Peppers are excellent sources of vitamins C and A and have antioxidant phytonutrients. Of the sweet peppers, red sweet peppers have highest levels of antioxidants, vitamin A and beta-carotene. A small red bell pepper contains:
• Over 100% daily value (DV) of vitamin C.
• 45% of the DV of vitamin A.
Hot peppers are also an excellent source of vitamin C (half of a fresh chili pepper contains over 50% DV), and contain the phytonutrient capsaicin that produces the “hot” sensation.

HOW THEY IMPROVE HEALTH
• Pepper phytonutrients have potential to reduce stress in the body, lower inflammation, and reduce risk of age-related cancers and cardiovascular disease.
• Capsaicin may have anti-inflammatory benefits and can offer cardiovascular and osteoarthritis protection.

NUTRIENT AND PHYTONUTRIENT CHANGES
• Peppers should be stored whole in the refrigerator (up to 7 days) to preserve vitamin A and capsaicin. Chopping, then storing can cause loss of beta-carotene and vitamin A.
• To maintain vitamins A and C, use only light cooking, with short times and low temperatures.
• Canning or jarring causes significant losses in vitamins C and A – freezing is a better method of preservation. If possible, it is best to freeze peppers whole to preserve the most nutrients and phytonutrients.
Recipe: Marinated Peppers and Zucchini with Almonds

(Reprinted with permission from the American Institute for Cancer Research, www.aicr.org)

This recipe uses fresh peppers, which maximizes vitamin C and phytonutrient levels. It also incorporates oil to increase absorption of vitamin A. It does not contain hot peppers, so does not contain capsaicin.

Ingredients:
• 1/2 red pepper, thinly sliced
• 1/2 orange pepper, thinly sliced
• 1 small zucchini, cut in half, then thinly sliced horizontally
• 1/2 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed or 1/2 cup canned corn kernels, drained
• 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
• 1 1/2 tsp. apple cider vinegar
• Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
• 2 Tbsp. lightly toasted sliced almonds

Directions:
• In large non-stick skillet, sauté peppers, zucchini and corn over high heat for 2-3 minutes in ½ Tbsp oil. Remove from heat and place in serving bowl.
• In separate small bowl, whisk together remaining oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. Pour over vegetables and gently toss. Serve garnished with almonds.

4 servings. Per serving:
80 calories, 5 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 8 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 7 mg sodium, 1035 IU vitamin A (21% DV), 63 mg vitamin C (105% DV)

OTHER FOOD SOURCES OF KEY NUTRIENTS AND PHYTOCHEMICALS:
- Vitamin A: Sweet potatoes, Carrots
- Vitamin C: Broccoli, Strawberries, Tomatoes

For more information or how to maximize nutrients in other fruits and vegetables, see http://localfoods.osu.edu/maximizenutrients.