

# Peppers — Adding Colour and Antioxidants

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Peppers are just coming into season, although they are of course available all year round now, they are at their best during the summer months. They make a colourful and crunchy addition to salads and crudités.

Red peppers have one of the highest vitamin C content of all vegetables. Peppers are also rich in another group of antioxidants, carotenoids, including beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthine. Anti-oxidants help the body get rid of free radicals, aggressive molecules which we are exposed to through our environment, including certain foods, and our own metabolism. If these free radicals are not quenched by anti-oxidants they can cause damage to our body's cells and contribute to the development of degenerative diseases, such as arthritis, cancer, heart disease and age-related macular degeneration.

When buying peppers try to get organically grown ones, as peppers are amongst the twelve vegetables most often found to have pesticide residues. Add raw peppers to salads, serve with dips or roast to bring out their sweet taste even more. For some recipes see left.



## Recipes

### Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables

*This is delicious with pesto and grilled fish or meat.*

- 1 green, 1 yellow and 1 red pepper, deseeded and chopped into 2cm (1 inch) squares
- 1 courgette, sliced into 0.5cm slices
- 1 aubergine, sliced into 0.5-1cm slices
- 100g mushrooms, quartered
- 1-4 cloves of garlic, crushed (according to taste)
- Olive oil to coat
- Balsamic vinegar

Place all vegetables into a large baking tray and coat with olive oil. Roast at 180°C for 20-25 minutes until the vegetables are soft. Drizzle with a little balsamic vinegar.

# Recipes

## Lentil Feta and Spinach Salad

*This salad is ideal for lunch or a light dinner. It is very satisfying and will keep you going for a long time.*

Serves 2-3

200g Puy lentils  
2 red peppers, quartered and deseeded  
150g baby spinach leaves  
100g feta cheese, cubed  
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
2 tsp balsamic vinegar  
1 garlic clove, crushed  
Freshly ground pepper

Place lentils in a saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 30 min or until lentils are soft and drain.

Place peppers skin side up under the grill and cook until the skins are turning black. Allow to cool and remove skin. Slice the flesh into strips.

Combine lentils, peppers, spinach and feta cheese and mix with the olive oil, balsamic vinegar and garlic and season with pepper. Serve at room temperature.

## Warm Broccoli and Red Pepper Salad

Serves 4

1 medium head of broccoli, broken into small florets  
2 large red peppers, deseeded and quartered  
Olive oil for roasting  
2 large cloves of garlic, unpeeled  
3 tbsp olive oil  
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar  
Salt and pepper to taste  
3 tbsp pine kernels

Coat baking tray and peppers with olive oil and roast together with the whole garlic cloves at 200°C for 20-25 minute, until the skin of the peppers begins to show bubbles. Set aside to cool. Once cool remove the skin of the peppers and cut them into strips.

Meanwhile steam the broccoli florets for 4-5 min, they should still have some bite.

Roast the pine kernels in a dry pan for about 3 min until they start to turn golden, take care not to burn them.

For the dressing remove the skin of the roasted garlic and mash the inside. Mix with the oil, vinegar and spices. Carefully mix the dressing with the broccoli and red pepper, and sprinkle with the pine kernels.