

# Extension

## Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Tricky Treats  
October 2013

I love Halloween. All the children in their costumes coming to the door – about 200 in my neighborhood! As a child it was a special day to go pick out your costume or to make it at home. We even went trick or treating in two feet of snow in Colorado one year with my silky store bought Snow White costume leaving a trail of red dye on the snow. After about three houses and boots full of snow we gave in and went home. Today, Halloween isn't just a children's holiday it's a celebration for the whole family with yard displays, lights, elaborate costumes and, of course, party foods in character. Transforming farmer's market finds and seasonal produce into treats fit for the season can be fun and delicious!

Bell peppers make the perfect little container to be carved up into a Jack-O-Lantern, so stuffed peppers are a great Halloween dinner. These peppers have a special little trick as they are stuffed with orzo instead of the traditional rice for a great twist on this comfort food dish. Orzo is a rice shaped pasta and is often used in soups and fillings. Look for it in the pasta section of the grocery store. Another little trick is the addition of zucchini to the filling. Grate it up with the skin and all and then press with some paper towels to remove the excess moisture. This adds even more vegetable goodness to the filling and keeps it moist. The third little trick is to use seasoned diced tomatoes to make it easy. I used the basil, garlic and oregano diced tomatoes to enhance the Italian flavor of the stuffing. The rest is just a little browned mild Italian sausage and freshly grated Parmesan cheese. I used orange peppers so they would look like little pumpkins but you could use yellow or red or even green and when it's not Halloween leave the little carved faces off for an everyday dinner. The orange, yellow or red peppers give a really sweet flavor to the dish which is a good combination with the filling. The green won't be quite as sweet but if you have them in the garden or want a less expensive choice, they are fine. Between the cute little faces and the delicious Italian style stuffing you might even get your children to try these peppers!



For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>) and click on Seasonal Eating. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on "Tricky Treats" will be on Wednesday, October 16 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$7.00 to class to cover the samples.

### Orzo Stuffed Halloween Peppers

4 orange bell peppers

1/4 pound mild Italian sausage

2 cups chicken broth  
3/4 cup orzo pasta  
1 (14 1/2-ounce) can diced tomatoes with garlic, basil and oregano, drained  
1 zucchini, grated and pressed dry  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Cut the tops off the peppers by cutting around the outer edge from the top. Pull the top out with the core and seeds. Cut the core and seeds off the underside of the top, leaving the stem and flesh intact. Pull out the ribs and any other seeds from the inside of the pepper. With a sharp paring knife, take a small slice off the bottom to make them stand up but not cutting through the bottom. Carve a Jack-O-Lantern face into one side and place in a 9"x9" baking dish. In a small skillet, brown the sausage, breaking into small crumbles. Bring the chicken broth to a boil and add the orzo. Cook for 4 minutes, it will be slightly under done. Remove orzo from broth with a strainer and place in a large bowl, reserving the broth in the pan. Add the sausage, tomatoes, zucchini, cheese, olive oil, salt and pepper. Stir to combine well. Fill the peppers with the orzo mixture, placing the tops back on and pour the chicken broth (adding water if necessary) in the bottom of the dish to about 1/2" deep. Cover with foil and bake at 400 degrees for 1 hour or until peppers are tender.