



THE POWER AND VERSATILITY OF 'NDUJA

News brief from Hela Spice Canada

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What is 'nduja?

'Nduja is a spreadable salami that originates from the Calabria Region in Southern Italy. The renowned spreadability comes from the fact that this salami is made with a 60 – 90% fat content in the meat block! It is normally made using belly, lean shoulder and back fat to get the meat block to the desired level of fat. The meat is then ground and seasoned with salt and Calabrian Chiles. The resulting product has a chunky smooth texture, that's deep red and delightfully spicy. The origin of nduja is a bit contested and there are several theories about its provenance. One theory is that nduja takes inspiration from the French sausage andouille, a sausage made from pork tripe and a staple of Napoleon's soldiers during the occupation of Calabria in the early 19th century. Others believe that it comes from 15th century Spanish invaders who brought peppers back from the New World with them. Spain has a similar fermented sausage called Sobrassada which is spreadable but not quite as spicy. However, everyone agrees that the community of Spilinga in Calabria is where the spicy spread originates.



'Nduja is a great example of traditional peasant food. It was the type of sausage where all the scraps and odd bits of leftover pork were ground together and seasoned heavily and then smoked before aging for an extended period. It is a sausage of necessity that has evolved over time to reflect the changing tastes of the consumer. What was once filled with offal is now generally made using just pork meat and pork fat. One thing that hasn't changed is the assertive use of Calabrian chilis.

How is Traditional 'nduja made?

The process of making 'nduja isn't too different from making other sausages or salami. To make 'nduja, the fatty blend of pork is ground, seasoned with salt and dry ground Calabrian chilis (up to 30% of the total weight of the sausage!). The seasoned meat is then stuffed into a casing, traditionally a hog middle cap (also known as an "orba") is used, but any diameter casing could be used. The sausage is then fermented, smoked and allowed to mature over a period from 2 to 16 months. Hela has developed faster methods that allow an 'nduja style product to be made in days with all the attributes.

What if I don't like spicy?

Not a problem at all! While traditional 'nduja is made using hot Calabrian chilis, they can easily be swapped out for high quality paprika or even for Spanish smoked paprika. If you aren't set on making it traditionally at all then let your imagination run wild and look to other corners of the globe for inspiration. Try making a Middle Eastern inspired 'nduja using a Baharat seasoning, let your inspiration take you to Mexico with a mole inspired 'nduja, or a Chinese five spice seasoned 'nduja. We can even help make a fully plant-based version!

What do I do with 'nduja?

'Nduja is broad and versatile ingredient that can work its way into almost any dish where you want a spicy, porky, smoky flavour. It is great enjoyed on its own, spread on a piece of crusty bread. An amazing replacement for the traditional guanciale or pancetta in a carbonara, as a pizza topping, stir it into a pot of simmer beans, use it to flavour a mayo or cut it with ricotta cheese for a ravioli filling. The culinary possibilities are endless.

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