

This is a recipe I made up ages ago. It can be part of an antipasto platter, as a stand alone appetizer or as part of a salad course if you add some salad greens dressed with olive oil and salt. It is served at slightly warm to room temperature, so you need to prepare this ahead of when you wish to eat. I figure a half pepper per guest no matter the way you choose to serve it. I buy bell peppers of different colors because it makes for a prettier presentation, but you can go with a single color if you wish, especially if green peppers have too strong flavor. When shopping for your peppers be sure and choose ones that have a firm stem attached.

Bell Peppers Stuffed with Cheese & Tomato

Ingredients

5 Bell peppers, with good stems, cut in half and cleaned out of seeds and membrane
1 Tomato, medium (meatier the better) sliced into 5 slices and then halved
Crushed garlic
Fresh basil leaves, chiffonade-ish
Olive oil
10 pieces Gruyere cheese - 1/8" thick by x 1" square
Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Preparation

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Prepare your bell peppers by cutting each pepper in half. Choose where you will make the cut so that both sides will lay as flat as possible. Carefully remove the white membrane and seeds from the pepper leaving the stem firmly in place. (The step helps hold the cheese in the pepper.)

Prepare the tomato, chiffonade the basil, and cut the cheese, then set up to fill peppers.

Place the bell peppers on a lightly oiled (olive oil pam works as well) sheet pan with the cut side up. Place a tomato half in each pepper, followed by a dab of crushed garlic, the square of Gruyere cheese and the basil. Next using a teaspoon to control the amount, add about a third teaspoon of olive oil to each pepper. Finally, grate a layer of fresh Parmesan cheese over each pepper.

Place in oven and bake for 40-45 minutes until the peppers are cooked al dente and still holding shape. Remove from oven and remove from pan. Set aside to cool.

As it cools, you will see water pool in the pepper. The water is from the pepper and the tomato, and it's unavoidable. Using a clean paper towel, delicately dab at the pools to remove the water. When the bell peppers have cooled sufficiently that the cheese has slightly hardened again, it is time to serve.

Notes: Bell peppers have a strong taste. That is why I use a strong, flavorful cheese like Gruyere. If you do not like this cheese, you should use an aged strongly flavored nutty cheese in its place.

And you can use more cheese if you like but the star here is the pepper, and the cheese is a compliment to it.

