



Baked Stuffed Tomatoes

MAKES 8

In the heat of summer, sometimes the only relief is biting into a beautiful ripe tomato. I like to stuff them and bake until they're juicy and blistered. You can fill them with just about any ground meats or vegetables, but I like to use rice or other grains mixed with a variety of roasted vegetables, cheese, and nuts. An important ingredient in Greek cooking is oregano which grows wild in Greece and isn't quite as strong as the Mexican variety. It adds a subtle herbal note to these stuffed tomatoes, along with the surprise burst of flavor from the goat cheese hidden in the middle of the stuffing. You can prepare these stuffed tomatoes 6-8 hours before baking them, which makes it easy to pop them in the oven just before serving.

INGREDIENTS

8 medium to large firm ripe tomatoes	5 or 6 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling	10 fresh oregano leaves, minced
½ cup chopped white onion, chopped	1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ cup chopped red bell pepper, chopped	½ teaspoon black pepper
1 clove garlic, minced	1 cup cooked rice (or other grain)
1 tablespoon toasted pine nuts, toasted	4 ounces soft goat cheese

PROCESS:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Using a sharp knife, cut off the tops of the tomatoes and set aside. Use a spoon or paring knife to remove the seeds and pulp and discard (or save for another use). Carefully slice the bottom of each tomato to create a flat bottom without cutting through to the inside.

Place the tomatoes in a shallow baking pan. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat and add the olive oil. Add the onion and bell pepper and sauté until soft. Stir in the garlic. Remove the pan from the heat and add the pine nuts, basil, oregano, salt, pepper, and rice. Stir well, then spoon about half of the filling into



the tomatoes, filling each halfway. Place 1 ounce of goat cheese over the filling, and then fill to the top with the remaining filling.

Drizzle all the tomatoes with olive oil. Place the tops of the tomatoes atop the tomatoes and bake for 45 minutes, until the tomatoes are tender, and the rice is golden. Serve while hot.