

Everyday Healthy! Everyday Delicious!

From the Kitchen of Janice Feuer Haugen

Vegetarian Split Pea Soup

Makes 12 cups

½ pound green split peas (1 cup plus 2 tablespoons)
½ pound yellow split peas (1 cup plus 2 tablespoons)
15 cups water
3 fresh thyme sprigs (or 2 teaspoons dried thyme leaves)
1 4-inch piece kombu, optional
2 bay leaves
1 large onion, 1/3 inch dice (divided)
2 cups celery, 1/3 inch dice (divided)
2 cups carrots, 1/3 inch dice (divided)
1 large clove garlic crushed and divided
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 ½ teaspoons salt, divided
Dozen twists freshly ground pepper
3 cups potatoes, ½ inch dice (regular and/or sweet potatoes), stored in water
¼ cup chopped parsley for garnish

Wash and drain the split peas and place them in a large soup pot along with the water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat so the water simmers. White foam (water-soluble protein released from the peas) will form on the surface. It is not necessary to remove it as it will be reabsorbed as the soup cooks.

Stir in the thyme, kombu, bay leaves and ½ cup *each* diced onion, carrot and celery, and one-fourth of the crushed garlic. Partially cover the pot and cook for about 75 minutes* until the split peas become quite soft and dissolve into the liquid. Stir the pot occasionally, though especially during the last half hour or so to keep the peas from sticking.

Note: if the peas do stick, turn off the heat and cover the pot. Wait 5 minutes and you will be able to easily stir them loose. Add a cup of water and continue cooking.

While the peas are cooking, put the oil into a sauté pan over medium heat. When hot stir in the remaining diced onion. Cover the pan and cook for 5 minutes until the onion is translucent. Stir in the remaining diced carrot and celery and garlic. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of the salt and a dozen twists of freshly ground pepper. Cook for another five minutes until the vegetables begin to soften. Turn off the heat.

When the peas are quite soft and most have dissolved into the liquid, stir in the drained diced potatoes along with the lightly cooked vegetables. Add the remaining 1½ teaspoons salt. If the soup is very thick, add another cup or more of water to thin it to your liking. Cook the soup partially covered for another 20 minutes.

Purée 2 ½ cups of the soup in a blender and return it to the pot. Adjust the seasoning and consistency to your taste. Serve garnished with the chopped parsley.

Split pea soup thickens as it cools, so you may want to add additional water and adjust the seasoning when/if you reheat it. Your actual cooking time may vary. I've had peas cook for two hours before softening. Be willing to let them cook as long as needed, adding more water as the water in the pot evaporates and is absorbed by the peas.