Harvest of the Month | Family Newsletter

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.

Harvest Season

Peppers are harvested in Pennsylvania from July through October.

Pennsylvania Harvest of the Month

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 | Vegetarian Stuffed Peppers

Ingredients	Directions
	1. Preheat over to 425 degrees F. Lightly oil a large shallow baking pan.
4 bell peppers (red or green)	2. Cut peppers in half lengthwise and remove seeds. Arrange peppers cut sides up in baking pan and lightly oil cut edges of stems.
2 cups cherry tomatoes	3. Halve cherry tomatoes and chop onion and basil. Finely chop garlic.
1 onion (medium)	
1 cup basil leaves slices	
3 garlic clove	
2 teaspoon olive oil	4. In a bowl toss tomatoes, onion, basil, garlic, and olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste.
¼ teaspoon salt	
¼ teaspoon pepper	
	5. Spoon equal portions of mixture into peppers and roast in upper third of oven until peppers are tender, about 20 minutes.

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *More Matters Recipes*.

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

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