

Stuffed poblano peppers pack a flavorful punch



Stuffed poblano peppers

Photo Carol McDonald

By Susie Iventosch

A few years ago, while I was conducting the arduous task of roasting and peeling poblano peppers to stuff and bake, I had an epiphany. Despite placing the roasted peppers in a paper bag to loosen the skins, it is always so difficult to remove all of the skin without making big holes in the peppers. And, holes render the peppers rather useless vessels for cheese filling. My new vision had me stuffing them raw and then baking the entire thing just like you would do with stuffed bell peppers. The very next time, I tried my new method and have never turned back. It is so much easier and the peppers can be baked al dente or well-done, and they have no holes!

Fast forward a few years to this past October, when my good friend Carol McDonald was preparing to roast her peppers for peeling and stuffing with a fabulous mixture of corn, shallots, cilantro,

goat cheese, grated cheddar and jack cheese. Just thinking about peeling all of those peppers for a group of eight can be daunting. So, I shared my new trick with her. She was delighted and we all devoured her delicious peppers. I've made her recipe several times since then and they are always wonderful.

We use frozen corn, but you could certainly use fresh corn cut right off the cob for this dish. Also, keep in mind that poblano peppers can vary a lot in terms of heat levels; even peppers from the same plant can be different. Since we were in New Mexico at the time, we found both red and green poblano peppers and the red ones seemed to pack the most heat. However, you can often find poblanos that have very little heat. The problem is that you don't really know until you bite into them. If that intimidates you, just replace the poblano peppers with Anaheim peppers, which are very mild.

INGREDIENTS

6 poblano peppers (can use Anaheim peppers for less heat)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 large shallots, finely chopped (or ½ yellow onion)
1 small red bell pepper, chopped
6-8 ounces goat cheese
1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese
1 ½ cups frozen corn (can be white and yellow mix, or either one)
½ cup minced cilantro
S&P to taste

DIRECTIONS

*Preheat oven to 400 F. (You can prepare peppers several hours ahead and refrigerate until ready to bake.)

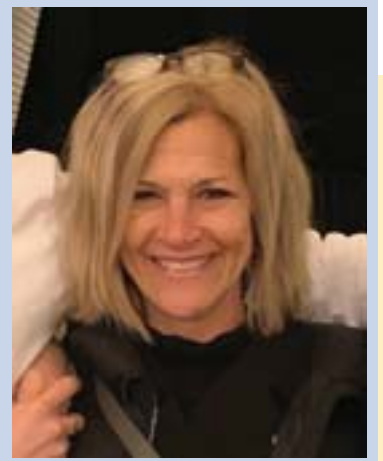
Spray a large baking sheet with cooking spray.

Prepare peppers, by cutting a long narrow triangle with the wide part of the triangle just below the stem and the narrow part at the bottom tip of the pepper, leaving stem intact if possible. Cut out this section, chop and set aside. Then clean out the seeds and membranes from within the pepper. Set peppers open side up, on the baking sheet. In a sauté pan, heat olive oil and cook shallots until translucent. Add chopped poblano and red peppers. Sauté a few minutes longer. Remove from heat.

In a large bowl, crumble the goat cheese and add remaining grated cheese, sautéed peppers and shallots, corn and cilantro. Mix well with a fork or by hand. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stuff cavities of cleaned peppers with filling.

Bake at 400 F for approximately 25-30 minutes, or until a knife inserts easily into pepper and cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown. Remove from oven and serve hot!

*I have not tried this yet, but am contemplating grilling them on the barbecue in order to get some charred spots on the peppers. Will keep you posted!



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This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

Contra Costa County High School Mock Trial seeks volunteers with legal expertise



Photos Jonathan Lance, CCCOE

Submitted by Jonathan Lance

Bay Area soon-to-be, practicing, and retired law professionals are needed to provide assistance to their future brethren at the upcoming 38th Annual Contra Costa County High School Mock Trial Program, held on seven early weekday evenings during late January and early February, in the Martinez Court Rooms. Last year, close to 100 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys and sworn judges, as well as third-year law students volunteered their time with the Mock Trials.

Coordinated by the Contra Costa County Office of Education, Mock Trial is an academic event provided for high school students. The hands-on

educational program was created to help students acquire a working knowledge of our judicial system, develop analytical abilities and communication skills, and gain an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as participating members of our society. This year's case is *People v. Klein* – a young adult is charged with two felony counts: making a false report of an emergency (in this case, commonly referred to as "swatting") and making a criminal threat.

"This program is a great tool to ensure that our students understand the workings of the trial courts and thus the importance of an independent judiciary," says Contra Costa County Presiding Judge Barry Baskin, a long-

time Mock Trial volunteer, who encourages all of his local fellow law professionals to join him in assisting with this year's Mock Trial Competition.

Teams of high school students work with teachers and volunteer coaches to prepare their version of the criminal case, from both the prosecution and defense perspectives. Students assume the roles of trial attorneys, pre-trial motion attorneys, witnesses, clerks, bailiffs, artists and court journalists. Mock Trial judges and attorneys score their performance and provide immediate feedback. Winning teams advance through seven rounds of competition. The county's champion advances to the state finals. This year, there will be 17 Mock Trial teams competing, representing high schools throughout all of Contra Costa County, including Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte high schools.

Volunteers will score two competing schools that argue the case in their assigned court. Each night, will begin with a 15-minute rules and regulations training, then the volunteers will go into their scheduled courtrooms to serve as Mock Trial judge and scorers. The Mock Trials' scorers are made up of Bay Area deputy district attorneys and deputy public defenders, as well as public-sector, private-practice, and corporate lawyers. In addition, seasoned law students are also welcome



Contra Costa County Superior Court Judges Joni Hiramoto and Steven Austin.

to participate. A practicing or retired judge or commissioner will preside over each trial, and also serves as one of the trial's scorers.

"We applaud the hard work and time our students and their coaches put in to prepare for our Mock Trial program," said Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. "In ad-

dition, we are grateful for the continued generous volunteer support we receive from our county's Judicial, District Attorney, and Public Defender offices, as well as so many of our current and retired public- and private-practice attorneys. This successful program would never come together without so much support from the community."

Call for entries for LAC High School Visual Arts Competition



Gallery at Orinda Library

Photos provided

Submitted by Diane Athanasiou

The Lamorinda Arts Council will host its 16th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition from Feb. 14 to March 14 at

the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library. This annual exhibition provides the community a wonderful opportunity to view a wide range of creative, original work by local students and recognizes the re-

gion's dedicated high school art teachers.

Entries for the High School Visual Arts Competition are currently being accepted through Feb. 8. The competition is open to ninth through 12th grade students living in or attending public or private high schools in Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga. The competition is also open to all students who attend the Acalanes Union High School District schools, including Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas, and Miramonte High Schools, regardless of residence.

Students may submit entries for 2D and 3D artwork as well as for photography and digital design. LAC offers community service hours for the project with school or district approval. The online registration form for entry is available now through Feb. 8,



closing at midnight. The registration form as well as the full details of the competition can be found at www.lamorindaarts.org/vac.

Event Chair, Denise Nomura, is looking forward to this year's participants: "It's going to be another exciting year of High School Art! The talent in this community is amazing and we are expecting over 200 pieces. The community is sure to be impressed."



Competition award winners will be announced during a free, public reception from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20 at the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library. A panel of arts professionals and educators will judge and award winners.