we eat.

3. *Spices*

The post-muscle-soreness we encounter after physical activity—not to be confused with the burn we feel during physical activity—is the result of inflammation in the body. [Spicy foods](#), such as Guajillo peppers, that are commonly found in store bought Chile powder and Chamoy sauce, as well as arbor pepper and jalapenos all have anti-inflammatory properties that relieve muscle fatigue and soreness after a workout; as well as aid in reducing inflammation in joints and other areas of the body. Spicy foods can also increase metabolism and improve gut health by boosting the microbiome.

C. History on Chamoy and its Oriental Influence . . .

Chamoy was first popularly distributed by companies like [Lucas](#), after the 1960's, when people from Asia started migrating to Mexico, and [imprinting their trade on the region](#).

The Chinese and Japanese have [pickled snacks](#) called “see mui” and “umeboshi” which are early inspirations for what we now lavish on our raspas, candy, and other TexMex snacks. See, Mui consists of salted dried apricots, and the Japanese, Umeboshi consists of salted dried plums.

When Asian merchants sold their food products in Mexico, a new sauce was created by the locals that typically consisted of dried mangoes or plums, but with added Mexican spices! Chamoy was then added to fruits and candies and has been a favorite cultural snack ever since!

Great Spots in San Antonio for Chamoy Treats and TexMex Favorites:

- [Chris and Kids Snow Cones](#)— Southwest San Antonio
- [Ice Ice Baby](#)— Northwest San Antonio
- [Big Daddy's Treats](#)— Downtown San Antonio
- [Amigos Snacks](#)— Central Southeast San Antonio
- [La Chiquita Paleteria](#)— North Central San Antonio