Harvest of the Month | Fact Sheet

Peppers



Peppers are tender, warm–season vegetables that can be classified into two groups — bell peppers (mild and sweet–tasting), and chili (hot and pungent). Bell peppers come in a wide variety of colors such as green, red, yellow, orange, purple, brown, and black. Chili peppers range in color from green to deep red to almost black. The color of chili peppers is not a sign of the heat (flavor) of the pepper.

Did you know?

As bell peppers mature, their color changes from green to red and they become sweeter. The green bell pepper is a pepper that has not fully ripened and will not ripen after picking.

Paprika is prepared from red bell peppers.

Peppers are botanically a fruit, but are recognized in the culinary world as a vegetable.

Selection

Bell peppers: Look for peppers that are firm, smooth-skinned, with even shape and color and without blemishes.

Chili peppers: Choose peppers that are brightly–colored and firm, but generally light for their size.

Both types: Avoid peppers that are soft, wrinkled, or bruised. The first signs of mold will appear at the stem and bottom of the pepper.

Storage

Store whole, unwashed peppers in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 3–5 days.

Handling

Wash fresh peppers gently in cold water. Remove the stem and seeds. **WARNING**: When handling and preparing to cook chili pepper wear gloves and avoid touching your face.

Nutrition

Peppers are a good source of vitamin C which is important in the body's healing process and may play a role in guarding against heart disease and cancer. Vitamin C also helps the body absorb iron. Red peppers are a good source of vitamin A which is important for eye health and immune function.

School Meal Connection

Green and yellow bell peppers, green chilies (Anaheim, jalepeno), and pepperoncini are classified as "other" vegetables. Red and orange bell peppers qualify as red/orange vegetables. iron. Red peppers are a good source of vitamin A which is important for eye health and immune function.

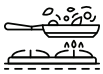
Harvest Season

Peppers are harvested in Pennsylvania from July through October.

Finding Peppers

Child Nutrition Program operators may be able to find local peppers in a variety of ways. Check with your produce distributor to learn what they have available. You can search for products through the PA Preferred website or connect with local producers through produce auctions or farmer's markets. The Food Trust has also developed a Guide to Local Produce in Keystone Schools which identifies producers who are interested in selling to schools.

Preparation



Saute: Cut pepper into strips. Heat oil in skillet over medium–high heat. Stir and cook for 7–8 minutes.



Roast: Cut a small slit near the stem of each pepper. Broil peppers 4 inches away from heating source. Turn peppers over when the skin blisters and turns black or brown. Repeat until all sides are dark. After skin has blackened, place peppers in a zip–top bag for 15 minutes. Remove peppers from the bag and scrape the skin off using a knife. Remove the stem and seeds.



Peppers are great served raw by themselves or on top of salads. They can also be used as a pizza topping or be added to dishes such as pasta primavera, soups, stews, chili, and chicken or tuna salad.



Recipe | Chinese-Style Vegetables

Makes 50 Servings

¼ cup (No. 16 scoop) provides ⅛ cup red/orange vegetable and ⅛ cup additional vegetable.

Ingredients	Weight	Measure	Directions
Canola Oil		2 Tbsp	1. Heat oil in a large stock pot.
Fresh broccoli crowns, cut into small pieces	2 lb	3 qt - 2¼ cups	2. Add broccoli. Simmer uncovered over medium–high heat for 2–3 minutes.
Fresh yellow squash, diced	1 lb	3 cups - 1 Tbsp	3. Add squash. Simmer uncovered over medium–high heat for 3–4 minutes.
Fresh red bell peppers, julienne slices	2 lb	1 qt - 2 cups	4. Fold in bell peppers. Simmer uncovered over medium–high heat for 2–3 minutes.
Fresh carrots, sliced	1 lb 4 oz	1 qt - 2 cups - 2 tsp	5. Add carrots, water, soy sauce, garlic powder, pepper, ginger, and Asian spice. Simmer uncovered over medium–high heat for 2–3 minutes.
Water		½ cup	
Low-sodium soy sauce		½ cup	
Garlic powder		2 tsp	
Ground black or white pepper		½ tsp	
Ginger, minced		1 Tbsp - 1 tsp	
Asian five spice powder		2 tsp	
			6. Critical Control Point: Heat to 135 °F or higher.
			7. Pour 2 qt 2 cups (about 2 lb 15 oz) vegetable mixture into a steam table pan (12" x 20" x 2½"). *For 50 servings, use 2 pans.*
			8. Critical Control Point: Hold for hot service at 135 °F or higher.
			9. Portion with No 16 scoop (¼ cup).

Source: USDA Recipes for Schools. USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website (www.paharvestofthemonth.org) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

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