ndh
Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health

Peppers

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What's Inside

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

What's So Great about Peppers?

Flavorful and Colorful
Peppers add color, flavor, and texture to salads, pizza, pasta and ethnic foods.

Rich in Vitamins and Minerals
Peppers are high in vitamin C and are a source of beta carotene, potassium, folic acid, and fiber.

Easy to Use
Peppers mix well with almost any type of food, such as, poultry, fish, rice, pasta, as well as other vegetables. Frozen peppers are pre-cut and available all year.

Versatile
Peppers are great to eat raw, stuffed, roasted, stewed, or pickled. Peppers can be a healthy side dish or snack.

Selecting and Storing Peppers

At the Market
Bell peppers are in stores all year, but are less expensive during the summer. Fresh peppers come in many colors (even purple), shapes, and sizes. Green bell peppers are usually the least expensive. When buying other colors of peppers, try to buy them on sale at your local market. When selecting peppers, follow the same guidelines.

Look for
Peppers with deep color, glossy skin, and firmness.

Avoid
Peppers with thin walls (flimsy sides), peppers that are wilted or with cuts or tears through the walls, and peppers with soft watery spots on the sides.

Storage
Store unwashed peppers in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Peppers will stay fresh for about a week. Green bell peppers will stay fresh a little longer than the yellow and red ones.

Why is Vitamin C Important?

Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is needed for growth and repair of body tissue. Vitamin C helps to form collagen, a protein used to make skin, scar tissue, and blood vessels. Vitamin C is also needed for cartilage, bones, teeth and healing wounds. Peppers are one of the highest sources of Vitamin C.

Varieties of **Peppers**

The variety of the pepper and the stage of ripeness determine the flavor and color of each pepper. A red bell pepper is a mature green bell pepper. Bell pepper flavor becomes sweeter and milder with age.

Jalapeño and Serrano peppers are a spicy cousin to bell peppers. These varieties of peppers are smaller than bell peppers. But don't let the size fool you: these peppers have a lot of heat!

Nutrition Facts
Green Pepper

Serving Size (149g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 40	Calories from Fat 5
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	**0%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 0mg	**0%**
Total Carbohydrate 10g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 3g	**12%**
Sugars 4g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 20% • Vitamin C 220%	
Calcium 2% • Iron 4%	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Nutrition Facts
Red Pepper

Serving Size (149g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 40	Calories from Fat 5
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	**0%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 0mg	**0%**
Total Carbohydrate 10g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 3g	**12%**
Sugars 4g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 170% • Vitamin C 470%	
Calcium 2% • Iron 4%	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Nutrition Facts
Yellow Pepper

Serving Size (149g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 40	Calories from Fat 5
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	**0%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 0mg	**0%**
Total Carbohydrate 9g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 1g	**4%**
Sugars 4g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 8% • Vitamin C 460%	
Calcium 2% • Iron 4%	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Did you know?

Red bell peppers have 9 times more beta carotene (a cousin to vitamin A) and twice the vitamin C than green bell peppers! But don't forget a serving of green peppers still provides over 200% of the suggested amount of Vitamin C.

How Hot is Hot?
Scoville heat units measure the spiciness in peppers. The table shows the range of heat found in different types of peppers.

Scoville Heat Units

Pepper	Heat Range
Sweet Bell	0
Pepperoncini	100 ~ 500
Pasilla	1,000 ~ 2,000
Rocotillo	1,500 ~ 2,500
Jalapeno	2,500 ~ 8,000
Serrano	8,000 ~ 22,000
Tabasco	30,000 ~ 50,000
Thai	50,000 ~ 100,000
Habanero	100,000 ~ 325,000
Red Savina Habanero	350,000 ~ 575,000
Pure Capsaicin	15-16,000,000

Preparation **Tips**

Always wash fresh peppers gently in cold water to remove dirt. Make a meal in minutes with a bag of frozen peppers. **Dice** peppers for a colorful, crunchy addition to dips, pasta, or pizza. When **freezing,** first core the peppers. Chop, dice or slice the peppers. Spread the pepper pieces in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Place tray in the freezer for an hour or longer. These pepper pieces will remain separated for easy measuring. Loosen pepper pieces from the tray and put into freezer bags. Place sealed bags in the freezer.

To **roast peppers,** cut a small slit near the stem of each pepper. If grilling, use a longhandled fork to hold the pepper. Turn the pepper over a flame until skin is blackened. If using an oven, broil peppers 4 inches away from heating source. After skin has blackened, place the hot peppers in a ziplock bag for 15 minutes to allow them to steam. The steam helps to remove the skin. Take the pepper from bag and scrape the skin off using a table knife. Remove stem, core, and remove seed from pepper. Roasted peppers add rich flavor to any dish!

If cooking with the **spicy peppers** like Jalapeño, Chile, and Serrano peppers, make sure to wear rubber gloves and make sure you don't touch your eyes! The oils from these peppers can cause your skin and eyes to burn! To make spicy peppers less spicy, scrape out the seeds.

Fitting Peppers into MyPyramid

The **GREEN** triangle of MyPyramid is the vegetable section. Vegetables may be raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, or canned. Age, gender, and level of physical activity determine the daily vegetable need. For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended having about 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. For more information on vegetable serving sizes, go to www.mypyramid.gov.

What does a cup of vegetables look like?
When on the go, it can be hard to know how much food is appropriate. There are some tools that can help. 1 cup of vegetables is about the size of a baseball, or the size or a fist.

Nutrition Facts
Green Pepper

Serving Size (149g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 40	Calories from Fat 5
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	**0%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 0mg	**0%**
Total Carbohydrate 10g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 3g	**12%**
Sugars 4g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 20% • Vitamin C 220%	
Calcium 2% • Iron 4%	

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Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Recipe Collection

Southwestern Pepper Cups

Makes 10 servings

INGREDIENTS

5 bell peppers (any color), halved and seeded
1/3 cup onion, chopped
1 1/2 garlic clove, chopped
3 cups rice, cooked
10 1/2 ounces tomatoes with chilies, canned, diced and undrained
8 1/2 ounces corn, canned, drained vegetable cooking spray
1/3 cup shredded cheddar cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place peppers in boiling water 2 to 3 minutes. Drain. Set aside.
2. Cook onion and garlic in oil in medium skillet over medium high heat for 3 minutes.
3. Combine rice, tomatoes with chilies, corn and onion mixture. Mix well.
4. Spoon mixture into pepper halves. Place on baking sheet coated with cooking spray.
5. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 minutes or until hot. Sprinkle with cheese.
6. Bake again at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 5 to 10 minutes or until hot and cheese melts.

Nutrient Data

SOUTHWESTERN PEPPER

Serving size: ½ Pepper Calories 110, Total Fat 1.5g, Saturated Fat 1.0g, Cholesterol 5mg, Sodium 210mg, Carbohydrate 21g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Protein 3g, Vitamin A 8%, Calcium 4%, Vitamin C 80%, Iron 6%

Shell Pasta Salad with Veggies

Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

10 ounces small shell pasta, cooked and chilled
1 green bell pepper
1 red bell pepper
1 cup cucumber
2 medium carrots
1 stalk celery
1 small red onion
5 radishes
1/4 cup low fat cottage cheese (optional)
1 seven-ounce can of tuna in water (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot of water, cook pasta. Drain and rinse under cold water; chill.
2. Dice all vegetables and add to pasta. Add cottage cheese or tuna (optional). Mix with your favorite low fat dressing.

Nutrient Data

SHELL PASTA SALAD WITH VEGGIES

Calories 254; Saturated Fat 0.6 g; Iron 2.4 mg; Protein 8 g; Cholesterol 1 mg; Calcium 27 mg; Carbohydrate 47 g; Vitamin A 757 RE; Sodium 26 mg; Total Fat 4.0 g; Vitamin C 40 mg; Dietary Fiber 4 g

Did you know?

Peppers, both sweet and hot, were first grown in Central and South America over 2,000 years ago. Columbus introduced them to Europe after his first voyage to the New World. Portuguese traders eventually brought them to India and southeast Asia. Today the sweet pepper is common in most European and Middle Eastern cuisines.

Grow Your Own **Peppers**

Peppers are a favorite plant for gardeners because pests tend to avoid them. Peppers grow best in warm weather (when nighttime temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit). The best time to plant them outside is late May or early June.

Peppers can grow well in pots. If planting in the ground, set plants 18 to 24 inches apart in the row, or 14 to 18 inches apart in all directions in beds. A dozen plants may provide enough peppers for most families for the entire summer.

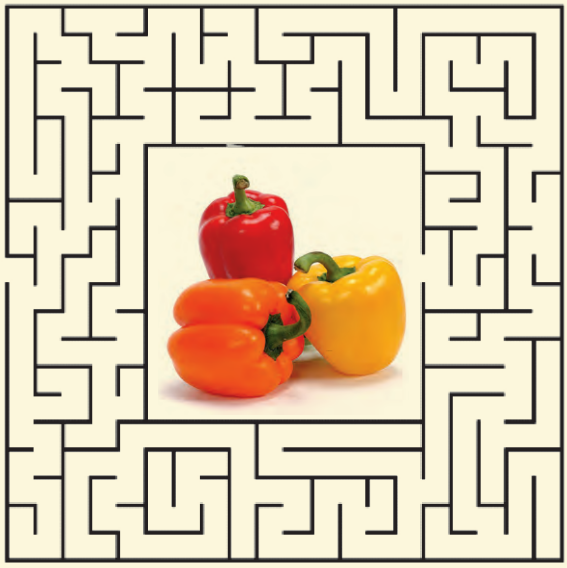
Peppers grow best in a well-drained, fertile soil. Use a starter fertilizer when transplanting. Apply supplemental fertilizer (side-dressing) after the first sets of peppers begin to grow. Water regularly, especially during dry periods because peppers need consistent moisture. Peppers may be picked at any size. Green bell varieties are usually picked when they are fully grown and mature or when they are 3 to 4 inches long. To avoid damage to the plant, it is best to cut peppers from the stalk. Colored bell peppers may be left on the plant to develop into reds, yellows, oranges or browns; or they may be harvested green. When the peppers are ready, they break easily from the plant.

For more information , contact your local Cooperative Extension Educator in the phone book or at www.extension.psu.edu/.

ACTIVITY ALLEY

Pick a **Pepper!**

Directions: Help the Peppers get safely to the plate.



ACTIVITY ALLEY

How Much **Do You Know About Peppers**

Directions: Answer the clues to test how much you know about Peppers.

1. Bell peppers are a excellent source of this nutrient
a. Vitamin C
b. Calcium
c. Protein

2. The spiciest pepper is
a. Jalapeno Pepper
b. Pepperoncini Pepper
c. Pure Capsaicin Pepper

3. The best season to grow peppers is
a. Spring
b. Winter
c. Fall

4. Peppers were first grown in
a. Africa
b. Central and South America
c. India

5. Peppers turn this color when fully mature
a. Black
b. Red
c. Green

6. Peppers should be stored
a. On the countertop
b. In a paper bag
c. Unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator

7. To avoid burns from the pepper oil when using hot peppers, you should use
a. Rubber gloves
b. Plastic spoon
c. Paper towels

8. When purchasing peppers, look for
a. Thin walls
b. Glossy skin
c. Watery spots

9. Usually, the least expensive pepper is the
a. Pure Capsaicin Pepper
b. Red Bell Pepper
c. Green Bell Pepper

10. You eat peppers
a. Often
b. Once in a while
c. Never

Your Score

0-3 correct
Peppers are a great source of vitamins and minerals and low in calories. Peppers are easy to use. Peppers add great flavor to any dish. If you scored 0-3, try to include peppers in a dish this week. Top a pizza with peppers, or use a frozen bag of peppers to make a quick quesadilla.

4-6 correct
Good job! Peppers provide one of the highest sources of Vitamin C, and are low in fat. Peppers come in a variety of colors. Red bell peppers often are a greater source of nutrients. If you scored 4-6, try to include peppers in your dish tonight. Sauté peppers with onions and garlic for a side dish, or chop peppers and add them to a salad.

7-10 correct
Wonderful! Peppers are high in vitamin C and are a source of beta carotene, potassium, folic acid, and fiber. Red bell peppers have 11 times more vitamin A and 2 times more vitamin C, than the green version. Whether you like sweet or spicy, peppers can fit into almost any dish. If you scored 7-10, try to make peppers a main dish. Stuffed peppers or a salad with peppers as the main ingredient will add color and flavor to your plate!

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