

Crock Pot Stuffed Green Peppers



This recipe is all about using up LEFTOVERS. I don't mean the extra serving from the [Crock Pot Celery and Leek Soup](#) you made over this cold weekend so you can have a delicious hot lunch to start the week, or the corner pieces of [Crock Pot Vegetarian Lasagna](#) that you purposefully didn't scoop out so you could nibble on the cheesy goodness again after the kids are in bed, I mean the small containers of random single ingredients that you can't bring yourself to throw out.

Stuffed peppers are the perfect solution to this ongoing drama of being single. Ingredient, that is.

I did make lasagna last week and didn't have a chance to make homemade sauce, so I bough (gasp!) a big jar of chunky spaghetti sauce. I also rolled sushi and had one sad bowl of white rice left. So I stopped by the store and picked up a few fresh peppers— because even though it was a separate trip, I rationalized that I was actually doing a service by cleaning out the fridge.

DISCLAIMER: this next statement is not political, religious,

or meant to have any greater meaning in life. I don't really believe in gender... of bell peppers. That's right, there's a myth that you can judge the gender of a pepper based on the number of bumps on the bottom of the bell. Male peppers are a tripod with three bumps and females are more voluptuous and display four proud bumps instead. Farmers and cooks have tried to determine if there is a taste variety, increase or decrease in the number of seeds, or what causality actually exists to determine the gender, but I have yet to see scientific proof on this topic. Lack of proof does not discourage me from believing that once again, we can say that size does matter and so do the number of bumps. I think they are called male and female just as an easy way to differentiate, but that there isn't actually a gender connection to the bells, since they grow the same seeds and reproduce in the same way.

I prefer to use the female, four bump variety, when I make stuffed peppers for no greater meaning than I think they stand up easier in the crock pot. If you are going to cut them in half before stuffing, then it doesn't really make a difference, but I like to stuff my peppers whole. When they start to get soft, the three bump chumps tend to tip over and the contents and liquids spill out. So if you can, try to find full, robust "females" to stuff with your meaty goodness. (I HAVE A FEELING THAT I SHOULD REPEAT THAT DISCLAIMER AGAIN HERE, YOU NAUGHTY LITTLE READERS.)

A normal serving would be one full pepper, but I like to make three peppers and then a few extra meatballs. That's right... I turn my leftovers into leftovers. Sometimes, the kids just prefer the meatballs to the peppers and that's fine with me, too. My oldest son tells me he doesn't like peppers or onions, but doesn't realize they are already chopped up and cooked in the meatball. He tells me that dinner was "so good" in the same voice that my nana used to say those words. And then she would suck in air, like it was grabbing up the last morsel of goodness from that bite.

Crock Pot Stuffed Green Peppers

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 hours

Serves: 3-4 people

3 green bell peppers, with four bumps on the bottom

1 lb. 80/20 ground beef

1/4 sweet onion, finely chopped = about 1/2 cup total

2 c. cooked [white medium-grain rice](#)

1 t. dried basil leaves

1/2 t. ground celery seed

2 T. tomato paste

2 c. marinara or spaghetti sauce, chunky preferably

Cut top inch off each bell pepper and scoop out the seeds and pithy parts. Cut the green parts off the top part and finely chop. Mix beef, chopped pepper and onion, seasonings, rice, and tomato paste. Stand peppers up in the crock pot and using your hand, gently fill each pepper pot with meat. Push mixture into the sides so that air is removed and maximum capacity is reached. Use any remaining mixture to make meatballs; place them in the crock pot surrounding the peppers. Pour marinara sauce over the stuffed peppers and meatballs. Cook on low for 5 hours. Serve immediately (overcooked peppers will fall apart and lose all remaining texture).