

The Zest Podcast - S6E8

[00:00:00] **Dalia Colón:** Okay, so far.

[00:00:01] **Michele Northrup:** Carrot.

[00:00:02] **Dalia Colón:** So far, so good carrot mm-hmm.

[00:00:03] **Michele Northrup:** Mm-hmm and then the little bit of habanero starts to build.

[00:00:07] **Dalia Colón:** Oh my gosh.

[00:00:08] **Michele Northrup:** There it goes. Water she's sipping water folks. She's, she's chugging water.

[00:00:15] **Dalia Colón:** I'm Dalia Colón. And this is The Zest. Citrus, seafood, Spanish flavor, and Southern charm. The Zest celebrates cuisine and community in the Sunshine State. If you can't stand the heat, then grab a glass of milk. We're spicing things up with Michelle Northrop, better known as the Saucy Queen.

[00:00:40] Whether you love spicy foods or you feel your mouth burning when you hear a song by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, I think you'll enjoy today's conversation. Michelle Northrup owns Intensity Academy, hot sauce company, and co-pro produces the annual I Like It Hot! Festival. This year's event [00:01:00] takes place September 10th and 11th at the Largo Event Center. I visited Michelle at her home in Tampa's Northdale neighborhood to discuss her favorite ways to spice up a meal.

[00:01:11] She also offered advice for introducing spicy foods to kids and for cooling down your mouth if things get a little too intense. Speaking of intense, stick around for the taste test at the end of the episode, thanks to Michelle's husband, Atlas Cortecero for assisting with that.

[00:01:32] **Dalia Colón:** Have you always been into spicy foods?

[00:01:35] **Michele Northrup:** Always, always, always. And I've always been into creating flavors. So sometimes I'd come home, look in the refrigerator, look in the pantry and everybody in my house would be like, oh, guess we're doing

pizza again. And I like the challenge of taking what I have and creating it into something that's unique, but I've always added a little spice to my life.

[00:01:59] **Dalia Colón:** I love that. Spice up your life.

[00:02:00] Are you a fan of the Spice Girls?

[00:02:02] **Michele Northrup:** Oh, yes.

[00:02:05] **Dalia Colón:** They have to be your favorite group.

[00:02:06] **Michele Northrup:** Oh, definitely.

[00:02:07] **Dalia Colón:** When we talk about spice how is that measured? Is there a scale?

[00:02:11] **Michele Northrup:** Yes, there's the Scoville scale, the Scoville units. So that can go as mild as a cayenne pepper all the way up.

[00:02:22] Past ghost pepper to the Trinidad scorpion. And right now they're actually doing a nationwide contest to scientifically measure the Scoville units to find the hottest pepper in the world.

[00:02:35] **Dalia Colón:** You lost me when you said Cayenne was mild.

[00:02:38] **Michele Northrup:** That's the mild, that's almost like black pepper. Cayenne's way low, low, low, low.

[00:02:42] **Dalia Colón:** Oh my gosh. I'm such a weak what's the hottest pepper you've ever taste.

[00:02:47] **Michele Northrup:** Oh, I've had ghost pepper, Trinidad scorpion, to me, like, I'll eat a habanero for breakfast. You know, like, like an apple, like you would have an apple. I would eat the habanero. I love it hot. When we go to restaurants, like say a Thai restaurant and they're like, oh, do you want medium?

[00:03:06] Do you want hot? Do you want Thai hot? I'm like, yes, I want all of that. And then some, so there's like a Saucy Queen hot at my local Thai restaurant. The know to go hotter than Thai hot.

[00:03:19] Michelle's

[00:03:19] **Dalia Colón:** coming.

[00:03:20] **Michele Northrup:** Oh yes.

[00:03:21] **Dalia Colón:** When you say you would eat a pepper, like an apple, do you really mean you would just bite into it?

[00:03:25] **Michele Northrup:** Yes, absolutely.

[00:03:28] **Dalia Colón:** Oh, my gosh.

[00:03:29] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah.

[00:03:29] **Dalia Colón:** Oh man.

[00:03:30] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah.

[00:03:30] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. Let's talk about the festival. Now why do you think Florida or Largo in particular is a good home for a spicy food festival?

[00:03:38] **Michele Northrup:** I think because it's centrally located. So people come up from Sarasota. People come from Orlando, Tampa, St. Pete, and it's a nice centrally located right off the interstate, easy to get to.

[00:03:53] And for people that don't necessarily like spicy there's things for them as well. If you're just a foodie in general, there's plants, there's food trucks that have a wide variety. There's tacos, tacos, tacos. If you like tacos, this is the festival for you as well.

[00:04:13] **Dalia Colón:** What about Florida? I mean, it it's hot. I mean, it's, it's, it's hot temperature wise.

[00:04:18] **Michele Northrup:** Right. And so, uh, as a joke, when I would go do national festivals, people would be like, oh, your carrot based sauce, what makes the carrot so hot? I'm like, oh, well, I'm in Florida. So we're, we're getting pretty close to the equator. We grow our carrots hotter here as a joke, of course. But I think that people in Florida, like things, a little spicy, a little Saucey, and at this festival, we also have beer and wine and sangria.

[00:04:48] So to help cool down those peppery flavors, we have that as.

[00:04:53] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. Why do you think people in Florida, like things a little spicy?

[00:04:57] **Michele Northrup:** I think because of the heat outside, [00:05:00] because it's hot outside. You gotta put a little heat inside.

[00:05:03] **Dalia Colón:** I don't know.

[00:05:05] That can help balance

[00:05:06] **Michele Northrup:** it out.

[00:05:07] **Dalia Colón:** Do you bring hot sauce with you when you're out?

[00:05:09] **Michele Northrup:** Oh yes. I even have like a little holster where my favorite hot sauce always is. And when we go to restaurants, I'll bring like my Chipolte ketchup or my spicy mustard. Always.

[00:05:22] **Dalia Colón:** So you're always, you're always packing heat?

[00:05:23] **Michele Northrup:** Always packing the heat.

[00:05:25] **Dalia Colón:** How many hot sauces do you own? Do you know?

[00:05:27] **Michele Northrup:** So we have products in total, I would say 21 products in total.

[00:05:35] **Dalia Colón:** So you have a lot, you have a lot?

[00:05:36] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah. So we started with just a carrot based hot sauce because, um, I was working in the school at my children's school in the organic garden and the vegetable of the week was carrots. So the assignment for the students was to

[00:05:54] find a way to entice the kiddos to eat their vegetables. So I made a Kickin Carrot hot sauce. I took some habaneros and blended it with the carrots and some onions and lime. Brought it in, made like nachos with the kids and some dips and they loved it. They're like, Miss Michelle, Miss Michelle, you need a bottle this.

[00:06:15] This is so good. And the staff at the school agreed. That weekend, I had a little tumbleweir still left over, and the people at the party were like, this is really good. So what started as a school project ended up as the saucy empire and we decided, okay, we had literally enough money for one batch and it was either gonna be a joke at Christmas where everybody got a bottle of hot sauce or it was gonna make it.

[00:06:44] And like I said before, we've won 57 national awards. And just from a spark of an idea and a carrot in a garden started intensity academy.

[00:06:55] **Dalia Colón:** Intensity Academy. I love that. It sounds like a ninja school or something.

[00:06:59] **Michele Northrup:** Right? Right, like the intense flavors. Exactly. It does sound like a martial arts studio.

[00:07:05] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. So I told some Facebook friends that I will be chatting with you. And they have questions. So we're gonna go over some of those. Maggie Hall wants to know why can some people tolerate high heat and others find even a small amount, unpleasant.

[00:07:18] **Michele Northrup:** That's so true because your pallet or taste buds are, you know, accustomed to certain things. Now I do find that people who traditionally cannot handle heat, they can train themselves. They can train their tongue to handle more heat over time.

[00:07:38] **Dalia Colón:** I've done that with other foods. So I get that. Okay. Barb Sanders on the flip side wants to know if something is too hot, how do you cool off your mouth or your stomach?

[00:07:46] **Michele Northrup:** Sure. Any dairy. Dairy is the only way to cool down.

[00:07:53] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. I've heard that. So that is true. Okay.

[00:07:55] **Michele Northrup:** And then like, say if you were cooking, so this might be a good tip for, for people that when you're cooking and say you're cooking and you used a hot sauce or too much pepper, if you add just a hint of dairy, so it could be sour cream, it could be heavy cream, it could be half and half. Just a little hint of dairy will help mellow it.

[00:08:16] **Dalia Colón:** That's a good tip. All right. Lisa Hordel asked besides maybe hot honey, are there any hot sauces to spice up pizza?

[00:08:24] **Michele Northrup:** Ooh, definitely. So we carry like a sweet chili sauce and I know sweet chilies are very common. I definitely suggest sweet chili sauce on a pizza or like a sriracha. Awesome.

[00:08:39] Or a dry rub. Because there's so many dry rubs and people often put salt and pepper on a pizza. So if you have a dry rub with a hint of heat, you'll have that saltiness, the pepperiness and some spice.

[00:08:53] **Dalia Colón:** Ooh, sprinkling a dry rub. That's why you're the Saucey queen. She's got the tips. Ray Wong asks is there one sort of universal condiment that could be used to spice up a variety of different foods?

[00:09:07] **Michele Northrup:** I, I think sriracha is currently the universal. There is actually a sriracha shortage. I don't know if you've heard.

[00:09:15] **Dalia Colón:** I have heard. And Jim Wiener wanted to know, is that a trend or is that a short term thing?

[00:09:20] **Michele Northrup:** The shortage? Well, I think because of, uh, staffing issues and production issues, I know that we have experienced issues ourselves in production, like trying to source glass and source certain ingredients. It's been very difficult since the pandemic. Typically we would bring out a new product, every two years.

[00:09:44] But we've had to halt that because it is difficult right now in the Saucey world to find certain ingredients on a consistent basis. I'm not saying you can't find them initially, but if you create a new product and you have a certain ingredient, it is hard to resource it over time. So, or glass or plastic, depending on the product.

[00:10:08] So I believe the sriracha shortage currently will just be temporary until the facility can get things going.

[00:10:16] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. Well that is good news. And obviously you're not a physician, but are there any people who really just should not have spicy foods? Natalie Preston is thinking of people with high blood pressure.

[00:10:26] **Michele Northrup:** No, actually. Uh, capsaicin lowers blood pressure. So that is absolutely the opposite, but I would worry for people who

have like ulcers or stomach issues. That's what I would worry about. The capsaicin will lower blood pressure for sure.

[00:10:43] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. And then what about getting our kids into spicy foods? Lisa Dostal wanted to know about that?

[00:10:49] **Michele Northrup:** Oh yes. So I think that that's important too, because the flavor pallets of children, I've noticed, are a little hindered over the years where kids are only eating chicken nuggets or macaroni and cheese or grilled cheese. We need to get these kids to eat everything. Experience Indian food experience, Mediterranean food, not just dinosaur shaped chicken nuggets, you know, and if that's what your kids eat, then try a few different little dips to get their pallets a little more exposed to great flavors, because I think the trend going here on out will be international flare. I think that within the gourmet food industry, I think the push now is to go beyond the American typical flavors and see things that are more international.

[00:11:45] And what you could do too, so say the little Dino is gonna, you know, run through the forest and then dip into the sauce. So you could mix it with a base that your child already likes. So like ketchup, like ketchup or ranch or sour cream or Mayo. So if there's already a base that they like add a little bit of spice to it. So, you know, the angry T-Rex can have a little bite of the sauce as well.

[00:12:13] **Dalia Colón:** Oh, that's cute. Okay. Last question from Facebook Gabe Ortiz asks like wine, do certain chilies taste better with particular Mexican foods? Are there, are there pairings?

[00:12:23] **Michele Northrup:** Oh, absolutely. Like for Mexican food, I would definitely say serranos and poblanos, and red peppers, green peppers, amazing. Any peppers that you can roast, uh, we just came back from Orlando and we went to a Mexican restaurant there. They had the most amazing roasted pepper salsa, where you could see the little flexa black from the roasting. So roasting peppers for Mexican food unbeliev. So great.

[00:12:54] **Dalia Colón:** Mm, that does sound good. Okay. I'm a little nervous because you brought some show and tell.

[00:13:01] Have you ever seen the YouTube show, "Hot Ones?"

[00:13:04] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. You wanna do that? Cuz I have hotter.

[00:13:07] **Dalia Colón:** No no, I do not. I do not wanna do that.

[00:13:10] For people who are unfamiliar, it's the host interviewing a guest, as they taste, uh, progressively spicier chicken wings. No, let's not do that.

[00:13:20] **Michele Northrup:** We won't do that. No, no, no. We won't. We'll do a, a, uh, a friendlier version with some sauces and spices. So today I brought some sauces that you could use in cooking. Uh, so I have a Chai Thai teriyaki, which is infused with organic chai tea. So it's beautiful. Peppery flavor, local honey Thai peppers. It's a great marinade, stir fry sauce, Asian salad, dressing, a versatile, beautiful Asian sauce.

[00:13:56] **Dalia Colón:** That actually, that actually does sound good. I like your salad dressing idea.

[00:14:00] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. I love it for Asian salad. So we're gonna do the Thai teriyaki

[00:14:04] Thai teriyaki,

[00:14:05] **Dalia Colón:** and we're just having. Spoon just a little bit. Is that the best way to taste a hot sauce?

[00:14:09] **Michele Northrup:** Well, you're gonna taste the pure amount, you know, the pureness of the sauce. The best way of course is if I were to prepare a little stir fry or something like that. For now this is a good way. So we're opening up the bottle.

[00:14:24] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. So this is the Thai...

[00:14:26] Chai Thai

[00:14:27] **Michele Northrup:** teriyaki. It has just a little bit of Thai peppers, local honey. The highest grade tamari soy.

[00:14:35] **Dalia Colón:** And you made this?

[00:14:36] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. So pictured this on some chicken breast marinated.

[00:14:41] It smells good it smells sweet. Okay,

[00:14:43] **Dalia Colón:** here we go. You already just downed yours . Okay. It is spicy. What, what level of spice would this be? I'm not gonna make it.

[00:14:53] **Michele Northrup:** She might need a cracker.

[00:14:54] **Dalia Colón:** And these, these, all that you brought are considered low spice.

[00:14:58] **Michele Northrup:** And you are tasting it directly. So if you were to marinate with this, it wouldn't be quite as hot.

[00:15:04] **Dalia Colón:** What's the, what's the pepper that's in out?

[00:15:05] **Michele Northrup:** Thai pepper.

[00:15:06] **Dalia Colón:** Thai pepper.

[00:15:07] **Michele Northrup:** This is the one when I go to the Thai restaurant and you say, oh, I would like more Thai peppers. Like typically they'll put five. I want 13 or 14 of the Thai peppers. Now we're gonna cool down a little with our sweet chili, which still has a nice peppery flavor, but it has the sweetness that helps balance it.

[00:15:27] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. So this is which one is this?

[00:15:29] **Michele Northrup:** This is the Chai sweet chili.

[00:15:31] **Dalia Colón:** It smells sweet.

[00:15:32] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. So sweet with a little peppery kicked. You ready?

[00:15:37] **Dalia Colón:** Not really.

[00:15:40] Okay. Let's do it. Cheers.

[00:15:41] **Michele Northrup:** All right. Ready? Cheers.

[00:15:43] Okay. This one is, I'm waiting

[00:15:45] **Dalia Colón:** for it to hit. It's starting to hit.

[00:15:48] **Michele Northrup:** It'll build a little.

[00:15:49] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. I need a drink. Okay, so that one was that one tasted sweeter. They were both sweet. So what would you put that one on?

[00:15:56] **Michele Northrup:** So this one, typically for parties and such, we'll put it [00:16:00] over a block of cream cheese. That'll help cool it down as well.

[00:16:04] We have on our website or recipe for a pineapple dip. So it's the sweet chili sauce.

[00:16:10] **Dalia Colón:** Oh no, I just wanted to hear what you said.

[00:16:11] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah, the sweet chili sauce, crush pineapple, green onion, and this, it's incredible.

[00:16:17] **Dalia Colón:** Could we, could we put that recipe?

[00:16:19] **Michele Northrup:** I'll send that recipe to you.

[00:16:21] **Dalia Colón:** That would be good. I could see that with the cream cheese or with the pineapple, not just straight up. Okay. Here we go.

[00:16:29] **Michele Northrup:** So next we're gonna go to our honey hype spice.

[00:16:31] **Dalia Colón:** This is a spice.

[00:16:32] **Michele Northrup:** This is a dry rub spice. This is one of the ones that I was telling you would be amazing on pizza. My favorite way to have this is on vegetables, corn on the cob with this, you will never wanna have it any other way because it has crystallized honey. It's called honey hype. And when it roast or cooks, it just melts beautifully. So if you like things like cauliflower, broccoli, carrots. This with olive oil. Unbelievable. So my favorite recipe with it is a whole cauliflower.

[00:17:07] You core out the middle, you rub the outside of the cauliflower, like a bald man's head with some olive oil. Then you honey hype the heck out of it. The whole thing. Roast it in the oven hole. 350. 35 minutes. And it comes out

like a golden crown. It's such a beautiful table presentation and you will never want cauliflower any other way.

[00:17:32] **Dalia Colón:** I love that because I'm actually a vegetarian, so I do cauliflower steak.

[00:17:36] **Michele Northrup:** It's so good. This, you will love.

[00:17:38] **Dalia Colón:** You want something that's gonna be sort of the star of the show, like a steak would be. Can I smell it?

[00:17:43] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah. You want a little taste on your hand? Just a little?

[00:17:47] **Dalia Colón:** Yes.

[00:17:47] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah. Come on.

[00:17:48] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. Okay. So you're pouring it into my hand.

[00:17:50] **Michele Northrup:** I'm just putting a little bit, there you go. Just a little.

[00:17:52] **Dalia Colón:** That is a tiny bit. It's like fish, just fish food. OK. A little bit more, a little more.

[00:17:55] **Michele Northrup:** You were scared. So I didn't wanna didn't wanna scare you too much.

[00:17:58] **Dalia Colón:** It does smell good. I could see this on corn, corn on the cob.

[00:18:01] **Michele Northrup:** So good. Corn, and carrots. Brussels sprout, asparagus. With a little bit of olive oil, and then you're feeling the crystallized honey. But when it bakes or roasts, it just melts so beautifully. With a hint of spice, as you could tell, not too much spice.

[00:18:19] **Dalia Colón:** No. Less spicy than the others.

[00:18:20] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah, absolutely. So this one is definitely kid friendly. Kids love their vegetables with this. So good.

[00:18:27] **Dalia Colón:** Honey Hype. Okay. I might try try that tonight.

[00:18:29] **Michele Northrup:** Yeah, gotta see what the hype is all about.

[00:18:34] Okay. So do you need a cracker or anything? Because now we're going for our hottest sauce.

[00:18:38] **Dalia Colón:** Let's just, let's just we've come far. We've got this far.

[00:18:42] **Michele Northrup:** So this is one of our original sauces. This one is called Hot Cubed because it has triple the habanero. So it is a carrot based hot sauce, and it is carrot, onion, lime, and habanero, habanero, habanero.

[00:18:59] **Dalia Colón:** Okay.

[00:19:00] You know, what's scaring me? Is that the, what the other sauces were in bigger containers and this one is in like a very, skinny bottle.

[00:19:07] **Michele Northrup:** It's because it's concentrated.

[00:19:08] **Dalia Colón:** Right. That's why I'm scared right now.

[00:19:11] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. But I think you can handle it, and we have crackers if you need it.

[00:19:13] **Dalia Colón:** It's fine.

[00:19:14] **Michele Northrup:** We have milk if you need it, you know. Whoa. All right. A little over pour for you, but, you know it smells okay.

[00:19:21] **Dalia Colón:** It's burning. It's burning my nose. Just to smell it. And what's the, what's the spice again?

[00:19:26] **Michele Northrup:** So habanero. Habanero.

[00:19:28] **Dalia Colón:** Where is habanero on the scale?

[00:19:31] **Michele Northrup:** It's low. It's like 150,000 versus millions. On other peppers. So typically like if we eat dinner, I might go through half a bottle.

[00:19:42] **Dalia Colón:** What would you be putting it on?

[00:19:43] **Michele Northrup:** Everything and anything. I could put it on casseroles and soups and stews and stir fries. My favorite way is yellow rice, like chicken and yellow rice with this is amazing. Because the carrot has so much flavor. People are like, I'm used to hot sauce as being tomato based, so it's a little bit different to have carrot based. And it's good for you too.

[00:20:07] **Dalia Colón:** All right. I'm trying to think of more questions so I can stall, but let's just do it.

[00:20:10] **Michele Northrup:** Let's just do it.

[00:20:11] **Dalia Colón:** All right. Here we go.

[00:20:12] **Michele Northrup:** Ready? Cheers.

[00:20:13] **Dalia Colón:** Cheers.

[00:20:16] Okay. So far, so far, so good carrot. Mm-hmm.

[00:20:19] **Michele Northrup:** And then the little bit of habanero starts to build.

[00:20:22] **Dalia Colón:** Oh my gosh.

[00:20:23] **Michele Northrup:** There it goes. She's sipping water folks. She's, she's chugging water.

[00:20:31] **Dalia Colón:** It, it hits you.

[00:20:32] **Michele Northrup:** Oh, it does.

[00:20:33] **Dalia Colón:** It's like, it was waiting around the corner to just to like ambush me.

[00:20:36] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. It's like angry carrots. It has a bright flavor, right?

[00:20:41] **Dalia Colón:** Mm-hmm . All right. I'm gonna grab a cracker.

[00:20:44] **Michele Northrup:** Yes, we have crackers.

[00:20:46] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. So do you find this enjoyable?

[00:20:50] **Michele Northrup:** I love it. Like when we go to a restaurant and they make it hot enough for me, I am so happy. Right, babe. I'm like, oh my gosh, it's too hot.

[00:21:00] I love it. I am disappointed when I go to a restaurant and I order something, and I tell, because they look at me and they're like, oh yeah, that girl cannot um, oh yes, yes. I can. I can handle that heat. So usually they kind of make it a little milder for me, but when the places actually believe me and they give me something really hot.

[00:21:20] Oh, I love it.

[00:21:22] **Dalia Colón:** Do you like roller coasters and things like that?

[00:21:24] **Michele Northrup:** No.

[00:21:25] **Dalia Colón:** This is your rollercoaster.

[00:21:27] **Michele Northrup:** This is my rollercoaster.

[00:21:28] **Dalia Colón:** Oh man.

[00:21:29] **Michele Northrup:** Yes. I love, I love flavor in general. And I think that people who like hot sauce, like other strong flavors as well, like, you know, like blue cheese or things that are stronger in flavor, like we have this one mustard and it's the strongest mustard side flavor, but then it also has Thai peppers too. So I think people who like strong flavors in general, love hot sauce.

[00:21:56] **Dalia Colón:** Okay. I am not those people.

[00:21:59] **Michele Northrup:** What about, um, anybody else in your life? Does anybody in your life like spicy or not? Are you guys all kind of mild?

[00:22:06] **Dalia Colón:** I thought I liked spicy until today.

[00:22:12] Apparently I'm a weakling. My husband's Puerto Rican and people sort of lump all Latinos together and think that they like spice, but really the

Puerto Rican food that we would have is not very spicy compared to maybe Mexican food or something like that. Oh man. This has been a journey. Is there, is there anything else you would want people to know about spicy food?

[00:22:31] **Michele Northrup:** Okay. So for spicy food in general, I think a good way is to come to the festival because there will be such a variety. You can have things that are mild, but have flavor like, 25 different barbecue sauces or things that are fruit infused, which I think is a great way for people to try spicy things like mango based sauces or blueberry sauces, things like that.

[00:22:59] So when you come to the festival, you can sample hundreds and hundreds of products for free. So it's great to come out, get and buy from a local mom and pop company. Cuz we don't have Tabasco featured at this show. These are artisan creators who come up with these amazing blends of sauces and spices and the food truck people. Absolutely incredible. They put their heart, soul and passion into their creations into a bottle and you really can taste the difference.

[00:23:37] **Dalia Colón:** I love that. Okay. At this point, I would usually thank you for, uh, speaking with me, but I don't know. My tung is burning.

[00:23:45] **Michele Northrup:** One more thing I do want to say about the festival specifically is we have fun contests.

[00:23:51] So if you out there make the world's greatest barbecue sauce, hot sauce or salsa at your own home. We have an amateur competition that is incredible, where the public will come in and vote to see if you really do have the best sauce in the Tampa Bay Area. So that's a lot of fun. Also, we have a jalapeno eating contest and I happen to create a hot lollipop.

[00:24:24] 2.5 million Scoville. So you figured this Habanera sauce you had is about 150,000. The lollipop is over 2 million and people literally cry or fall off the stage when they're having this lollipop. And even if you don't wanna do the competition to watch it is hysterical. So much fun. So I suggest you come out. Family fun kids are welcome. It's a free family event for any foodies in your life.

[00:24:57] **Dalia Colón:** All right, Michelle. I don't even know what to say. I'm gonna go.

[00:25:02] **Michele Northrup:** You ready for another shot of sauce?

[00:25:03] **Dalia Colón:** I'm ready for a gallon of milk.

[00:25:05] **Michele Northrup:** Yes, there we go. Ice cream, maybe ice cream for breakfast.

[00:25:07] **Dalia Colón:** Yes, let's go for ice cream.

[00:25:09] Thank you so much. This was a lot of fun.

[00:25:11] **Michele Northrup:** This was a joy. Thank you.

[00:25:14] **Dalia Colón:** That was Michelle Northrup, AKA the Saucy Queen. Michelle organizes the I Like It Hot! Festival, which takes place September 10th and 11th at the Largo event center. Find the link with more information along with Michelle's recipe for sweet chili pineapple dip on our website, thezestpodcast.com.

[00:25:35] I'm Dalia Colón. And honestly, I'm just happy I survived this episode, which I produced with Andrew Lucas. We also get help from Chandler Balkcom, Hana Abdel Magid, and Mark Haze. Special thanks to Michelle's husband Atlas Cortecero who assisted with the taste test. I don't know if I should thank them or not.

[00:25:54] Just kidding. Thank you guys. It was fun. The Zest is a production of WUSF Public Media. Copyright 2022.