

Health Benefits of Jalapeños



If you prefer a little spice in your meals, consider jalapeños, which have been enjoyed for over 6,000 years. Originally grown in Mexico, the pepper is named for the city where it was cultivated. Jalapeños were used by the Aztecs and are a cuisine staple in Mexican dishes. Today these peppers are also grown in California and throughout the American Southwest. Texas has adopted the jalapeño as the state pepper.

Jalapeños are available in several varieties including Senoritas (very hot), Fresnos, Sierra Fuegos (mild) and Mucho Nachos. Chipotles are dried, smoked jalapeños.

Most jalapeños are deep green because they are picked at an immature stage, and are usually about 2 to 3 inches long. These peppers can also be found in red and purple. Red jalapeños have a higher vitamin C content than the immature green. Some varieties have been hybridized to contain no “heat” for milder palates.

WHAT MAKES JALAPEÑOS GREAT?

Nutrition

1 cup chopped raw jalapeños provides 26 Calories, 0.8 gm protein, 2.5 gm fiber, no fat, no cholesterol.

Vitamins

Jalapeños are a good source of vitamin C. Just one pepper provides 10% of the RDI. They also contain B6 which protects the immune system against bacteria and yeast infections, beta-carotene, folate and vitamin K.

Minerals

Jalapeños contain manganese which plays a role in metabolism, bone formation and the immune response. Manganese works with vitamin K in blood clotting. Jalapeños also contain potassium, phosphorus, calcium and trace amounts of iron, zinc and selenium.

Fiber

Just one jalapeño pepper provides 2% of the RDI for a person consuming 2,000 calories per day.

Phytonutrients (plant compounds)

There are several bioactive compounds in chili peppers including capsaicin, violaxanthin and lutein.

Capsaicin is responsible for the spicy flavor. Numerous studies have demonstrated benefits in reducing chronic inflammation, boosting metabolism and potential benefits for the heart muscle. Some studies show the intake of spicy foods is associated with reduced risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Violaxanthin is a carotenoid antioxidant found in yellow chili peppers. Lutein is found in green chili peppers and contributes to eye health.

BUYING & USING JALAPEÑOS

Fresh jalapeños can be found in yellow, green and red varieties in most grocery stores, although green is the most popular. You can buy them fresh and whole in the produce section or canned, sliced, or pickled on the supermarket aisles.

After harvest, fresh jalapeños have a shelf life of 3-5 weeks. Wash and refrigerate fresh peppers. Before using, it is recommended to dip in hot water 131°F for 4 minutes to kill off potential molds or pathogens. Use food safe gloves to slice peppers and avoid touching eyes, mouth or other mucous membranes.

Capsaicin is concentrated in the membrane surrounding the seeds. Remove seeds for a milder flavor. Soaking cut peppers in cold water also helps make them milder.



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Jalapeños can be used in a variety of ways in all kinds of dishes.

- Chopped for salads and salsas, veggie stir fry, soups, stews or chili
- Sliced for sandwich or pizza topping
- Hollowed out and filled with cheese and served raw or grilled
- Pickled on top of nachos or tortilla chips
- Made into jalapeño jelly
- Fresh or canned in baked goods for extra zest
- Muddled and served in mixed cocktails like mojitos or margaritas
- Added to breakfast smoothies

However you choose to use jalapeños, they will add zest and health benefits to your menu items.

Warning

Some research shows that capsaicin in jalapeños may contribute to heartburn or worsen symptoms in those with irritable bowel syndrome.

Vegan Jalapeño Poppers

worldofvegan.com

Ingredients:

- 12 jalapeño peppers, tops and seeds removed, sliced in vertical halves
- 1 8-oz tub of vegan cream cheese
- 1 8-oz pkg of vegan pepperjack or cheddar cheese
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1/4 cup breadcrumbs (or crushed tortillas)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F and line cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place jalapeños in rows on a baking dish cut side up.
3. Mix cream cheese, cheese shreds and oregano until creamy.
4. Spoon mixture into jalapeños. Sprinkle generously with breadcrumbs.
5. Bake 25 minutes until deep in color. Put under broiler for 5 minutes to finish browning.
6. Serve with a sprinkle of red pepper flakes for colorful garnish.
7. Store any leftover filling in the refrigerator or serve with tortilla chips.

Jalapeño Corn Bread

Plantbasedonabudget.com

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| Ingredients: | 1 1/2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar | 1 c cornmeal | 1 can sweet corn, drained |
| | 1 c soy or almond milk | 1 c all purpose flour | 1-2 jalapeños, diced (you could also use canned, drained) |
| | 1/4 c apple sauce | 1/2 tsp salt | |
| | 2 Tbsp vegetable oil | 1 tsp baking soda | |
| | 2 Tbsp sugar | 1 tsp baking powder | |

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Pour apple cider vinegar into plant-based milk and let sit until curdled, about 10 minutes.
3. In a small bowl, mix together applesauce, oil and sugar.
4. In a large bowl, mix together flour, cornmeal, salt, baking soda and baking powder.
5. Add apple sauce mixture to milk mixture and gently combine. Do not over mix. Add corn and jalapeños.
6. Pour into a 9x7" baking dish, garnish with jalapeños and bake 30 min or until toothpick comes out clean.

REFERENCES

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