



My signature poppers are grilled, not breaded and fried. I consider that "healthy!" Fill pepper boats with yummy creamy cheese, savor the char from the fire, maybe add a hint of salty bacon. Oh! So good! On the side of this photo is skillet corn - the first recipe I wrote for my former website, and available on this site too!

Judy's Signature Jalapeno Poppers

I'm a spicy girl. Bring it on! Maybe you like the heat - maybe you are wary. Give these a try! The cheese cools the spice of the jalapeno. Grilling the jalapeno brings out natural sugars and char. The combination is terrific! That being said, jalapenos vary from pepper to pepper. You might get a super hot one! That makes you the lucky person! :)

There are so many variations to this recipe that my head spins (excitedly). Try whatever combinations you like. I think of this as a fun healthy snack / appetizer. Yes, healthy. Veggie and dairy, no deep frying, no bread crumbs. The peppers spark awesome endorphins that make you feel good! And hey, if your head sweats a little, just think of all the toxins you're losing! Seriously, just enjoy.

As a parting note, today would have been my Dad's birthday. This one's for you, Dad! I know he would have loved the poppers. I can picture him grilling, crunching and savoring half a dozen. I got my taste for spicy food from him. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Ingredients (makes 12 poppers)

6 Large jalapeno peppers
½ cup low fat cream cheese, room temperature
½ cup Mexican blend shredded cheese
Bacon crumbles, about 2 large slices (optional)
Smoked paprika

If adding bacon crumbles, cook your bacon completely, break into crumbles and set aside for a moment.

Wash the peppers and cut in half, lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds, to make a boat. Use a spoon or potato peeler.

Mix the cream cheese and shredded cheese in a bowl. The half-cup of each is a suggestion. Make more, or change the proportions to your liking. I think 50/50 is good, but do what you like!

Use a small spoon to mound the cheese mixture into the pepper boats. Be generous.

Sprinkle lightly with smoked paprika.

Add a few bacon crumbles, if you're using bacon.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour so that the cheese becomes firm again; otherwise, it is going to melt very quickly, and possibly messily, on the grill.

Put the poppers on a hot grill, indirect heat, pepper flesh side down, cheese side up. Close the grill lid. You want the pepper to soften but not fall apart. A little crunch is desirable. The cheese will melt into the pepper boat. This takes about 2 minutes in a very hot grill. Use tongs to handle the poppers.

When the cheese has melted to your satisfaction, the poppers are ready to serve. The cheese will be volcano hot, so be careful!

This recipe also works in the oven, 400 degrees for 4-5 minutes, and then 1 minute under the broiler if necessary (if the cheese needs further melting).

If you prefer, the popper can be wrapped in prosciutto rather than topped with bacon crumbles. Another riff is to use creamy goat cheese (room temperature) in place of the cream cheese. As with all of my recipe suggestions, I encourage you to make it your own. Follow the template, and it will all be good.

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