



SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Availability

Peas, sugar snap peas and snow peas take so well to freezing that only about 5 percent of the nation's pea crop are sold fresh. Most of the pea crop is sold, canned, frozen and to a lesser degree, dried. Frozen peas retain their color, flavor and texture much better than canned, but the best are fresh. California is the leading producer, which makes peas of all types year-round.

Description

Sugar snap peas, which are plump with fully developed peas and edible pods, are a cross between English peas and snow peas. Pods are soft, tender, and edible. Snap peas are so crisp, sweet, and succulent that they may be snapped into pieces and mixed into salads or eaten whole as an appetizer. Like snow peas, they also may be stir-fried or steamed. Snap peas have a distinctive appearance and flavor. The pods are round and reach a length of 2? to 3 inches at maturity. Pod walls are rather thin in comparison with snow peas.

Varieties

Sugar Snap and Sugar Daddy are the two varieties of snap peas. The Sugar Daddy is actually a cross between the green pea and the snow pea, and is a string-less sugar snap pea. The sugar snap peas that have stings do not have to be removed it is a personal choice or habit. The only thing that you may want to remove if the growers did not, is the calyx or cap at one end.

Recipe

Penne with Sugar Snaps, Tomatoes and Herbs

- 9 to 10 ounces sugar snap peas
- 10 ripe cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons fruity olive oil
- 2 to 3 tablespoons chives or scallion greens, cut into 1/2 inch lengths
- 1/2 pound small penne pasta
- 3 to 4 Tablespoons slivered basil leaves
- 3 to 4 Tablespoons chopped parsley
- 2 to 3 tablespoons toasted chopped pine nuts
- pepper to taste

Rinse peas, remove strings and cut each pea in half diagonally. Quarter cherry tomatoes and combine in serving bowl with sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, olive oil and 2 tablespoons chives. Bring water to boil and add generous amount of kosher salt. When water boils place sugar snaps in a sieve and dip into boiling water for about 1 1/2 minutes. Set peas aside. Add penne to water and boil 8 to 10 minutes until al dente. Drain pasta and add to bowl with tomatoes. Add the sugar snaps and toss to coat. Add basil and parsley; toss. Add salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle with nuts; toss. Toss again before serving.

Uses

Raw or briefly cooked sugar snap peas make a good appetizer with a creamy dip. Toss cold peas into salads or stir-fry with other vegetables. Add sugar snaps to slow braises during the last 10 minutes or so of cooking. They can also be cooked on their own with butter and herbs or put into cold preparations like pasta salads.

Nutrient Content

Sugar Snaps and other edible pods are a good source of carbohydrates, Vitamins A, C, thiamin, riboflavin and niacin, as well as impressive amounts of phosphorus, iron and potassium.

Origin

California is the leading producer of peas. Peas have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. The ancient Greeks and Romans ate only dried peas. It was in the 16th century that fresh peas were served during the lenten season. Sugar Snap Peas are a cross between English Peas and snow peas. The edible pod peas were developed by the Dutch and the English in the late 17th century but did not become commonly available until the 1970s.

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