Bell peppers go through a spectrum of colours as they ripen – here we look at the compounds behind their colour, aroma, and flavour.

**Bell Pepper Colour Chemistry**

Chlorophyll, used by plants for photosynthesis, gives bell peppers their initial green colour. As the pepper ripens, these are decomposed, and a range of carotenoid pigments appear. These include lutein, violaxanthin, and beta-carotene, which give yellow and orange hues. Eventually red carotenoid pigments including capsanthin and capsorubin appear. These red pigments are almost exclusively found in peppers.

**Bell Pepper Aroma**

The aroma of bell peppers also develops as they ripen. In green peppers, the characteristic smell is largely due to a single chemical, 2-methoxy-3-isobutylpyrazine (“bell pepper pyrazine”). Other minor contributors include (E,Z)-2,6-nonadienal (“cucumber aldehyde”). The concentrations of most volatile compounds drop during ripening, with the exception of (E)-2-hexenal and (E)-2-hexenol, lending a sweeter, fruitier note to the aroma.