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Produce Pointers

Southern Peas



The Southern Pea is a popular farmers-market vegetable grown locally. Peas are harvested in June, July, and August.

Southern peas originated in India in prehistoric times and moved to Africa, then to America. This traditional Southern vegetable might have as many as 50 different names. In the United States, especially the South, it may be called “field peas”, “crowder peas”, “cowpeas”, or “blackeyes” (the “eye” may be pink, red, or maroon also), but Southern peas is the preferred name.

Selection

❖ Look for small, plump, bright green pods that are firm, crisp, and well-filled with medium-sized peas.

Uses & Preparation

❖ Remove peas by shelling the pods. If peas are not to be frozen (see directions below), rinse and cook using a recipe listed here.

❖ Southern peas are often frozen for later use, but must be blanched first. Blanching destroys enzymes, removes air, shrinks food and loosens peels.

❖ To blanch peas, submerge about 1 pound of cleaned raw peas in 1 gallon of boiling water on high heat. Let the water return to boiling, and continue boiling for 1½ to 2 minutes. Quickly cool down the peas by pouring off the hot water and running cool water over the peas. When cool, place peas in freezer bags, label and freeze.

Storage

❖ Refrigerate all peas, unwashed, in a plastic bag for up to 3 days. Properly blanched frozen peas may be stored at 0°F for up to 12 months.

Nutrition Information

☞ Cholesterol-free ☞ Good source of fiber and iron ☞ Very low in sodium

Quantities

- ❖ One pound of unshelled peas will yield about 1 cup of cooked peas.
- ❖ A bushel of unshelled peas is about 28-30 pounds, and will yield about 12-15 pint bags for freezing.

Recipes

Southern Pea Medley

- 2 cups shelled fresh Southern peas (any variety), cleaned (about 2 pounds unshelled)
- ¾ cup snap beans, cleaned
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup diced green pepper
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 3 slices bacon, cut in pieces

Combine peas, all ingredients in a large, heavy saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 2 hours, or until peas are tender enough to mash easily. Add water if needed while cooking.

Yields 4 servings.

Black-Eyed Peas in “Pot Likker”

- 6 cups shelled fresh black-eyed, or other variety peas, cleaned (about 6 pounds unshelled)
- ½ pound lean pork or chicken
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 6 cups water

Combine all ingredients in a large, heavy saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 1 hour and 15 minutes or until peas are tender.

Yields 12 servings.

