

PEPPER, BELL/SWEET



SWEET PEPPERS are related to tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, and tomatillos. They come in a wonderful array of colors, shapes, and sizes. Most peppers are green when they are young, and turn red, yellow, orange, or purple as they ripen. The flavor also changes with the color. Green peppers are usually bitter and sharp. As the fruit matures, its flavor becomes more mild and sweet. Peppers, native to Central and South America, are a warm season crop and are available in the Northeast from midsummer into the fall.

STORAGE

- ◆ Peppers will keep for **one or two weeks** stored unwashed in a paper bag in the refrigerator drawer.
- ◆ **To freeze**, wash and dry the peppers, cut into pieces, and place in freezer bags or airtight containers. Peppers are one of the few vegetables that do not need to be blanched before freezing.

PREPARATION

- ◆ Wash peppers under cold running water. For slicing, cut in half from top to bottom, remove cap and seed mass with your fingers. **For stuffing**, cut a circle around the cap and pull it off, along with most of the seeds. Rinse remaining seeds out before stuffing.
- ◆ **To roast**, leave peppers whole. Hold above a flame on the stove or place on a grill, turning frequently, until the skin is blistered. Allow to cool in a covered bowl or in a paper bag, then remove skin, stem and seeds.
- ◆ Sweet peppers are great raw, served as **part of a vegetable platter, in a salad, or on sandwiches**.
- ◆ Peppers can also be **steamed or sautéed and added to soups, stews, casseroles, omelets, quiches, or stir-fries**.

Nutritional Information

Peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C and contain levels of vitamin A that increase from moderate to high as the fruit ripens. Vitamin A is important for vision, bone development and healthy skin. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption.

Sweet Pepper Recipes

Skillet Peppers and Potatoes

- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 cups thickly sliced or chopped bell peppers
- 2 cups peeled and roughly chopped potatoes
- 2/3 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoons parsley or rosemary
- 1/2 cup shredded low-fat cheese



In a large pan, heat oil . Add garlic and peppers, cook about 5 minutes. Add potatoes, sauté about 5 more minutes. Add water and herbs, cover and simmer about 15 minutes. When potatoes are tender, top with shredded cheese. Serve when cheese is melted.

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Stuffed Peppers

- 6 peppers, washed and tops cut off to make lids
- Lean ground beef (optional)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 2 cups tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup fresh tomatoes, chopped
- Herbs to taste—thyme, oregano, Italian seasoning
- Salt and pepper to taste



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove seeds from peppers and wash inside. (Be careful not to break the pepper.) Turn pepper upside down to drain. In a large skillet, brown beef (optional), onion and garlic. Add rice, tomato sauce and fresh tomatoes. Season with salt, pepper and herbs. Mix well. Fill peppers with rice mixture and put on pepper top lids. Place stuffed peppers in a baking dish, adding about 1/4 inch of water to the pan. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour.

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African-Style Peppers and Spinach

- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium pepper, chopped
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 1 pound fresh spinach, washed and dried, stems removed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup peanut butter



In a medium saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat . Add onion and pepper, cook until tender. Add tomato and spinach. Cover pan and simmer until spinach is tender (about 5 minutes) Stir in salt, pepper and peanut butter. Cook until all is heated through.

Recipe adapted from [Urban Organics Today](#) Newsletter, Vancouver, Canada, October 26- November 2, 1998.