



Mini Stuffed Sweet Pepper Appetizers

Savory cheese and bread stuffing create a trendy new appetizer

- 1/4 cup plus 2 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 cups light fresh bread crumbs
- 3 Tablespoons minced flat-leaf parsley
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup finely chopped mixed giardiniera
- 1 Tablespoon capers, rinsed, drained; coarse chop
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Asiago cheese
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt or to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper as needed
- 1 pinch ground chili pepper, optional
- 15 sweet mini peppers, multi-colored red, yellow, orange
- 1 can (15 ounce) diced tomatoes with juice

Olive oil spray as needed

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Warm 1/4 cup olive oil in large skillet over medium heat.

Add bread crumbs, parsley, and minced garlic; sauté for 5 minutes or until bread crumbs are light gold and begin to crisp.

Transfer bread crumb mixture to large bowl; add giardiniera, capers, cheeses, salt, pepper, and chili pepper. Mix and set aside. You will have about 4 cups bread stuffing.

Cut 15 mini peppers in half lengthwise, cutting right through the stems so that each pepper half has a decorative stem end. Remove seeds and white ribs. Spoon filling into hollowed out pepper halves. Fill them generously, but don't overstuff them. You will have about 1 cup filling left. See Cook's Note for suggestions for using leftover filling.

Place 2 Tablespoons olive oil onto 13x9-inch baking dish; evenly spread canned tomatoes and juice over bottom of baking dish. Arrange peppers on top of tomatoes, filling side up. Make sure they are close together. You can get 30 mini pepper halves in the dish. Lightly sprinkle about 1/4 cup bread crumb mixture over peppers in pan. Spray olive oil over the top of peppers.

Bake peppers about 35 to 45 minutes or until the filling is browned and peppers are tender. Remove from oven; let cool until can be handled. Place mini peppers on serving platter; spoon roasted tomato chunks in small bowl to serve with peppers. Serve warm or at room temperature. Yield: 30 appetizers Serve about 10 to 15

Cook's Note: You can use the remaining 3/4 cup filling for preparing more sweet mini peppers in a second pan. Also, you might want to split one whole pepper in half, stuff and bake it in the oven with tomatoes in the bottom for about 1 hour or lightly brown. Make sure to oil spray your peppers before baking.

Measurement: 3 cups cubed bread made about 2 cups soft bread crumbs

Basic Recipe Inspired by: Chef Domenica Marchetti from *Dinner for Friends, Italian Style*

About the Recipe: Many times, roasted stuffed peppers are filled with heavy sausages and pasty stuffing, covered with thick sauces. This recipe delights the eye with its bright sweet pepper colors and are filled with a light cheese bread stuffing. Chunks of tomatoes with juice bring fresh flavor to the dish. Imagine serving these colorful mini sweet peppers as appetizers or a first course. They are simply amazing!