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PEPERONI IMBOTTITI alla BENEVENTANA

Bread-Stuffed Peppers

Serves 4 to 6

Dozens of pepper varieties thrive in the soil of Campania. The flat and bulbous papaccella is pickled and served with pork; bell peppers are halved, sprinkled with bread crumbs, and baked until caramelized and nearly falling apart; and the horn-shaped cornetto is stuffed with seasoned bread crumbs and gently cooked in oil. The filling changes from village to village—and even from house to house—but in Benevento, and ancient city deep in Campania, you may find olives, anchovies, capers, pine nuts, or even raisins in the bread crumb mixture. Some also add canned tuna, while others prefer Parmigiano-Reggiano, but all cook the peppers until they nearly burst open, spilling out their flavorful contents.

2 cups soft bread crumbs
1 ripe tomato, chopped
¼ cup black olives, rinsed, pitted, and chopped
4 anchovy fillets, cleaned and chopped
1 tablespoon capers, rinsed and chopped
1 egg, beaten
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
¼ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
Sea salt
2 pounds red peppers (ideally long or short horn-shaped red peppers), tops and seeds removed

In a large bowl, mix together the bread crumbs, tomato, olives, anchovies, capers, egg, ¼ cup of the olive oil, oregano, garlic, and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Season with salt, taking care not to add too much, as the capers and olives are already salty. Stuff the peppers loosely to the tops with the bread mixture.

In a large skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. When the oil begins to shimmer, add the stuffed peppers and cook, turning occasionally, until the peppers are cooked through and very soft, about 20 minutes for small ones, 25 minutes for larger ones. Serve immediately or at room temperature.

