

## Colorful, creamy pepper poppers make the perfect side dish



Ricotta & Feta Pepper Poppers

Photo Susie Iventosch

### By Susie Iventosch

Back in the April 1, 2020 issue, we featured a recipe for homemade ricotta cheese. It's really fun to make and so delicious! Since then, we've used that recipe as an ingredient in many other recipes including these delicious pepper poppers.

Mini sweet peppers are so beautiful and colorful and they are absolutely delicious roasted with ricotta and feta cheese. The tangy flavor of the feta is the perfect foil to these mini sweet peppers. Just stuff them and roast them until the cheese is beginning to brown for a perfect side dish to any meal or the main course for any vege-

tarians in your crowd. You can prepare the peppers a few hours ahead of time and refrigerate them until you're ready to bake them for dinner.

If you don't have time or if you're not interested in making homemade ricotta, then you can easily substitute store-bought ricotta to use in this recipe. But, if you have time and the interest, even if making your own cheese at home sounds a bit daunting, this ricotta recipe is super easy and really fun to do. It takes about 20 minutes or so to heat the milk and cream to the right temperature and then it's just a matter of how firm or soft you want your cheese to be that will determine the total time

### Ricotta & Feta Pepper Poppers

#### INGREDIENTS

24 mini sweet peppers in multiple colors red, orange, and yellow  
1 cup ricotta cheese (see recipe below for homemade ricotta)  
1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese  
1 teaspoon lemon pepper  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon white pepper  
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 F. Spray a baking sheet or casserole dish with PAM or equivalent.

Prepare the peppers:

Lay peppers on a cutting board. Cut a small triangle on the top side of each of the peppers (see photo) with the wide part at the top near the stem. Leave the stem intact if possible. Remove the triangle and set aside for your salad tonight. Now, scoop out any remaining seeds with a grapefruit spoon. Set aside. (You can also just take the easy route and cut them in half before filling them.)

Mix all remaining ingredients in a small bowl.

#### Assembly :

Using a small spoon or pastry bag, stuff peppers to the top of the opening with the cheese mixture. Place peppers, stuffing side up, on your baking sheet or casserole dish.

Bake at 400 F for approximately 15-20 minutes, or until cheese is bubbling and beginning to brown.

Serve piping hot!

### Homemade Ricotta Cheese

#### INGREDIENTS

8 cups whole milk  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
1 1/2 teaspoons sea salt  
2 tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon juice (strained pulp out)  
2 tablespoons rice vinegar (can also use white wine vinegar)

#### DIRECTIONS

In a medium-large pot, slowly heat the milk and cream together until it reaches 185 F, stirring occasionally along the way. The best way to measure the temperature is to clip a candy or instant-read thermometer to the side of the pot when you first begin the process.

While the milk mixture is heating, line a colander with cheesecloth and sit it over a bowl. Set aside. Mix the lemon juice and vinegar in a small container.

Once the temperature reaches 185 F, remove the pot from the heat and immediately stir in the salt. Slowly drizzle the lemon juice and rice vinegar over the top. Stir gently with a silicon spoon or spatula until the curds begin to form.

Ladle the curds into the colander and roll any loose edges of cheesecloth over the top of the cheese. Allow to drain until it reaches the consistency you desire. This can take anywhere from 20 minutes to a few hours, depending upon how firm you like your ricotta. Store the cheese in an airtight container for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

involved.

Whole milk makes much better ricotta than low-fat milk, and it's best to find one that is not ultra-pasteurized. Ultra-pasteurized milk is not recommended because it has already

been heated to a very high temperature of 280 degrees Fahrenheit which prevents it from curdling properly. Normally-pasteurized milk has been heated to a much lower temperature of between 145

and 161 degrees. You need the curds and whey to separate for making ricotta, so just stick to normally-pasteurized milk for this project.



Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://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. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



## Lamorinda volunteers travel abroad to aid Ukrainian refugees

### By Sora O'Doherty

Since the outset of the war in Ukraine, residents of Lamorinda have been trying to find ways to help Ukrainian refugees: those who make it here, those still in Ukraine, or those who make it to Poland.

Charles MacNulty, long-time Moraga resident known locally for his volunteer work with, among others, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, wanted to make a difference, if he could. He first attempted to gather medical supplies to ship to Poland, but there were in-

surmountable obstacles. Failing that, MacNulty thought, if he couldn't send help, he would go and help personally.

MacNulty and his wife had planned a river cruise in Europe in May, and MacNulty determined that he would go to Poland after the cruise and offer his assistance. A former medic during the Vietnam war, a certified drone pilot and fork lift operator, he felt that he had volunteer skills that could be useful. Before leaving, he reached out to The International Committee of the Red Cross and passed a background check to allow him to

volunteer.

Leaving his cruise in Basil, Switzerland, MacNulty made his way to Warsaw where he contacted the Red Cross. He was directed to Lublin, and from there he rented a car to travel to Dolhobychow, Zosin, and Hrubieszow. While there he was used to ferry people from one location to another. He met volunteers in Poland from many countries, including Italy, Australia, Ireland, and the U.S. Most of the other volunteers spoke Polish, which

MacNulty does not. The volunteers and the Red Cross staff welcomed refugees from Ukraine and provided them with food and supplies. To MacNulty's surprise, many of the Ukrainians had already been to Poland and returned to Ukraine, but were now coming back to buy cars and trucks, since Ukraine had dropped the tax on bringing in vehicles. The line to return to Ukraine was some 15 miles long, and moved about a mile or two per day. However, MacNulty ob-

served that everyone was patient and polite.

MacNulty spent about 10 days in Poland, and was tempted to stay longer. However, the help that was needed at that point involved driving into Ukraine, where the Russians were not welcoming. "I've been shot at," MacNulty recalled, "and I didn't like it!" The International Red Cross is still looking for people to volunteer in Poland in aid of Ukrainian refugees.

#### Link for more information:

<https://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/international-services.html>

## Orinda garden club members once again featured in de Young Museum's Bouquets to Art



Diana Kennedy & Phoebe Kahl

### By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda Garden club members Diana Kennedy and Phoebe Kahl have represented Orinda Garden Club for more than 20 years and will once again be featured in the annual Bouquets to Art exhibition in the de Young Museum of art in San Francisco this week. The pair of Orinda gardeners were assigned a piece entitled "Lake Basin in the High Sierras" by Chiuri Obata located in Gallery 11. The exhibition is open to the public through June 12 at 5 p.m.

Kennedy explained that

some of the flowers they used are from the San Francisco Flower Market, a few from a vendor in Southern California called Haus of Stems and the remainder from their own gardens. "Our containers belong to us," she said, and "gourds were sprayed blue to compliment the art work and placed in front and in the back of our design. Participants are permitted to refresh their designs early in the morning before the museum is open to the public.

"It is always a pleasure to be asked to be a part of Bouquets to Art," Kennedy added.



Mari Tischenko's completed bouquet

Photos Sora O'Doherty

Garden club member Mari Tischenko also participated this year, as well as Morgan Carpenter of Morgan Carpenter Floral Designs in Lafayette. Tischenko was assigned a piece entitled "Cat-walk" by Charles Sheeler. It is an oil on canvas inspired by his work as a professional photographer and artist. Tischenko says that this piece resulted from a photograph that he took at a synthetic rubber plant in West Virginia back in the mid '40s. "He was inspired in this paint-

ing by the precise geometric forms that his photo captured. He called himself a 'precisionist' and favored an industrial architectural approach."

She chose a metal container from her Ikebana Sogetsu school and then fabricated her version of a "grid and I-beams" by using a metal grid then welding and screwing together pieces of aluminum material. "I wanted the industrial feeling to come through with the screws and nuts and bolts, the bold grid

form, the strong circular form in the ping-pong balls, and the architectural angular form in the red 99% right angle positioning squares."

Having admired this piece for a few years, Tischenko is happy to have this opportunity to interpret the painting. "I wanted the floral material to be more architectural in nature too, thus the strong red and white anthurium. The bulrush is wired so that I could create more sharp angular line elements," she added.

This is the 38th annual Bouquets to Art event. For more information about events happening during the exhibit, see <https://deyoung.famsf.org/bouquets-to-art>