

Spicy Stories

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The Spicy Jet-Setter, Chili Pepper Touches Down in Chile

By MARSHALL WINNEBERGER

In an unexpected turn of global produce events, a single bright red chili pepper has become an overnight sensation after arriving in Santiago, Chile, earlier this week. The spicy traveler, dubbed Picantito by local fans, disembarked from a commercial flight at Arturo Merino Benitez Airport accompanied by a modest suitcase and a dazzling blue luggage tag labeled simply CHILE.

Airport staff were initially bewildered to see a solitary chili pepper confidently exiting the arrivals terminal. At first I thought it was part of a commercial or a prank, said baggage handler Ricardo Moya. But it had all its paperwork, passport and everything. It was spicy and official.

According to sources close to the situation, namely, a produce importer with a flair for performance art, Picantito's visit is part of a cultural exchange project titled Spice Routes Reimagined, aimed at strengthening culinary and cultural ties between countries named after food and the foods themselves.

Over the last few days, Picantito has toured Valparaiso's vibrant street art scene, hiked in the shadows of the Andes, and even received a warm welcome from Chile's Minister of Culture, who called the visit a delicious moment in international diplomacy.

Social media is abuzz with photos and memes of the pepper posing in front of iconic Chilean landmarks. One viral post shows Picantito basking in the sun on a vineyard tour, captioned, Too hot to handle, but just right for red wine.

When asked about future plans,

a representative for Picantito, speaking on behalf of the wordless pepper, hinted at upcoming travels to Hungary and Turkey. He's taking the spice tour global.

One thing is clear, Picantito isn't just a chili pepper, he's a red-hot ambassador for culinary unity.



The UN-sponsored International Moose Census got off to a flying start today with hopes for an increase in the worldwide moose population compared to last year's disappointing figures. Among the traditional early reporters were Egypt, returning figures of six moose, a twenty percent increase on 2011's figures of five, and Uruguay whose moose population remains stable at eleven.

According to Robbie McRobson, head of the UN Moose Preservation Council, worldwide moose numbers are expected to grow markedly on last year due to the traditional moose strongholds of Canada and the United States, with the larger developing moose ecologies also poised to make gains. The largest percentage increase in moose will likely come from China'', says McRobson, The Chinese government has invested heavily in moose infrastructure over the past decade, and their commitment to macrofauna is beginning to pay dividends''. Since 2004 China has expanded moose pasture from 1.5% of arable land to nearly 3.648% and moose numbers are expected to rise to 60,000 making China a net moose exporter for the first time. This is good news for neighbouring Mongolia, a barren moose-wasteland whose inhabitants nonetheless have an insatiable desire for the creatures. The in-

crease in Beijing-Ulanbataar trade is anticipated to relieve pressure on the relatively strained Russian suppliers, but increase Mongolia's imbalance of trade with its larger neighbour.

Historically the only competitor to China in the far eastern moose markets has been Singapore but the tiny island nation is set to report a net loss, expecting a decrease of more than five percent on last year's 50,000 moose counted. The head of Singapore's Agency for Agriculture, Jing-Feng Lau, explained to an incredulous Singaporean parliament yesterday that bad weather had contributed to this season's poor showing, most notably when a cargo of 150 moose were swept out into the Indian ocean in a monsoon.

Yet again the global demand for moose will be met largely by the US and Canada. The recession-hit States is taking comfort in its moose growth figures with gross production expected to break 700,000 and net exports to grow by 2%. The worldwide dominance of Canada shows no signs of abating though with this year's moose population expected to match last year's record figures of one hundred million billion.

Europe's rise as an international moose power will slow slightly this year as a response to the European Union's move towards standardising the European moose. Stringent quality controls are holding back the development of the eastern european populations compared to last year when they contributed significantly to europe's strong growth figures. Norway, which is not an EU member but has observer status, strengthened in numbers relative to the Euro area with numbers of Norwegian moose, known locally as elk'' expected to rise for the tenth consecutive year, particularly thanks to a strong showing in the last quarter.

As moose season reaches its close, researchers world wide are turning to science in an attempt to boost next year's figures. NASA stunned the

scientific community today with the announcement of their discovery that the moon is significantly smaller than previously believed. This conclusion, which is the conclusion of a ten-year collaborative project, will have profound implications for the moose community as the gravitational field is now known to be of the right strength to support moose in orbit.

According to John Johnson, head of the NASA Moon Sizing Experiment the first delivery of moose into low moon orbit could be achieved as early as the third quarter of next year. The technology to nurture moose in space is available now", he said, "all that is needed is political will".

Granny wins World Wrestling Championship

By ROY MCROYSTON

Records were smashed in Nicaragua's World Wrestling Championship last night as 78-year-old Maud Johnson, grandmother of five, became the first woman for fifty-six years, and the oldest competitor ever, to claim the gold medal. She walked away with her million dollar share of the prize money, runner up Tommy Thompson from Nigeria taking half a million, and third place New Zealander John Smith receiving a warm handshake from the umpire.

Having started the tournament a rank outsider she began to impress in her second match when she took US number three Ron Ronson by surprise and subdued him in twenty seconds with her unique move that has been dubbed "Maud's Death Grip". The injection of a new wrestling style into the tournament was welcomed by spectators and Johnson's pre- and post-match breakdances have proved entertaining to fans. However, she was still not expected to win in round three last Wednesday, facing off against title-holder Paulo "Spine-Snapper" Lutti, of Vatican City. Underdog Johnson was soon showing her worth with stamina and agility easily matching last year's winner. Lutti's experience paid off initially as he took the first two rounds, but as Johnson became more confident her superior strength came to the fore and she clawed back two rounds to take the contest into a decider. By this time Lutti's body language indicated that he already felt overawed by the pretender to his crown, and the newcomer took advantage of this to engage a mutual headlock which she held for three hours until the Vatican man retired from exhaustion. The next seven matches were barely a contest as the news of Johnson's supremacy overawed all her opponents who became too intimidated to fight properly.

Nigerian Tommy Thompson is also a relative newcomer to the wrestling scene, but with his 210lb frame he was expected to fare well against Johnson who weighs in at

only 90lb. However Johnson's lithe and slender, some would say scrawny, figure belies her agility and strength which she demonstrated by holding Thompson above her head several times during the bout and throwing him into the crowd once. With the scores tied at 2-2 time ran out and the contest went to a panel of judges to be assessed. They awarded Thompson a C grade whilst Johnson received an A, becoming the first grandmother to ever win the title.

The new champion explained her success as the result of a strict training regimen instituted by her coach and grandson five-year-old Sammy Johnson. "I've been drinking ten raw eggs for breakfast every morning, sprinting fifty miles a day and carrying my daughter's car to the end of the road and back whenever I felt my arthritis was OK" she said. Sammy added "I always knew she could do it. She's my grandma.". The youngster is also her manager and has reportedly arranged sponsorship deals which will dwarf her one million dollar prize fund. Her new contract with headband designer Nike alone is set to earn her fourteen billion dollars over the next year. She will also be promoting Tupperware, Halliburton, the Republic of Macedonia, and Gala Bingo. Her continued participation in the sport is not assured as she wants to spend more time on her bungee-jumping business, and knitting. Everyone here at the World Championships, however, hopes for her return.