



Tips For Eating More Fruits And Vegetables BELL PEPPERS

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The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that adults eat 1 ½ – 2 cups of fruits and 2 – 3 cups of vegetables a day to reduce the risk for diet-related chronic diseases. However, only 1 in 10 Americans eat the recommended amounts of fruits or vegetables.¹ There are many different ways to add a variety of fruits and vegetables to your diet. This publication focuses on bell peppers and provides tips on how select, store, prepare and preserve them.

- They can also be stored, sliced or chopped for quick and easy use. Begin by thoroughly rinsing the pepper in cool water and removing any stickers. Next, use a knife to cut around the stem. Pull out the stem, core and seeds (they usually will all come out together). Slice or chop the pepper to the desired size and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator. Use within five days.

Shopping Tips²

- Bell peppers are sold at different stages of ripeness. Green bell peppers are less ripe and will have a slightly bitter flavor. Red, orange, or yellow bell peppers are riper and will be sweeter.
- Choose firm, smooth peppers that are brightly colored.

How To Clean And Store²

- Bell peppers can be stored unwashed and whole in the refrigerator for about a week.





How To Prepare

- Slice bell peppers into spears and eat raw for a tasty snack.
- Chop bell peppers into small cubes and toss into salads for sweetness.
- Bell peppers can also be cooked. Try roasting, steaming, grilling or sautéing them in a pan with oil. They can be combined with other foods to add pizzazz to a dish - rice, beans, pastas, and meats - to name a few.



How To Preserve^{3,4,5,6}

- Freezing: Wash, core, and slice the bell peppers into halves or spears. Blanch them by boiling them for 3 minutes and then cooling them in ice water. Spread them on a baking sheet before placing them in the freezer. When they are completely frozen, move them to a plastic bag. The sealed bag can be stored in the freezer for up to a year. Add the date on the bag to ensure use before the year mark.
- Drying: Prepare the peppers as you would for freezing, except blanch for 4 minutes. Drain and follow a tested recipe to dry using an oven or dehydrator. Always store

dried foods inside sealed jars or bags in a cool, dry place. Dried bell peppers will keep for 6 to 12 months.

- Canning: Wash, core, and slice the peppers into quarters. Remove the skins by blanching them to make the skin blister for easy peeling. For normal canning, use the pressure method for safety, as bell peppers are low in acidity. For pickling, use the water bath method. Canned or pickled peppers will stay good for up to a year. For safety, follow only expert-tested recipes, such as those in the *USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning*.
- Ask your local Cooperative Extension office for more detailed information about safely preserving bell peppers, or visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation at <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>

Why Bell Peppers Are Healthy^{7,8,9}

Bell peppers contain many nutrients your body needs to be healthy:

- **Vitamin C:** Helps the body heal from bumps and bruises and fight infections. [231% Daily Value]
- **Folate:** Helps make red blood cells and helps women have healthy pregnancies. [17% Daily Value]
- **Vitamin E:** Protects the body's cells and helps the body best use vitamin K. [16% Daily Value]

All % Daily Values are based on red bell peppers and on a serving size of one cup.

How They Are Grown¹⁰

- Bell peppers are best started from seed in pots, then transplanted into the ground after the last frost.
- Bell peppers need fertilized soil that allows water to drain. They may also need a layer of mulch to keep soil moist and prevent weeds.
- Give regular, deep watering to bell pepper plants.
- Harvest the peppers when they reach the size and color you want. Remember that the more orange or red the fruit is, the sweeter it will be.



Botanical Information¹⁰

- Bell peppers are the fruit of the bell pepper plant, *Capsicum annuum*, which is a bush that grows over the summer months.
- Bell pepper plants are native to Central and South America, and do well in warm temperatures and sunlight.
- Bell pepper plants are grown as annuals, meaning they only live for one growing season.

Fun Facts²

- Bell peppers come in many colors, from green to purple to brown. There are even black bell peppers!
- Bell pepper plants are related to tomato and potato plants.
- Green bell peppers have twice as much vitamin C as citrus fruit, and red bell peppers have three times as much!



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