



Sweet Bell Peppers



Selecting Fresh Peppers:

- Sweet bell peppers can be green, red, orange, yellow, brown, white, light yellow, lilac or purple.
- Choose crisp, firm peppers that are 3 to 4 inches long, glossy and bright in color.
- Avoid peppers with shriveled or wrinkled skin, thin or flimsy walls, and soft, watery, or sunken spots.

Measuring Fresh Peppers

1 pound = 2 to 3 medium peppers, whole = $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups raw sliced = $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups cooked, sliced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw, sliced = $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces by weight = 75 grams

Handling and Storing:

- Store unwashed peppers in a plastic bag to hold in moisture.
- Sweet peppers usually store well for up to ten days & keep best between 40-50°F, so store them in the vegetable bin rather than the main part of the refrigerator.
- Colder storage temperatures may result in discoloration and undesirable flavors.
- Bell peppers freeze well. Wash, core, and cut them up, as desired, then spread in a single layer on a tray and freeze. Soon after they are frozen, loosen pieces and store in a sealed freezer bag. Upon thawing, the peppers will still be crisp and can be used raw, or in cooked dishes.

Preparation and Serving:

- Rinse peppers under cold running water to remove dirt.
- Cut off bruises and decay. Remove the stem, center membrane parts, and seeds.
- Peppers are delicious raw, as a relish, or in salads. You can also enjoy them grilled, roasted, baked, steamed, microwaved, boiled, pan-fried or stir-fried.

Nutrition Facts: One serving = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped raw sweet bell pepper: Calories 20, Protein 1 gram, Carbohydrates 5 grams, Fat 0 grams, Fiber 3 grams. All sweet peppers are very high in vitamin C. Red sweet peppers are also excellent sources of vitamin A.

References: www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies, www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/raw.html, ESHA Food Processor, <http://agnews.tamu.edu/dailynews/stories/CROP/Nov1902a.htm>, <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/vegetables/sweetpotato.html>, Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall

Stuffed Bell Peppers \$\$\$

Serves 4

Ingredients:

4 medium-size sweet bell peppers (any color)
1/2 pound extra-lean ground beef
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 cup onion, minced
1 medium carrot, shredded
3 medium tomatoes
1/2 cup uncooked long-grain wild rice
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 cup fresh basil, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese (optional)

Preparation:

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Have a large bowl of ice water ready. Plunge whole tomatoes in boiling water until skin starts to peel, 1 minute. Remove with slotted spoon and place in ice bath. Let rest until cool enough to handle, then remove peel and squeeze out seeds. Chop tomatoes and smash to desired consistency in a plastic bag.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cut the tops off each pepper; pull out the stem portion and seeds. Clean out the rest of the pepper so no seeds remain and the center ribs are carved out to make room for the stuffing. If pepper does not stand up straight, slice a little off the bottom of the pepper to level it out.

In a large pot over medium-high heat, cook peppers in boiling water until crisp-tender, about 4 to 5 minutes. NOTE: Your time may vary according to the size of the peppers. You want it to have just a slight crunch when you eat it. Be careful not to overcook them or they will be soggy and hard to stuff. Remove peppers from water and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process; drain and set aside.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, brown ground beef; add garlic, onion, and carrot; sauté until vegetables are tender. Add tomatoes, rice, brown sugar, basil, salt, and pepper. Cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook until the rice is tender, approximately 30 minutes. Remove from heat. Place peppers in a baking dish. Stuff hot meat mixture into peppers. Sprinkle shredded cheese over the top of each pepper. Bake approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven, serve immediately and enjoy!

Nutritional information per serving: 280 calories, 8g fat, 3.5g saturated fat, 40mg cholesterol, 190mg sodium, 36g carbohydrate, 5g dietary fiber, 10g sugars, 21g protein.



Approximate Pricing Scale

\$ = \$10-\$15 \$\$ = \$15-\$20 \$\$\$ = \$20-\$25