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Cooking with the Club

with Chef Robert Larios



STUFFED PEPPERS A LA LARIOS

It's amazing that the bell pepper exists for our cooking delight! What a versatile vegetable! It's used in so many ways and in so many cooking styles that it is unthinkable how food would be if it didn't exist. We've all seen the variety of colors – from green, orange, red and yellow, and even the uncommon purple. The colors vary because it depends when they're cultivated – green is the least ripened and red the most; the reds have been on the vines the longest. What's common in all the varieties is that they're all filled with a great dose of vitamin C.

With so many uses for bell peppers, I've decided to stay with the theme of quick and easy cooking by making Stuffed Bell Peppers. This recipe calls for a mix of ground beef, potatoes, scallion, garlic, onion, and yes... pine nuts. Why pine nuts? I like the nutty and slightly crunchy texture they provide. You are free to use other types of nuts like peanuts or cashews. I like my bell peppers roasted so that I can peel the skin-like coating around them. Experimenting with a variety of cheeses is a good idea, too, but any cheese that has an easy time of melting in heat will work, like mozzarella or Monterey Jack.

Chef Larios

Stuffed Peppers A La Larios

INGREDIENTS:

- 1.5 pounds ground beef
- 2 white creamer potatoes
- 1 medium scallion
- 2 jalapeño peppers
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 small sweet Hawaiian onion or small red onion
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1 orange bell pepper
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Your favorite cheese that melts well: mozzarella, Jack, etc.

Cooking TIDBIT

This recipe can easily be converted to a vegetarian version by replacing the beef with any combination of rice, beans or various other vegetables.

[A Cook's Dictionary]



Bell Pepper:

The best known sweet peppers are the bell peppers, so-named for their rather bell-like shape. They have a mild, sweet flavor and crisp, exceedingly juicy flesh.

When young, the majority of bell peppers are rich, bright green, but there are also yellow, orange, purple, red and brown bell peppers. The red bells are simply vine-ripened green bell peppers that, because they've ripened longer, are very sweet.

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Food Fact or Quote

"Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread, & pumpkin pie."

– Jim Davis

DIRECTIONS:

Serves 2-4



1 Have your bell peppers washed and other ingredients ready. Dice your jalapeños, white creamer potatoes, scallion and garlic. Set aside. Roast the bell peppers on an iron skillet, or grill, or in the oven, etc. I'm using an iron skillet. Medium-high to high heat is best. Watch out for the smoke!



2 Rotate the peppers once they begin to brown and turn black on the skin surface. Make sure you get it like this on all sides. This is what you want!



3 Once the peppers have the burned black appearance on the surface, bag the peppers in a paper bag or Ziploc bag and seal. This will help steam the peppers; once cooled, you'll be able to peel the skin easily. Let steam for about 15 to 20 minutes. Set aside. Sauté your diced ingredients then add salt, pepper and pine nuts. Be sure that the ingredients are sautéed to a golden brown color.



4 In the meantime, brown about 1.5 pounds of ground beef. Drain out the fat. Then add the sautéed ingredients to the ground beef and mix until all ingredients are incorporated together.



5 Remove bell peppers and begin scraping the skin off of them. You may even use a knife and your hands to peel the skin. Don't worry if you can't get all of the skin removed. Cut the tops of the bell peppers and remove the seeds from the inside.



6 Grate or slice your favorite cheese and place some inside of the bell peppers. Add the ground beef mixture until it fills the peppers to the brim. Lastly, add more cheese to top them off. You may heat in an oven to melt the cheese some more, but the residual heat from the cooking and sautéing should do the trick. Serve and enjoy!