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Stuffed poblano peppers pack a flavorful punch

By Susie Iventosch

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Stuffed poblano peppers Photo Carol McDonald

A few years ago, while I was conducting the arduous task of roasting and peeling poblano peppers to stuff and bake, I had an epiphany. Despite placing the roasted peppers in a paper bag to loosen the skins, it is always so difficult to remove all of the skin without making big holes in the peppers. And, holes render the peppers rather useless vessels for cheese filling. My new vision had me stuffing them raw and then baking the entire thing just like you would do with stuffed bell peppers. The very next time, I tried my new method and have never turned back. It is so much easier and the peppers can be baked al dente or well-done, and they have no holes!

Fast forward a few years to this past October, when my good friend Carol McDonald was preparing to roast her peppers for peeling and stuffing with a fabulous mixture of corn, shallots, cilantro, goat cheese, grated cheddar and jack cheese. Just thinking about peeling all of those peppers for a group of eight can be daunting. So, I shared my new trick with her. She was delighted and we all devoured her delicious peppers. I've made her recipe several times since then and they are always wonderful.

We use frozen corn, but you could certainly use fresh corn cut right off the cob for this dish. Also, keep in mind that poblano peppers can vary a lot in terms of heat levels; even peppers from the same plant can be different. Since we were in New Mexico at the time, we found both red and green poblano peppers and the red ones seemed to pack the most heat. However, you can often find poblanos that have very little heat. The problem is that you don't really know until you bite into them. If that intimidates you, just replace the poblano peppers with Anaheim peppers, which are very mild.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 poblano peppers (can use Anaheim peppers for less heat)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 large shallots, finely chopped (or 1/2 yellow onion)
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped
- 6-8 ounces goat cheese
- 1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 1/2 cups frozen corn (can be white and yellow mix, or either one)
- 1/2 cup minced cilantro
- S&P to taste

DIRECTIONS

*Preheat oven to 400 F. (You can prepare peppers several hours ahead and refrigerate until ready to bake.)

Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray.

Prepare peppers, by cutting a long narrow triangle with the wide part of the triangle just below the stem and the narrow part at the bottom tip of the pepper, leaving stem intact if possible. Cut out this section, chop and set aside. Then clean out the seeds and membranes from within the pepper. Set peppers open side up, on the baking sheet.

In a sauté pan, heat olive oil and cook shallots until translucent. Add chopped poblano and red peppers. Sauté a few minutes longer. Remove from heat.

In a large bowl, crumble the goat cheese and add remaining grated cheese, sautéed peppers and shallots, corn and cilantro. Mix well with a fork or by hand. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Stuff cavities of cleaned peppers with filling.

Bake at 400 F for approximately 25-30 minutes, or until a knife inserts easily into pepper and cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown. Remove from oven and serve hot!

*I have not tried this yet, but am contemplating grilling them on the barbecue in order to get some charred spots on the peppers. Will keep you posted!



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