

the pod squad



TRY THIS TRIO OF FRESH VEGGIES FOR YOUR OWN RITE OF SPRING

by Carol Penn-Romine

Ahh, springtime! It's a joy to kick off our socks and shoes and dig our toes into the first green grass of the year. And a treat to sink our teeth into the fresh green peas and beans that signal winter's end.

Not that I'm knocking those delectable slow-cooked pots of dried legumes and grains, but after a winter of dried fuel, the whole multisensorial aspect of spring's bounty is a pleasure: the fresh aroma, flavor and crunch of the season's first veggies and the delight of whipping up dishes that incorporate them. Sugar snap peas, green peas and fava beans are all rich in protein and miserly in fat. The peas require little if any cooking at all, while the favas allow you to catch up on your daydreaming while you prepare them. So put away the soak-'em-overnights of winter and say hello to spring with this trio of fresh green lovelies.

Sugar Snap Peas

Sugar snaps are ready for eating before the peas themselves have developed, so the pods are quite delicate. The ultimate in lazy cuisine, sugar snap peas are convenient because all they need is a quick rinse before you begin snacking. They're great raw or introduced to just the merest bit of heat, topped with a pat of butter, a sprinkling of sea salt and a grinding of black pepper. Or give them a quick blanch, about three minutes in boiling water, drop them into an ice water bath so they retain their color and then add them to your salad or stir fry.

When you buy sugar snaps, be sure to look for plump, firm, shiny pods that are deep green, all characteristics of a well-developed and ready-to-eat pod. Leave the dirt on until you're ready to use them and they'll last for about three days in the refrigerator—if you can keep your hands off them that long!

Green Peas

Did you know that wintertime's split peas started their lives as the debutantes of the garden? Green peas in their fresh form are finicky little darlings, so treat them with respect. Essentially, don't pick them until you're ready to use them, for within about six hours of harvesting, their sugar will turn to starch if left at room temperature. This won't hurt you, but it diminishes their fresh appeal, their crispness

and sweetness. If you buy them from the farmers market, be sure they were just picked that morning and then rush them home and either eat or refrigerate them right away. Select medium-sized pods that are bright green and obviously fresh, not dried out or tough.

Most green peas consumed are canned or frozen, but if you have access to fresh ones, why bother with their weary, excessively handled brethren?

Fava Beans

One of the most storied of foods, the fava bean has quite an amazing body of lore surrounding it, including tales from ancients who decided that favas were shaped like the doors of hell and said they contained the souls of the dead. Well, that's a stretch, but could those early prejudices be responsible for the relative scarcity of fava beans in the American diet? Or could it have to do with that *Silence of the Lambs* quote about "fava beans and a nice Chianti?"

Find this reference off-putting? Then just call them broad beans like the English do. These are tasty, versatile legumes that admittedly require some work to prepare. When you're in the mood for a little Zen activity, fava beans will do the trick. They must be shucked, then cooked and then peeled before you begin your recipe, but the flavor will amaze you. Favas have a more complex taste than their cousins, nutty and buttery and rich.

If you can find favas in their not-quite-ready-to-pick stage—or if you grow them yourself and harvest them early—you can actually eat them pod and all—one of those rare springtime treats! 🌱

Chef and food writer **Carol Penn-Romine** is a Tennessee farm girl who is still trying to get the hang of playing in the Southern California soil. She is editor of *Edible Los Angeles* and a contributor to a number of magazines within Edible Communities. Her essays have appeared in publications including *Cornbread Nation IV: The Best of Southern Food Writing* and *The Christian Science Monitor*.



FRESH GREEN PEAS AND SUGAR SNAP PEAS IN SESAME DRESSING

This recipe combines sugar snaps and green peas in a light and flavorful Asian salad. Recipe courtesy of *Bon Appétit*

Makes 6 to 8 servings

3 cups fresh, shelled peas (from 3 pounds of peas in pods)

12 ounces sugar snap peas, trimmed and rinsed

Sesame Dressing

2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1 tablespoon packed brown sugar

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Cook shelled peas in large saucepan of boiling salted water until almost tender, about 1½ minutes. Add sugar snap peas to same pan and continue boiling for 30 seconds. Drain, rinse under cold water and drain again. Transfer to large bowl and set aside.

Whisk vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar, salt and pepper in small bowl to blend. Pour dressing over peas in large bowl; toss to coat. Season salad to taste with more salt and pepper, if desired. Serve at room temperature.

Note: Peas and dressing can be prepared 2 hours ahead. Let stand separately at room temperature.



FAVA BEANS WITH RED ONION AND MINT

Recipe courtesy of *Gourmet*

Makes 6 small-plate servings

3 cups shelled and peeled fresh fava beans (about 2½ pounds in pod)

1 teaspoon plus 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided

2 medium red onions, chopped

Fine sea salt, to taste

Generous handful of mint, roughly chopped, about ½ cup

Cook fava beans with 1 teaspoon oil in boiling unsalted water until tender, 6 to 8 minutes, then drain.

Lightly sauté onions in remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a medium skillet over medium heat, stirring, until just crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Add beans and cook until just heated through, then season with sea salt and pepper. Toss in mint. Serve immediately.

Note: Fava beans can be shelled and peeled (but not cooked) one day ahead and chilled, covered.



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