

PRESS RELEASE
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At Berlin Chili Fest, the makers ask to be judged on flavour, not heat

More than 50 independent European producers bring hundreds of sauces to Neukölln from 4 to 6 September, most built to make a plate taste better rather than to test the person eating.

Berlin, 18 July 2026

Berlin Chili Fest opens at the Berliner Berg Brauerei on 4 September as an adventure in taste: three days, more than 50 independent European makers, and hundreds of sauces built first for flavour. There is a daredevil edge of real heat for anyone who wants it, but here that is a choice, not the point.

"Judging a hot sauce by its heat is like judging a wine by only its alcohol content," said Neil Numb, founder of Berlin Chili Fest. "Heat is one number. The fruit, the slow ferment, the balance a maker spent years getting right, that is what you taste when you walk the tables here."

The festival has grown since 2020 into one of Europe's larger gatherings of independent sauce makers, and more than 13,000 people are expected across the weekend. Most of the producers work in small batches, building a sauce around one chilli, a long ferment or the fruit of a particular region, and the range this year runs from sauces with almost no heat to a handful that mean business.

Take Instant Taste. Martina Wastl, an Austrian who settled in Berlin, took Argentina's chimichurri and made it crunch: her Chimichurri Crisp is loud with parsley and garlic and studded with toasted almond, a spoonful enough to carry fried eggs or a plate of grilled vegetables.

A few tables over, Max Weiss cooks Mexican salsas by hand for La Tiendita, his Kreuzberg grocery, and names each after a lucha libre move. La Quebradora is the quiet one, a fresh tomatillo salsa verde, sharp and green. La Tirabuzón is the show-off, all ripe mango and habanero.

Momo Haus works in a different register again. Biplav Dahal bottles the Himalayan Timur pepper that gives his restaurant's momos their lift, and his Snakebite Chilli Oil carries the same grapefruit-and-pepper aroma, a sauce you notice more for its scent than its sting.

The makers are only half of it. Anyone can enter the weekend's headline contest, Berlin's Best Homemade Hot Sauce Competition, by carrying a jar to the festival before 2pm on Sunday and putting it in front of the judges, with the winner named that evening. The Berlin Amateur Chili Eating Competition returns for a second year, run by Pandemonic Chili

Sauces with Westland Peppers and paramedics on standby, and a Spicy Cabaret Show and live music play across all three days.

Berlin Chili Fest runs Friday from 6 to 10pm and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 10pm at the Berliner Berg Brauerei in Neukölln. Day tickets are 7 euros and a weekend pass is 12, from chilifest.eu.

ABOUT BERLIN CHILI FEST

Established in 2020, Berlin Chili Fest has grown into one of Europe's premier hot sauce celebrations. The festival combines professional competitions with grassroots community spirit — proving that you don't need corporate backing to build something meaningful. It attracts thousands of attendees, partners with industry leaders like Clifton Chili Club, and maintains its commitment to supporting independent, artisan hot sauce makers.

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