

Stuffed Bell Peppers

Serves 4

When shopping for bell peppers to stuff, it's best to choose those with broad bases that will allow the peppers to stand up on their own. It's easier to fill the peppers after they have been placed in the baking dish because the sides of the dish will hold the peppers steady.

Table salt

4 medium red, yellow, or orange bell peppers (about 6 ounces each), 1/2 inch trimmed off tops, cores and seeds discarded

1/2 cup long grain white rice

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, minced

12 ounces ground beef, preferable 80 percent lean ground chuck

3 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 tablespoon)

1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained, 1/4 cup juice reserved

5 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (about 1 1/4 cups)

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

Ground black pepper

1/4 cup ketchup

1. Bring 4 quarts water to a boil in a large stockpot or Dutch oven over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon salt and the bell peppers. Cook until the peppers just begin to soften, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the peppers from the pot, drain off the excess water, and place the peppers, cut side up, on paper towels. Return the water to a boil; add the rice and boil until tender; about 13 minutes. Drain the rice and transfer it to a large bowl; set aside.

2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees.

3. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy bottomed 12 inch skillet over medium high heat until shimmering. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add the ground beef and cook, breaking the beef into small pieces with a spoon, until no longer pink, about 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer the mixture to the bowl with the rice; stir in the tomatoes, 1 cup of the cheese, the parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

4. Stir together the ketchup and the reserved tomato juice in a small bowl.

5. Place the peppers, cut side up, in 9 inch square baking dish. Using a soup spoon, divide the filling evenly among the peppers. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the ketchup mixture over each filled pepper and sprinkle each with 1 tablespoon of the remaining 1/4 cup cheese. Bake until the cheese is browned and the filling is heated through, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve immediately.