



SPRING PEAS, PLEASE

By Monique Wilber

UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preserver

Spring green. When our local hills are green, before they turn golden, it is the time to find spring fresh green peas in your garden, from a farmer, or at your grocery. Fresh peas are at their peak in spring and early summer. You can't beat fresh peas eaten in the pod, and out of hand as a healthy snack, tossed in a salad, or stir-fried. Peas are fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, and an excellent source of vitamin C (with 50% of your daily suggested values in just a ½-cup serving), a good source of vitamin A, folate and dietary fiber. A serving is ½ cup and contains only 60 calories.

Choose firm, bright green, medium-sized pods with no signs of decay or wilting. Refrigerate peas in a plastic bag (with holes in it) for 3-5 days. Shell peas, if you don't want to eat the pods, right before using. Edible pod peas (Sugar, Chinese, Snow Peas or Sugar Snap Peas) do not have to be shelled before eating. It is not safe to boiling water bath can peas as they are low acid; pressure canning is the only shelf-stable option. The National Center for Home Food Preservation recommends that sugar snap and Chinese edible pods be frozen for best quality preservation.

Peas freeze very well, and are convenient and available later in the year when they are not available fresh. To prepare edible pea pods, select bright green, flat, tender pods. Wash. Remove stems, blossom ends and any strings. Leave whole. Water blanch 1 ½ minutes for small pods; 2 minutes for large pods. Cool, drain and package, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. Approximate storage time in the freezer for frozen peas is eight to twelve months.

Enjoy fresh spring peas in my own Sesame Salad with Homemade dressing recipe.

Sesame Salad with Homemade Dressing

Dressing:

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 ½ tablespoons other sweetener (sugar, honey, stevia, etc.)

2 teaspoons tamari (is gluten free) or soy sauce

2 tablespoons sesame oil

¼ cup olive oil

6 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar

¼ cup orange juice

¼ cup water

1 tablespoon chia seeds (a thickener you can find in the natural foods section - optional)

1 tablespoon fresh or dried chives

1/8 teaspoon salt (optional)

1/8 teaspoon pepper

Salad:

4 cups romaine lettuce
2 cups spinach
2 cups fresh peas in pod, chopped
2 red bell peppers, chopped
1 cucumber, chopped
1 can sliced water chestnuts, drained
2 mandarin oranges, segmented (or 2 small cans)
2 tablespoons sesame seeds (optional)

Combine salad dressing ingredients in a jar and shake to combine just prior to serving. Prepare salad ingredients (except sesame seeds); pour dressing (amount as needed) over salad, and toss to coat. Garnish with sesame seeds.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506.

For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>.