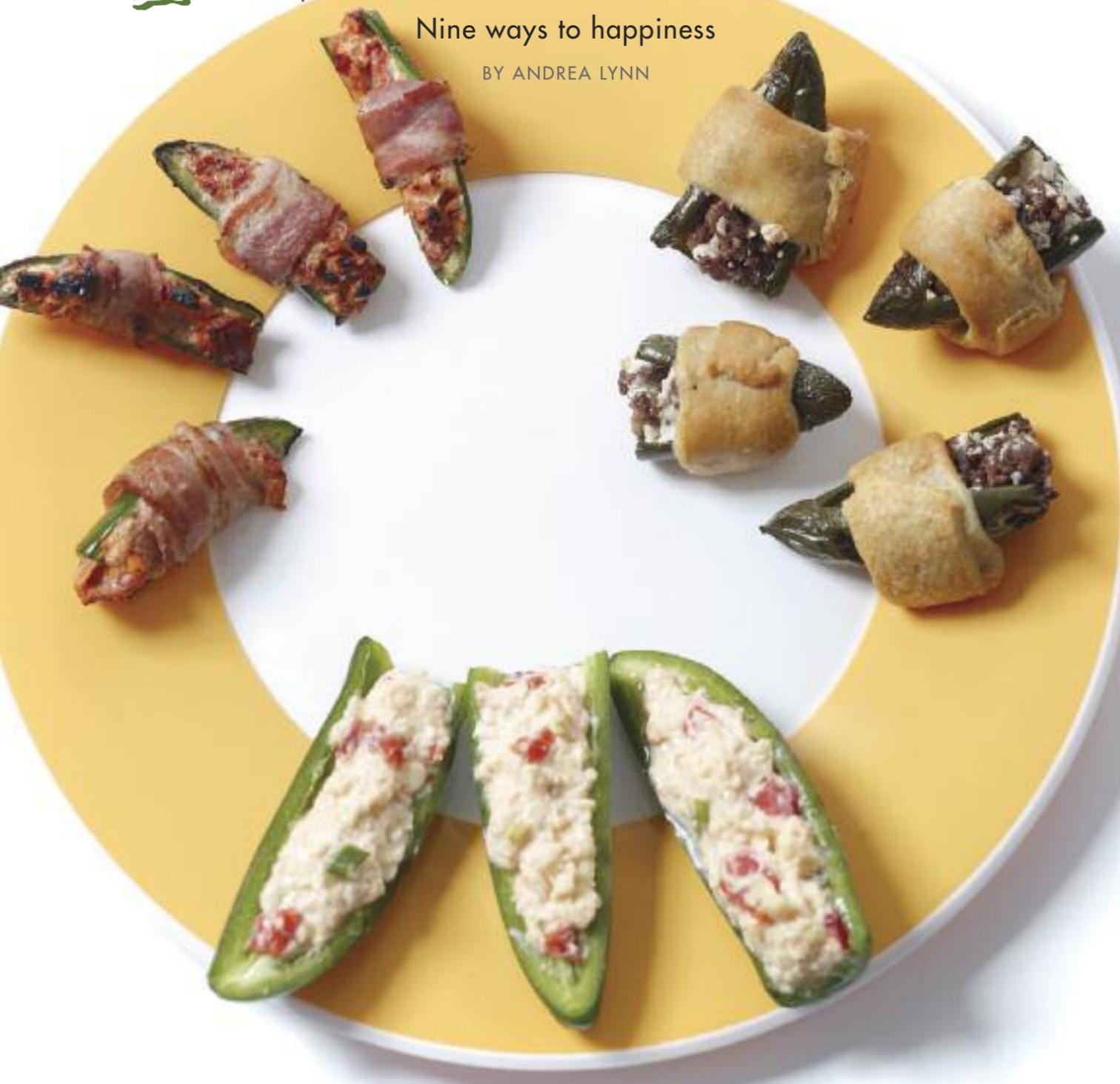


Jalapeño POPPERS

Nine ways to happiness

BY ANDREA LYNN



Texas torpedoes, jalapeño slammers and armadillo eggs are all amped-up names for the humble and versatile jalapeño popper. Whether stuffed with cheddar cheese and deep-fried or wrapped in bacon and grilled, jalapeño poppers are a spicy crowd-pleaser welcome at any gathering.

There's no limit to what can be tucked inside a jalapeño. The recipes below highlight some options like pimento cheese, sautéed mushrooms, ground beef and queso cheese, crabmeat, and pepper jelly, but don't stop there. Just remember to keep the fillings smooth, either running them through the food processor or finely chopping the meats and veggies in the filling, and then let your imagination run wild. After the chiles are stuffed, they can be baked, broiled, fried or grilled. Also, a note of warning regarding the jalapeños: While developing the recipes, I realized that eating jalapeño poppers was like playing a spicy version of Russian roulette—most of the chiles had a steady, reliable mild heat while others exploded on the Scoville scale. But that only lends to the fun of devouring them.

Pan-Fried Roasted Jalapeños Stuffed with Crab

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

Think of this as a crab cake encased in a roasted, pan-fried jalapeño. Serve with a spicy remoulade, if desired.

12 jalapeños, stemmed
½ pound crabmeat
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
1 teaspoon mustard
1 tablespoon chopped canned green chiles
salt and freshly ground pepper
2 eggs
panko bread crumbs, as needed
canola oil, as needed

Preheat grill or broiler. Place the jalapeños on a greased cookie sheet and broil them until their skins are blackened, about 5 minutes on each side. Transfer them to a medium bowl, and tightly cover with plastic wrap. Let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, add crab, mayonnaise, mustard, green chiles, salt and pepper. Mix to combine, and taste to adjust seasonings.

To prep the jalapeños, use your fingers to gently remove the blackened skin. Cut the top off the jalapeños, and carefully remove the seeds while keeping the chile wholly intact. Using a small spoon, fill the jalapeño with crab mixture.

To set up the breading station, add the two eggs to a small bowl, whisk with 1 tablespoon of water and a pinch of salt. Add panko bread crumbs to another small bowl. In a medium sauté pan, fill with a ½-inch of canola oil, and warm over medium-high heat.

Dip the crab-filled jalapeños into the egg mixture, and then coat with panko bread crumbs. Add to the warm oil. Cook until browned on each side, just a few minutes. Transfer to a paper-towel lined plate, and sprinkle with salt. Serve.

Mushroom-Filled Jalapeños with Chile Oil

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

2 teaspoons canola oil
10 ounces mushrooms, finely chopped
4 ounces goat cheese, softened
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
2 teaspoons chile oil
12 jalapeños

Preheat broiler or grill.

In a sauté pan over medium heat, warm canola oil. Add mushrooms, and cook slowly, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has been released from mushrooms, about 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer mushrooms to a medium bowl, and add goat cheese, smoked paprika and chile oil. Mix to combine.

Meanwhile, cut the jalapeños lengthwise, but keep one side of the chile attached, like an open book. Remove ribs and seeds from the jalapeños, and fill each jalapeño with the mushroom and cheese mixture. Secure with toothpicks.

Either place stuffed jalapeños on a baking sheet and cook in the broiler or cook on the grill. Cook 3 to 4 minutes, rotate stuffed jalapeños, and cook just a couple more minutes until jalapeños are slightly charred and the mixture is bubbly and toasted. Serve.

Pepper Jelly- and Cream Cheese-Stuffed Jalapeños

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

Cream cheese and jelly was always my go-to sandwich combination as a child. No peanut butter and jelly for me. In this recipe, pepper jelly delivers a sweet and spicy flavor to this jalapeño popper that

Bacon-Wrapped Jalapeños
Stuffed with Sundried
Tomato Cream Cheese



could almost pass as a sweet treat to finish the meal. Use any type of pepper jelly on hand for the recipe.

12 jalapeños
1/3 cup pepper jelly
1/3 cup cream cheese, softened
salt and freshly ground pepper

Preheat grill or broiler. Roast jalapeños until skins are blackened, about 5 minutes on each side. Place them in a bowl, and cover. Let stand for 10 minutes. While the chiles are resting, add pepper jelly and cream cheese to a small bowl and stir to combine; season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer the mixture to a quart-size resealable plastic bag, and

cut one bottom corner off to make a 1/2-inch-wide opening.

To prep the jalapeños, use your fingers to gently remove the blackened skin. Cut the tops off the jalapeños, and carefully remove the seeds while keeping the chile wholly intact. Squeeze the cream cheese mixture into the chiles until just filled. Serve.

Bacon-Wrapped Jalapeños Stuffed with Sundried Tomato Cream Cheese

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

1/4 cup sundried tomatoes
1/2 cup boiling water
4 ounces cream cheese, softened

1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
6 jalapeños, split lengthwise and
seeds removed
6 pieces bacon, cut in half
salt and freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 400°.

In a heatproof bowl, add sundried tomatoes, and cover with boiling water. Let sit for 10 to 15 minutes until tomatoes have softened. Remove tomatoes from water, reserving tomato water for later use. Roughly chop sundried tomatoes, and add to bowl with cream cheese and hot sauce. Add 2 tablespoons of liquid reserved from the sundried tomatoes, and stir cheese mixture to combine. Add more liquid, if needed, to achieve a smooth consistency, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

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Fill each jalapeño half with sundried tomato mixture, and wrap half a piece of bacon around jalapeño, securing it with a toothpick. Put on a pan fitted with a rack, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until bacon is crisp. Serve.

Crescent-Roll Wrapped Jalapeños with Cheese and Beef

Yield: 2 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium
If you don't have any queso cheese sauce, the pimento cheese recipe on page 57 works wonders as a substitute.

2 teaspoons canola oil
3/4 pound ground beef

store-bought queso cheese dip, as needed, like Lonzo's Jalapeño SpreaDip

12 jalapeños
1 (8-ounce) can Pillsbury refrigerated
crescent dinner rolls
salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat oven to 375°. In a sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm canola oil. Add the ground beef, and cook until browned, about 8 minutes. Drain oil, and reserve ground beef in a medium bowl. Mix in a few tablespoons of queso cheese dip, until cheese is well-incorporated with ground beef. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper if desired.

While the ground beef is browning, cut the jalapeños lengthwise, but keep one side of the chile attached, like an open book. Remove ribs and seeds from the jalapeños, and fill each jalapeño with the beef and cheese mixture.

On a cutting board, unroll the crescent roll dough. Cut each dinner roll into two strips. Wrap each dough strip around the beef- and cheese-filled jalapeños. Place on ungreased cookie sheet, and place in oven. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until dough is golden brown. Serve hot.



*Crescent-Roll
Wrapped Jalapeños
with Cheese and Beef*

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Chorizo- and Potato- Stuffed Jalapeños

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

The grated potatoes are cooked in the left-over oil from the chorizo, further infusing the potatoes with more of that great sausage taste. Most chorizo is spicy, but if you require more heat than your chorizo brings, add ½ teaspoon to 1 teaspoon of cayenne powder or red hot chile flakes.

- ½ pound fresh chorizo, removed from casings
- 3 Russet potatoes, washed salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
- 12 jalapeños

Preheat broiler or grill.

In a sauté pan over medium-high heat, cook the chorizo, stirring constantly to break up the meat, until chorizo is well browned, about 8 to 10 minutes. While the chorizo is browning, use a box grater placed in a large bowl, to shred the potatoes. Transfer the chorizo to a medium bowl, leaving remaining oil from the chorizo in the pan. Lower the heat to medium.

Add potatoes to the sauté pan, cook them in the chorizo grease, stirring often. Season the potatoes with salt and pepper, and continue to cook them until they are brown, about 8 minutes. Add the minced garlic to the pan, and cook for 1 minute. Add the cooked potatoes to the bowl with the chorizo, sprinkle in the shredded cheese. Stir to combine.

Cut the jalapeños lengthwise, but

keep one side of the chile attached, like an open book. Remove ribs and seeds from the jalapeños, and fill each with the chorizo and potato mixture. Insert toothpicks widthwise through the jalapeños to secure the filling.

Either place stuffed jalapeños on a baking sheet and broil them, or cook on the grill. Cook 3 to 4 minutes, rotate stuffed jalapeños, and cook just a couple more minutes until jalapeños are slightly charred and the mixture is bubbly and toasted. Serve.

Canadian Bacon-Pineapple Filled Jalapeños

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

A play on Hawaiian pizza, which combines Canadian bacon, pineapple and cheese, jalapeños just makes the trio even more heavenly.

- 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 5 slices Canadian bacon
- ½ cup finely diced pineapple
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 6 jalapeños, split lengthwise and seeds removed
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat broiler.

In a medium sauté pan, warm oil, and fry the Canadian bacon until golden, just a few minutes on each side. Transfer to a cutting board, and chop Canadian bacon into bite-size pieces. In a medium bowl, mix Canadian bacon with pineapple and mozzarella cheese. Fill each jalapeño

half with pineapple mixture, securing widthwise with a toothpick to keep filling intact. Place jalapeños on a baking sheet, and add Parmesan cheese into the filling of each one. Cook jalapeños in the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes. Rotate, and cook another 2 to 3 minutes until jalapeños are wrinkled and cheese is golden. Serve.

Panko-Crusted Poppers

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

Recipe by Aurora Nessly. Have you ever wondered how the heck to get a perfect crust on those waxy jalapeños? Panko bread crumbs is the answer.

- canola oil for deep frying
- 12 jalapeno peppers, top cap and stem removed, deseeded and deveined
- 1½ cups grated cheddar cheese
- ½ cup flour
- 3 tablespoons corn starch
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup, plus 2 tablespoons water
- 2 cups panko crumbs, crumbled almost to dust (very fine)
- salt

Bring a small sauce pan full of canola oil up to 350°. Stuff the jalapeños with cheddar cheese, filling to the max. In a small bowl, make the egg batter by combining flour, corn starch and egg. Mix with a fork and add water a tablespoon at a time until the batter is thick but workable. Drop your jalapeños one by one into the egg batter, coat all edges and quickly drop into your

panko crumbs before batter has a second to shift. Complete the crust by rolling the jalapeños through the panko until coated on all sides. Patch any missed spots with additional egg batter and panko.

Carefully drop the poppers into your frying oil. Fry 3 to 4 minutes until golden brown and flaky, remove with a slotted spoon to preserve the crust. Let dry on a paper towel lined plate and season with salt. Serve warm.

Raw Jalapeños Stuffed with Pimento Cheese

Yield: 1 dozen • Zest Factor: Medium

The crunch of the raw jalapeño and the smoothness of the pimento cheese is an addictive match.

- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 whole roasted red pepper, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese, softened

- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 6 jalapeños
- paprika, optional

In a bowl, combine cheese, red pepper, cream cheese, mayo and scallions. Using a fork, combine mixture into a chunky paste. Cut each jalapeño lengthwise and remove the seeds. Fill each jalapeño half with pimento cheese, and sprinkle with paprika, if desired. **CP**

Raw Jalapeños Stuffed with Pimento Cheese

