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Peas

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USU STUDENT ORGANIC FARM Newsletter

July 4, 2011 Volume 2 Issue 8

Stu and Alanna, student farm interns, bunching a million beautiful radishes.

Conquering the Bounty

Article by: Brianne Sherwood

If you get sick of eating peas raw, or if you don't like peas plain raw, here are a few ideas to mix things up a bit.

- Make a dip for your fresh peas (see "Fabulous Flavors" on pg 2)
- Roast them (see recipe to the right)
- Add to stir fries
- Add to salads
- Add to soups or stews
- Add to a coleslaw

Freezing is the best way to preserve and enjoy pod peas throughout the year. Only freeze high quality peas- no limpy or discolored ones. This is the best way to freeze snow peas:

1. Blanch peas first by bringing a large pot of water to a boil.
2. Add 2-3 cups of snow peas to the boiling water and cover. Time for exactly 2 minutes and remove promptly from heat.
3. Drain off water and place snow peas immediately in ice water for 2 minutes.
4. Remove from bowl and dry pea pods by blotting dry with a towel.
5. Place snow peas into freezer bags or containers, seal, and store in freezer.

Source: farmersalmanac.com

Featured Vegetable: Peas

Article by: Brianne Sherwood

There are three common types of peas: shelling peas, snow peas, and sugar snap peas (shown below, in order). We grow snow peas this year on our farm, which are flat and great flash-cooked in Asian dishes.

Peas are a member of the legume family, which also includes soybeans, beans, chickpeas, carob, licorice, and peanuts. One interesting fact about peas: only 5% are sold fresh. More than half of all peas are canned and most of the rest are frozen.

Peas are a great source of many fabulous nutrients everybody needs, including fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Peas also have quite a bit of protein. A ¾ cup serving contains more protein than a whole egg, less than one gram of fat, and no cholesterol.

Storing and Preparing

It's best to eat peas the day you get them because they start breaking down their sugars almost right away. If you must store them, place them in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator to preserve texture and nutrient content. They will keep about three days before they go limp, maybe more. Always rinse your peas before eating or cooking them. Snap or cut the very ends of the pea pods and eat! They are great eaten raw, pod and all.

Stir-Fried Snow Peas with Tofu

As with any stir-fry, this one is infinitely variable. You can add almost any vegetable that will cook through. The sherrylike flavor of the wine benefits almost any stir-fry.

- 1 ½ pounds firm to extra-firm tofu, blotted dry
- 3 Tbsp neutral oil, like canola
- 2 cups snow peas
- 1 Tbsp chopped garlic
- 1 Tbsp chopped, peeled fresh ginger
- ¼ cup sherry, sake, white wine, or water
- 1/3 cup vegetable stock or water
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- ½ cup roughly chopped green onion

Put 2 Tbsp of the oil in a large skillet or wok, preferably nonstick, over high heat. When hot, add the peas and cook, stirring occasionally, until peas are bright green and just beginning to brown. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside for a moment.

Add the remaining oil, then the garlic and ginger, and cook, stirring, for about 10 seconds. Add the tofu and cook, stirring occasionally until it begins to brown, a couple of minutes. Add the wine and stock and cook, stirring, until about half of it evaporates; return the peas to the pan and cook, stirring, and reheat.

Add the soy sauce and scallion and cook, stirring, until the scallion becomes glossy, about 30 seconds. Serve immediately.

Recipe adapted from: How to Cook Everything Vegetarian by Mark Bittman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

July 12th @ 7pm – Grilled pizza night! Everyone bring their favorite toppings and sauces and we will bring the dough and cheese. At the farm: 1750 N 800 E.

We're still giving out broccoli, kohlrabi, and peppers as they grow! We're keeping track of who gets them to be sure everyone gets an equal share. Don't forget to eat the leaves on the broccoli! Cook them like any other greens.

If you would like more strawberries, come pick some for yourself when you pickup your share!

Volunteer hours:
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 7am-1pm
Wednesday, Saturday: 10am-1pm

Organic Techniques: Soil Life

Article by: Brianne Sherwood

Among the billions of organisms present in organically rich soil, there are two main classifications: decomposers and predators. Decomposers are mostly bacteria and fungi. Predators eat decomposers and include nematodes, earthworms, and microscopic protozoa. These two types of creatures help feed plants by turning organic matter into plant food.

Nitrogen is the center of plant nutrition. It's needed and if it's there isn't adequate amounts in the soil the plant can't grow. Nitrogen is made available to plants when predators eat decomposers because they don't need all the nitrogen contained in them. Predators use the nitrogen they need in their bodies and then excrete the rest in a form that plants can readily use.

This natural process can only occur in soil that contains a large and varied microbial population. Chemical fertilizers disrupt this process because they produce a salt byproduct when they break down, which then in turn creates an environment unwelcoming to many soil organisms.

Source: The Vegetable Gardener's Bible by Edward C. Smith

For more information about the USU Student Organic Farm or CSA shares visit:
www.usu.edu/organicfarms

On the Farm News

This week has been the hottest week of the season! We've been beating the heat by coming in early in the morning, but even by 11am we are starting to feel it heat up. The warm weather plants, like squash, tomatoes, and watermelons are doing great! They are basically jumping out of the ground. We've shaded our more cool season crops with shade cloth so they are growing great as well.

Strawberries are coming on so fast we can barely keep up. If you would like more strawberries, feel free to pick some for yourself when you pick up your share. Usually we don't have time to harvest strawberries on pickup days before 11:30am because there are so many other veggies to harvest, but they are ripe and ready! Hopefully they are still coming on strong next week so you will get at least one more portion of organic, local strawberries.

Please RSVP to the event on July 12th (see "Announcements") to organicfarm@aggiemail.usu.edu so we know how much food to prepare.

Veggies to expect next week: lettuce, peas, chard, green onions, magna squash, cherry tomatoes, kale, some kohlrabi, some peppers and hopefully strawberries.

Article by: Brianne Sherwood

Fabulous Flavors: Tips & Techniques

"Dip" Your Way to Deliciousness

By: Tamara Steinitz Vitale, USU Dept of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Sciences

That platter of fresh, colorful, crisp vegetables looks beautiful… but play with your food a little and dip into some new flavors.

Hummus is made from a combination of beans, seeds, and other tasty ingredients, so adds a wealth of flavor plus some protein to turn the vegetables into a long-lasting and satisfying snack. It keeps for several days in the refrigerator and is very portable for picnics or "road-trip" food. Smear some hummus on a bagel or in some pita bread and pile high with cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers.

Hummus
Yield: about 3 cups

2 16-oz cans garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
1 clove garlic, peeled
1/3 C tahini*
1 tsp salt
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ tsp cayenne pepper, ground
¼ tsp cumin, ground
¼ tsp black pepper, ground
1/3 C extra virgin olive oil
1 handful parsley
3-4 green onions, cut into 1" pieces
water as needed (approx 1/3 C)

*Tahini is a smooth paste made from sesame seeds. It is usually found by the peanut butter in grocery stores.

Place all ingredients in food processor or blender. Add water as needed to form a smooth paste. Adjust seasonings to taste. Place hummus in a small bowl and garnish with parsley. Serve with a platter of pita bread wedges and fresh vegetables.