



SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

Peppers - Bell

There are literally hundreds of varieties of peppers. Classifying peppers can become confusing, but basically all peppers are either sweet or hot-tasting. Regardless of how they taste, they are all members of the Capsicum family. The familiar green bell-shaped pepper, for example, is a sweet pepper, as are most bell peppers. The bell peppers at the supermarket start out green and turn red when fully ripened, as do yellow banana peppers.

Marketing: Look for firm, shiny peppers with no signs of dehydration and good color (pale color denotes immaturity). Remember the red ones will be at their ripest stage and will not keep as well as green peppers. Pick up the peppers: the lighter the pepper in relationship to its flesh, the more chance that the pepper has dehydrated.

Storage and Preserving: Whole fresh unwashed peppers will keep in the refrigerator 3-4 days. Ripe red peppers will spoil faster. Peeled peppers stored in a covered container will keep 1-2 days.

- **Freezing:** Clean, seed, and mince the peppers. Do not blanch. Freeze in covered freezer boxes. The frozen peppers will be soft, but will be fine for soups or casseroles where flavor is the prime consideration.

Nutritional Information: The bell pepper is a significant source of Vitamin C, and fairly significant source of Vitamin A and potassium.

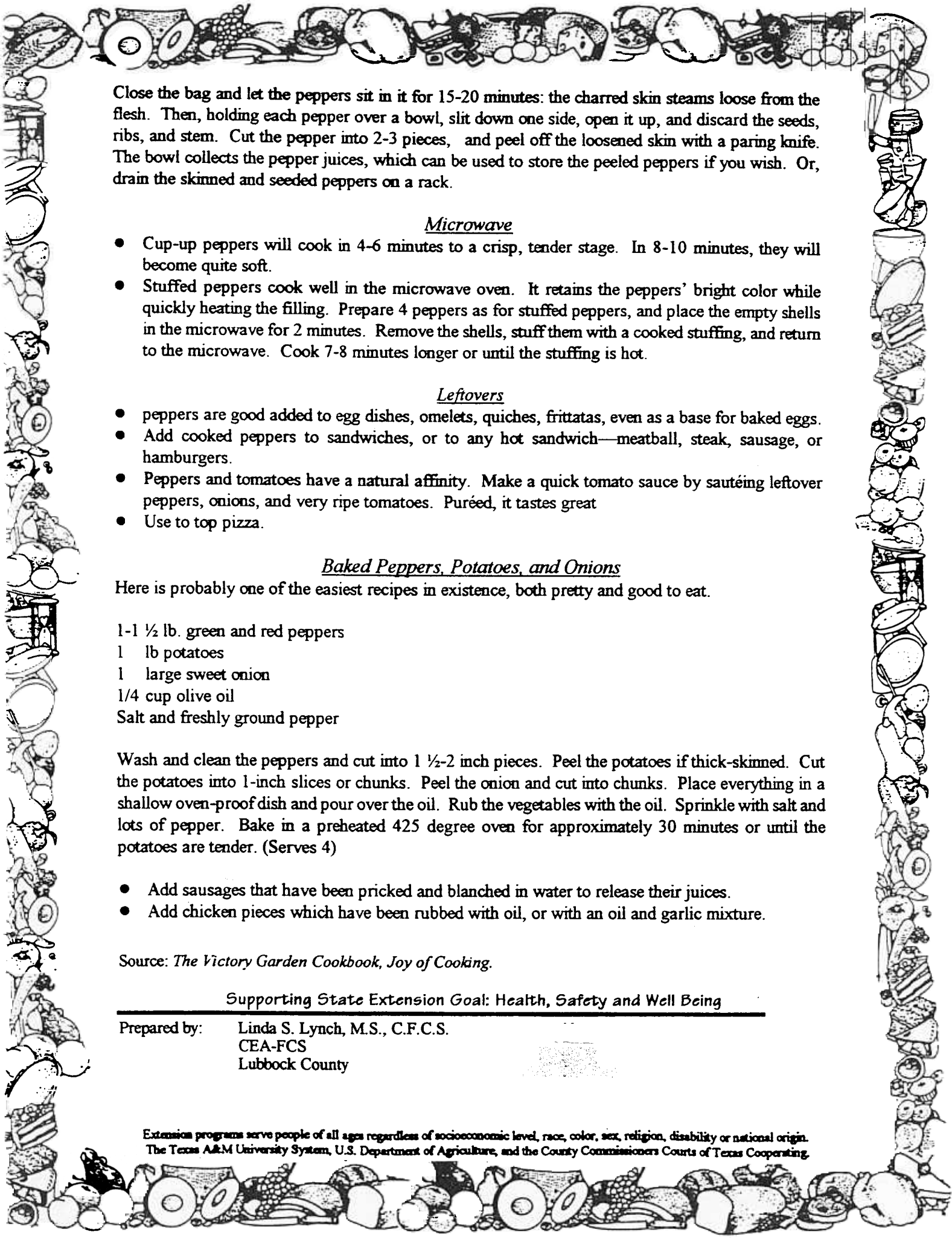
Yields: *Sweet Bell Peppers:*

- Peppers approximately 4 x 3 inches: 3 peppers per pound
- 1 pound peeled and seeded sweet bell peppers = $\frac{1}{2}$ pound flesh = 1-1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups
- 1 pound raw bell peppers cleaned, trimmed, and thinly sliced = approximately 4 cups

- Hints:**
- Select thick-fleshed peppers for peeled peppers; otherwise you will find yourself with little left.
 - Remember that peeled peppers have a more intensified flavor and softer texture than unpeeled peppers.

Peeling Peppers

Start with the thickest-fleshed peppers you can find because they are easier to peel and you lose less flesh than with thin-walled peppers. Lay the peppers in a broiler pan, and broil until their skins blister (2-3 minutes). With a tong or long fork, slightly rotate them and continue turning until the peppers are completely charred, then pop them into a paper bag.



Close the bag and let the peppers sit in it for 15-20 minutes: the charred skin steams loose from the flesh. Then, holding each pepper over a bowl, slit down one side, open it up, and discard the seeds, ribs, and stem. Cut the pepper into 2-3 pieces, and peel off the loosened skin with a paring knife. The bowl collects the pepper juices, which can be used to store the peeled peppers if you wish. Or, drain the skinned and seeded peppers on a rack.

Microwave

- Cup-up peppers will cook in 4-6 minutes to a crisp, tender stage. In 8-10 minutes, they will become quite soft.
- Stuffed peppers cook well in the microwave oven. It retains the peppers' bright color while quickly heating the filling. Prepare 4 peppers as for stuffed peppers, and place the empty shells in the microwave for 2 minutes. Remove the shells, stuff them with a cooked stuffing, and return to the microwave. Cook 7-8 minutes longer or until the stuffing is hot.

Leftovers

- peppers are good added to egg dishes, omelets, quiches, frittatas, even as a base for baked eggs.
- Add cooked peppers to sandwiches, or to any hot sandwich—meatball, steak, sausage, or hamburgers.
- Peppers and tomatoes have a natural affinity. Make a quick tomato sauce by sautéing leftover peppers, onions, and very ripe tomatoes. Puréed, it tastes great
- Use to top pizza.

Baked Peppers, Potatoes, and Onions

Here is probably one of the easiest recipes in existence, both pretty and good to eat.

1-1 ½ lb. green and red peppers
1 lb potatoes
1 large sweet onion
¼ cup olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Wash and clean the peppers and cut into 1 ½-2 inch pieces. Peel the potatoes if thick-skinned. Cut the potatoes into 1-inch slices or chunks. Peel the onion and cut into chunks. Place everything in a shallow oven-proof dish and pour over the oil. Rub the vegetables with the oil. Sprinkle with salt and lots of pepper. Bake in a preheated 425 degree oven for approximately 30 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. (Serves 4)

- Add sausages that have been pricked and blanched in water to release their juices.
- Add chicken pieces which have been rubbed with oil, or with an oil and garlic mixture.

Source: *The Victory Garden Cookbook, Joy of Cooking.*

Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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