

Hungarian Stuffed Capsicum with Pork, Rice & Tomato Sauce

Töltött paprika — Hungary

Serves exactly 1 | Preparation 20 minutes | Cooking 45–55 minutes

A tender capsicum filled with seasoned pork and rice, simmered in a gently sweet tomato sauce. This Hungarian home-style favourite is wonderfully comforting, with the richness of the pork balanced by the fresh flavour of the pepper and tomato.

Ingredients

Stuffed capsicum

1 large capsicum, approximately 200–230 g, preferably yellow

105 g pork mince

15 g uncooked white rice

20 g brown onion, very finely diced

3 g garlic, finely chopped

3 g flat-leaf parsley, chopped

2 g Hungarian sweet paprika

1 g fine salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Tomato sauce

180 g tomato passata

60 ml water, plus extra if required

8 ml sunflower oil

25 g brown onion, finely diced

6 g tomato paste

4 g caster sugar, adjusted to taste

1 small bay leaf

Fine salt and black pepper, to taste

To serve

15 g sour cream, optional

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Method

1. Rinse the rice and place it in a small saucepan of boiling water. Cook for approximately 5–6 minutes until partially cooked but still firm in the centre. Drain well and cool slightly.
2. Slice the top from the capsicum and carefully remove the seeds and white membranes, keeping the pepper intact. Trim a very thin slice from the base only if needed to help it sit upright, without making a hole.
3. In a bowl, combine the pork mince, partially cooked rice, 20 g onion, garlic, parsley, sweet paprika, salt and pepper. Mix gently until evenly combined.
4. Fill the capsicum loosely with the pork mixture, leaving a little room for the rice to expand. Do not compact the mixture tightly.
5. Heat the sunflower oil in a small deep saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the remaining 25 g onion and cook for approximately 4 minutes until soft.
6. Add the tomato paste and stir for 30 seconds. Pour in the passata and water, then add the sugar and bay leaf.
7. Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer and place the filled capsicum upright in the saucepan. Choose a pot small enough for the sauce to surround much of the pepper.

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8. Cover and cook gently for approximately 35–45 minutes, spooning a little sauce over the exposed filling occasionally. Add a small amount of hot water if necessary to prevent the sauce becoming too thick.
9. Check that the centre of the pork filling reaches at least 75°C and that the rice is completely tender. Continue cooking if necessary.
10. Carefully lift the stuffed capsicum onto a warm plate. Remove the bay leaf from the sauce.
11. Taste the sauce and adjust its balance of salt and sweetness. Reduce briefly if too thin.
12. Spoon the tomato sauce around the capsicum and finish with sour cream if using.

From this kitchen

Hungarian sweet paprika adds gentle warmth without overwhelming the pork. Yellow pointed Hungarian peppers are traditional in many versions, but a large Australian capsicum is a practical substitute.

The filling must be loose enough to allow the rice to expand as it cooks.

Single-serving specification

One large stuffed capsicum, its tomato sauce and optional sour cream — one complete main-course serving.



Polish Crispy Potato Pancakes with Sour Cream

Placki ziemniaczane — Poland

Serves 1 | Preparation 15 minutes | Cooking 15 minutes

Golden, lacy and crisp around the edges, Polish potato pancakes make a lovely simple meal. This recipe produces three modest pancakes, served together as one satisfying portion, with cool sour cream and fresh chives.

Ingredients

250 g floury potatoes, peeled
30 g brown onion
12 g potato starch
2 g fine salt
0.5 g freshly ground black pepper
20 ml neutral oil, for shallow frying; additional oil only if required
45 g sour cream
5 g fresh chives, finely chopped

Method

1. Finely grate the potatoes and onion into a bowl.
2. Place the grated mixture in a clean tea towel and squeeze out as much moisture as possible. Collect the liquid in a bowl and leave it for 2 minutes.
3. Carefully pour off the liquid. If a layer of natural potato starch remains at the bottom, scrape it into the potato mixture.

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4. Stir in the measured potato starch, salt and pepper until evenly combined.
5. Heat a 20–24 cm frying pan over medium heat and add enough oil to form a thin layer.
6. Divide the mixture into three equal portions. Place each into the pan and flatten into a thin round approximately 9–10 cm across. Cook in batches if needed.
7. Fry for 3–4 minutes on each side until deep golden and crisp, adjusting the heat so the centres cook without the edges burning.
8. Drain briefly on kitchen paper or a rack.
9. Serve all three pancakes immediately with the sour cream and chives.

From this kitchen:

Removing excess potato moisture is the key to crisp pancakes. This egg-free small-batch adaptation uses the potatoes' natural starch, supported by a little extra potato starch, to bind the mixture without leaving part of a beaten egg unused.



Maltese Beef Olives in Tomato Sauce

Bragioli — Malta

Serves 1 | Preparation 20 minutes | Cooking 65–80 minutes

Despite their English name, Maltese beef olives contain no olives. Thin beef slices are wrapped around a savoury filling and simmered in tomato sauce until tender.

Ingredients

Beef olive

- 140 g thin beef topside, in one or two slices
- 45 g beef mince
- 12 g fresh breadcrumbs
- 12 g finely diced streaky bacon
- 10 g finely grated carrot
- 5 g chopped parsley
- 5 g finely grated Parmesan
- 10 ml milk
- Fine salt and black pepper

Sauce and accompaniment

- 10 ml olive oil
- 50 g brown onion, diced
- 5 g garlic, chopped
- 120 g crushed tomatoes
- 40 ml dry red wine
- 80 ml salt-reduced beef stock
- 1 small bay leaf
- 100 g potato, peeled and cubed
- 40 g frozen peas

Method

1. Pound the topside between sheets of baking paper until approximately 4 mm thick.

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2. Combine the mince, breadcrumbs, bacon, carrot, parsley, Parmesan and milk. Season lightly.
3. Shape the filling into one or two portions to match the beef slices, roll tightly and secure with kitchen twine or toothpicks.
4. Heat the olive oil in a small saucepan. Brown the beef rolls on all sides, then remove.
5. Add the onion and cook for 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds.
6. Stir in the tomatoes, wine, stock and bay leaf. Return the beef rolls and bring to a gentle simmer.
7. Cover and cook over low heat for 40 minutes, turning occasionally and adding a little water if needed.
8. Add the potato and simmer, covered, for another 20–25 minutes until the potato is tender and the beef is soft enough to cut comfortably.
9. Add the peas for the final 5 minutes, uncovering the pan if the sauce needs reducing. Check the centre of the mince filling with a clean food thermometer; it must reach at least 75°C. Continue cooking if required.
10. Discard the bay leaf. Remove the twine or toothpicks and serve the beef roll with its sauce, potatoes and peas.

Maltese Beef Olives in Tomato Sauce

From this kitchen:

Bragioli vary between Maltese households. This version uses a small savoury meat filling rather than boiled egg so a whole batch of stuffing does not have to be prepared for one beef roll.

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