

Sugar-Snap Pea Soup With Mint

2 medium leeks
1 medium onion
4 tablespoons butter
1 pound sugar snap peas
1 large potato
3 tablespoons flour
4 cups hot water

1 medium shallot
10 Boston lettuce leaves
10-ounce package frozen peas
¼ cup minced spearmint leaves
Pinch sugar
Salt and white pepper to taste
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Thinly slice the leeks. Chop the onion. Melt 3 tablespoons of butter in a large kettle. Add the sliced leeks and chopped onion. Cook over low heat for 8-10 minutes until tender, but not browned.

Meanwhile, grab the stem end of each sugar-snap pea, and pull it along the concave edge of the pod, thus removing the string. Discard the strings, and wash the pods. Set aside a few perfect sugar-snap peas for a garnish. Roughly chop the remaining pea pods.

Add the chopped pea pods to the leak-onion mixture, cover the kettle, and cook slowly for about 10 minutes. While that is cooking, peel and coarsely chop the potato.

Stir the flour into the pea pods and cook slowly for 2 minutes. Stir in 1 cup of hot water, blending it in until the mixture begins to thicken. Then add the remaining 3 cups of water, a teaspoon of salt, and the chopped potato. Simmer the mixture partially covered for about 20 minutes until the vegetables are tender.

In the meantime, wash and chop the Boston lettuce leaves. Mince the shallot. In a separate kettle, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter, and add the chopped lettuce, shallot, and ½ cup of water. Cover and boil gently for about 10 minutes. Lower the heat, uncover the kettle, and add the frozen peas. Cook a couple of minutes or so, just until the peas are tender. If the water has evaporated, add another tablespoon or two. Remove this mixture from the heat.

With an immersion blender (or in a food processor), purée the frozen-pea mixture. Add the minced spearmint to the pea-pod mixture. Then move the immersion blender to the pot with the pea pods, and purée this mixture, as well.

Pour the frozen pea mixture into the kettle with the pea-pod mixture, and give it another go with the immersion blender. Strain the mixture through a fine sieve into a bowl to remove any strings and to make the soup very smooth. Return the soup to the kettle, and bring it to the simmer.

Add a pinch of sugar to bring out the flavor. Then add salt and white pepper to taste. Stir in 1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice.

The soup may be served hot, but it is at its most flavorful served cold. If the soup is too thick, add a bit of water, milk, or cream to it. To serve cold, oversalt the soup slightly.

Garnish the soup with either the raw or quickly blanched reserved pea pods and a sprig of fresh mint.