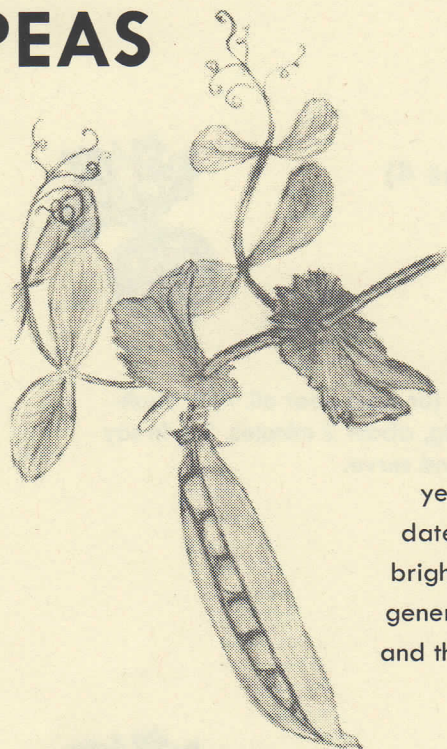


PEAS



The **PEA** (*Pisum sativum*) is a frost-hardy, cool-season vegetable that grows on a climbing plant which produces pods containing seeds (the peas!). There are two main types of peas; those eaten with the pod (sugar snap or snow peas) or those that must be removed from the inedible pod before eating (shell peas). Peas have been an important staple for thousands of years; the oldest evidence of peas was found in a cave in Burma and dated to about 9750 years ago. For the best shell peas, pick plump, bright green pods; for tasty snap peas, pick crisp smaller pods, which are generally sweeter and the most tender. Peas are abundant in the spring and throughout the summer.

STORAGE

- ◆ Keep **fresh, unwashed peas in an open plastic bag** in the refrigerator for no more than 2 to 3 days. Peas are high in sugar, which quickly turns to starch, and reduces the sweetness of the peas. In only a few hours, peas can lose as much as 40 percent of their sugar.
- ◆ Shell peas are the same variety that can be dried and stored, but are usually harvested to be eaten while they are still immature.
- ◆ **Fresh peas can also be successfully frozen.** Wash trim and strong pods, blanch then freeze. See "Preservation/Preparation Tipsheets" for instructions on freezing vegetables.

PREPARATION

- ◆ **Wash peas** just before preparing. **String sugar peas** by snapping off each end and pulling the string from each side of the pod. For shell peas, string and then pull each half of the pod apart to **pop out the peas**.
- ◆ Steam, sauté or stir-fry quickly to **retain the bright green color** and vitamin content; Vitamin C is easily destroyed by over cooking.
- ◆ Generally, the smaller the pods the more tender. **Eat the smaller sugar peas raw and save the larger ones to cook.**

Nutritional Information

Peas are rich in vitamins A, C and K and iron and a good source of calcium, phosphorus, iron, and potassium. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption. Vitamin K is involved in blood clotting. Calcium can help maintain good bone health and may reduce risk of osteoporosis. Phosphorus is important in bone health. Iron is important for healthy blood cells. Potassium is a mineral necessary for proper nerve and muscle function, as well as blood pressure regulation.

Peas Recipes

Sugar Snap Peas with Toasted Sesame Seeds (Serves 4)

- 1 tablespoon peanut or canola oil
- 3 (about 1/2 cup) small mushrooms, any type
- 2 cups sugar snap or snow peas
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 to 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seed



Wash and string peas, slice mushrooms and set aside. In a large skill (or wok) heat oil. Add mushrooms and stir until lightly browned. Add peas and cook, while stirring, about 2 minutes. Stir in soy sauce. Cover and cook 1 minute longer. Sprinkle with sesame seed and serve.

Recipe adapted from www.recipesource.com.

French/Spring Peas and Lettuce (Serves 6)

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup finely chopped Boston, romaine or other green leafy lettuce
- 3 cups shelled fresh peas
- 1/4 cup onions, minced
- 1 sprig parsley or basil, depending on taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper



Heat oil in a 3 quart saucepan and place lettuce on top. Add peas, onions, herb, salt and pepper. Simmer covered, stirring occasionally, 10 to 15 minutes, or until peas are just tender. Remove herb sprig before serving.

Recipe adapted from University of Illinois Extension at <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies/peas1.html>

Fresh Peas and Endive (Serves 6)

- 4 cups green peas, shelled
- 2 endives, washed, shredded
- 1 onion, sliced
- 4 cups water
- 1 tablespoon butter
- salt and pepper to taste



Place all ingredients in a stew pan, cover and let cook for about 35 minutes.

Recipe adapted from www.freerecipe.org