

Hitting the sauce

Hi – my name is Morgan and I'm a travelling hot sauce addict.

By Morgan Trimble (@MorganTrimble)



Right: The endorphins released by spicy foods are what make chillis so addictive.

Below: A relaxing view of Lake Malawi at sunset from Cape Maclear.

I recently cried over a hot sauce. These weren't the watering eyes that accompany an authentic Durban curry or fiery Mozambican peri-peri, but real, sad tears. With a heavy heart, I shook the last congealed dregs of my prized Garlic Nali hot sauce onto a slice of leftover pizza. This Malawian magic sauce could improve even a gourmet pie, lovingly crafted from imported prosciutto and stracciatella.

I discovered Nali sauce several years ago on a trip to Malawi, a country known as “the warm heart of Africa” – though it could just as well be called the “warm *mouth* of Africa”. There isn't a table in the country unadorned by a bottle of scorching hot sauce. Emperors of the Nali kingdom, the Khoromana family, have been growing and saucifying the Malawian bird's-eye chilli since the 1970s. These famous petite peppers rank up there with habaneros on the Scoville scale of pepper pungency. Appropriately, the Nali label warns in Chichewa: “*Abale samalani*” (“Friends, take care”).

Nali's cheap packaging belies a quality product which comes in a tastebud-tingling array of flavours. The blazing “Hot” variety is always close at hand, while connoisseurs



have also sampled Mild, Gold, BBQ, Ginger and Curry Masala, each with plenty of punch.

It wasn't until my third trip to Malawi that I discovered true liquid gold – Garlic Nali, the perfect blend of flavour and heat. Evidently, everyone else was already well aware of that, because last year, Malawi suffered from one of its frequent national shortages of the sauce. I

Now that my sauce has completely run dry, I'm in a predicament. I took to the Internet, hoping to find Nali somewhere (anywhere!) in SA and a 2011 post in an off-roading forum proved I wasn't the first traveller with this problem. One promising response suggested I look in the Groenkloof Spar in Pretoria, which I enthusiastically, but unsuccessfully, did. Thanks for nothing, 4x4Dude76.

Further searching turned up an Australian company claiming to be the only dealer of the sauce outside Malawi. Its owner is evidently a fellow victim of Nali's addictive zing. With the click of a mouse and the forking over of credit card details, a small bottle of Garlic Nali would be heading my way. Oh, the joys of the online global marketplace! The catch? Shipping cost nearly \$100 and while I was still deliberating, the website sold out of Garlic Nali.

So I'm saving for a trip back to the warm heart and mouth of Africa. Meanwhile I'll nurse bottles of Thai Sriracha, peri-peri from Inhambane and Tabasco from, well, Tabasco. Travel and hot sauce are equally addictive: once you've tasted them, life is bland without them. *Abale samalani*, indeed. 🌶️

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spent a frustrating week on the Lake Malawi beach at Cape Maclear, unable to get my fix. Our choice of restaurant each evening depended on which second-best Nali flavour it offered.

Back in Lilongwe, I found a supermarket that had just received a fresh shipment of Garlic Nali. I bought three normal-sized bottles for friends in SA (which I later handed out grudgingly). I also grabbed a jumbo bottle for myself. As my friends' Nali ran out, I became increasingly protective over my own dwindling stash. I rationed servings to tiny drops and hid the precious elixir away.

