

Ethnobotany

Alexey Shipunov

Minot State University

Lecture 19

Outline

- 1 From food to medicine
 - Spices

From food to medicine

Spices

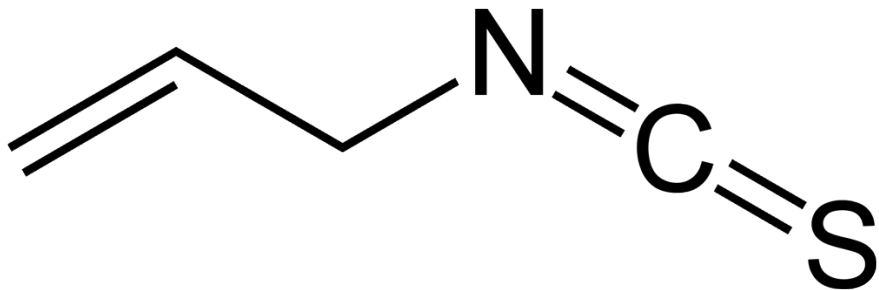
Spicy hot taste

- Caused from several different secondary metabolites which make a burning sensation
- These metabolites work with pain receptors, nociceptors
- One of proposed effects is the stimulation of endorphin and serotonin production in brain

Allyl isothiocyanate plants

- Main component of mustard oils, with formula $\text{CH}_2\text{-CH-CH}_2\text{-NCS}$
- Anti-herbivore chemical, stored in glucosinolate form and released by myrosinase when cells are broken
- Toxic, strong lachrymator, stimulates nasal and eye receptors
- Plants of Brassicales order (Cruciferae and also Moringaceae like papaya and horseradish tree) are rich of allyl isothiocyanates.

Allyl isothiocyanate



Horseradish, *Armoracia rusticana*

- Perennial plant from cabbage family (Cruciferae) with European origin
- Roots are using as a spice

Wasabi, *Wasabia japonica*

- Japanese perennial from same family
- Extremely strong flavor due to multiple isothiocyanates

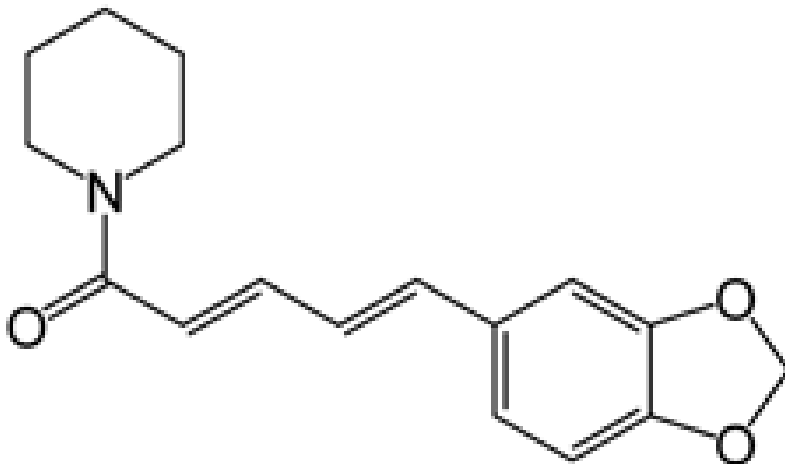
Iwasaki (1828) paint of wasabi



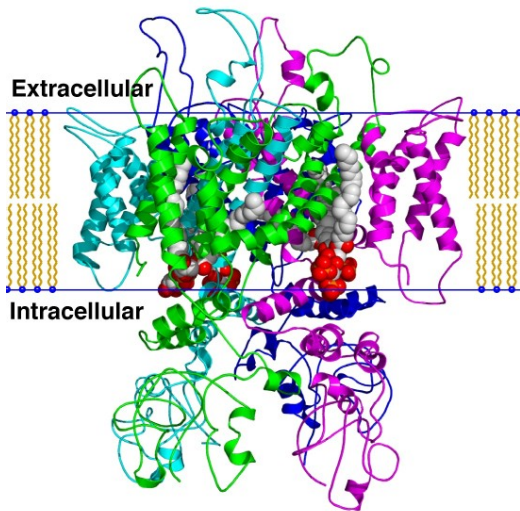
Piperine

- Alkaloid
- Activates TRPV channels in nociceptors

Piperine



TRPV channel



Black pepper, *Piper nigrum*

- Perennial vine from pepper family, Piperaceae
- Has the long and rich history: was one of primary causes of Exploration Age

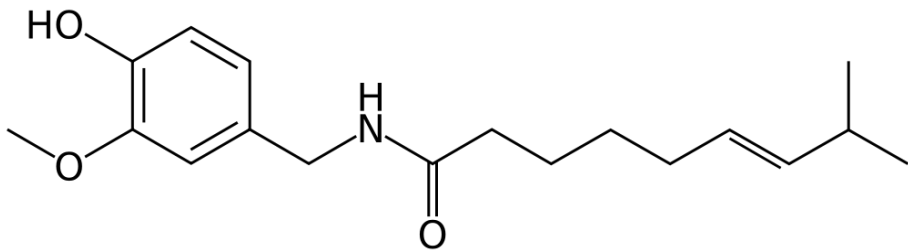
Piper nigrum



Capsaicin

- Amine, irritant for all mammals
- Binds to TRPV and provide sensation similar to burning of call damage

Capsaicin



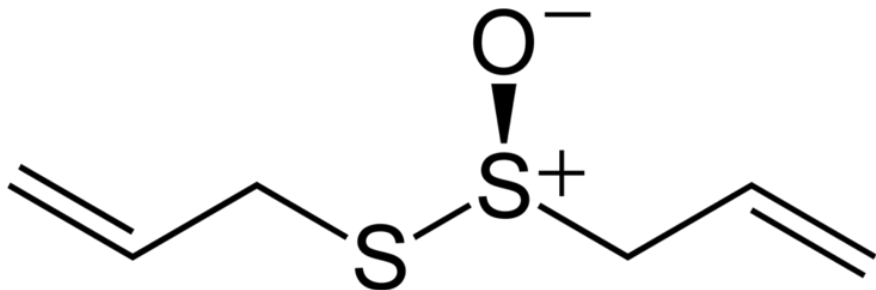
Chili peppers, *Capsicum annuum* and other species

- Multiple species of *Capsicum*, genus of Solanaceae herbs or vines from Central America
- Important component of several tropical cuisines

Allicin

- Organo-sulfur compound with anti-bacterial and anti-fungal effects
- Has multiple positive health effects

Allicin



Garlic, *Allium sativum*

- Cultivated species from amaryllis family, Amaryllidaceae
- Probably originated in West Asia from wild *Allium longicuspis*

Essential oil plants from umbel family, Umbelliferae

- Coriander, *Coriandrum sativum* from West Asia, known from pre-historic times
- Dill, *Anethum graveolens* from Europe
- Cumin, *Cuminum cyminum* from Mediterranean
- Caraway (*Carum carvi*), asafoetida (*Ferula asafoetida*), anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), sea parsley (*Ligusticum scoticum*), parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), and many others

Cumin



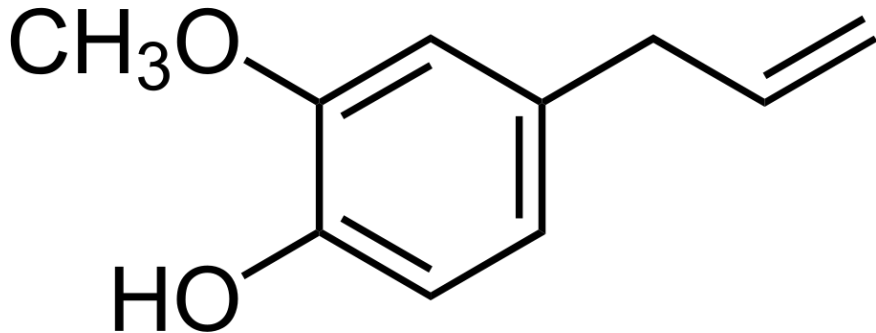
Essential oil plants from mint family, Labiatae

- Peppermint, *Mentha piperita* from Europe
- Basil, *Ocimum basilicum* with wide Eurasian distribution
- Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), mint (*Mentha* spp.), majoram (*Origanum majorano*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), thyme (*Thymus* spp.), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), and many others

Eugenol and similar compounds

- Essential oils with phenol component
- Often provide a burning sensation similar to other spices

Eugenol



Plants with eugenol-like compounds

- Allspice, *Pimenta dioica* from Myrtaceae family, Caribbean origin
- Bay leaf, *Laurus nobilis* from Lauraceae, Mediterranean origin
- Nutmeg, *Myristica fragrans* from Myristicaceae, Indonesian origin
- Cinnamon, *Cinnamomum verum* from Lauraceae, Southwest Asian origin
- Ginger, *Zingiber officinale* from Zingiberaceae, South Asia
- Turmeric, *Curcuma longa* from Zingiberaceae, South Asia
- Vanilla orchid, *Vanilla planifolia*, Central America
- Sage, *Artemisia spp.* from Compositae, cosmopolitan

Bark of cinnamon



Nutmeg



Vanilla plantation



Summary

- Most of spicy plants produce chemicals with nociceptive (pain) effect

For Further Reading



A. Shipunov.

Ethnobotany [Electronic resource].

2011—onwards.

Mode of access:

http://ashipunov.info/shipunov/school/biol_310



P. M. Zhukovskij.

Cultivated plants and their wild relatives [Electronic resource].

Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, 1962. Abridged translation from Russian.

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http://ashipunov.info/shipunov/school/biol_310/zhukovskij1962_cultivated_plants.pdf.