

# First Peas to the Table – Learning about Peas

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Wisconsin Fresh Market Vegetable Growers Association [www.wisconsinfreshproduce.org](http://www.wisconsinfreshproduce.org)

Peas originated in northern India and date back to 10,000 B.C. They belong to the legume family and are available both fresh and dried. We will only discuss the fresh types here including green peas, snow peas, and sugar snap peas. Snow peas are edible pod peas that are harvested before the seeds within the pod are mature. They are often used in stir-fry recipes. Sugar snap peas, another edible pod pea, were developed in the 1970s as a cross between green peas and snow peas. They are plump, tender, and very sweet.

## What to Look for When Purchasing

Garden peas sold in the pod should be green and appear “filled” yet not too large. Select medium-sized pods and reject overly large ones or pods that are puffy, yellow or dull. Snow peas should be flattened and shiny for the best quality. If you encounter snow pea pods in which the peas inside are bulging, throw them back. Sugar snap peas should also be bright green, firm, and plump.

## Storage Tips

- Keep garden peas in the pod until just before you plan to use them to preserve their quality.
- Always refrigerate peas in a perforated plastic bag to prevent their sugar from being converted into starch as well as maintain their nutrient content. Use within 5 days of harvest for best quality.
- You may freeze peas but they will lose their crunchy quality. Shelled peas should be removed from the shell before freezing.

## Cooking Tips

- Prior to use, wash all types of peas thoroughly and shell garden peas. Pinch off the stem end and pull the string the length of the pod for garden peas and snow peas. Sugar snap peas only require the tips of the pod be removed.
- Peas are great for stir-fries, crudités, salads or steamed.

## Creamed Peas and New Potatoes

Prior to use, wash all types of peas thoroughly and shell garden peas. Peas are great for stir-fries, crudités, salads or steamed.

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. very small new potatoes, about 15	4 tsp. butter
1 to 1 1/2 c. fresh new peas	4 tsp. all purpose flour
3 tbsp. sliced green onion	1 c. milk

### Preparation:

Scrub potatoes, cut off a narrow strip of peel around center of potato. Cook in boiling salted water 15 to 20 minutes; drain. Cook peas and onion in salted water 8 to 15 minutes; drain. Make a white sauce of butter, flour, dash of salt and milk. Combine vegetables and sauce.

## PLANT HISTORY

Source: [www.burpee.com](http://www.burpee.com)

The pea is one of the oldest cultivated vegetables in the world. Although its origin is obscured in history, peas were found in excavations in Switzerland dating to the Bronze Age and in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes. Peas were popular with the ancient Greeks and Romans. In fact, the word 'peas' is a derivation of the Latin 'pisum.' The Anglo-Saxon word for peas was 'pise' or 'pease' as in the nursery rhyme, 'pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold.'

Peas were originally grown for their dry seeds, in fact, for centuries people thought 'green' peas were poisonous! Fresh-shelled green peas are not mentioned in history until after the Norman Conquest of England. By the end of the 16th century, peas were being perfected in Germany, Belgium, and England. The earliest colonists brought peas to the New World where this valuable vegetable became a staple in their diets. In 1602, the Mayflower Colony logbook records that peas planted by Captain Gosnold produced respectable yields on the island of Cuttyhunk. Even Captain John Smith wrote of the abundant crop of peas the Jamestown colonists enjoyed in 1614.

## ABOUT PEA PLANTS

Source: [www.jungseed.com](http://www.jungseed.com)

Peas make their best growth during cool weather and can be planted when the soil temperature is 45°F. Successive plantings will produce peas over a longer period. Seeds should be planted 1 inch deep, 2 inches apart, with rows close together for best yields. Inoculation with nitrogen should be used for maximum yields. Taller varieties should be trained on a trellis or fence to increase crops. A double row can then be planted 6 inches apart with the support between the rows. Generous 2 oz. packets will plant a 10 to 15 foot row, 1/2 lb. will plant 40 to 60 feet. Average seed count is 125 seeds per ounce. There are three basic types: shelling, snack and snow peas.

## CULTIVATION

Source: [www.burpee.com](http://www.burpee.com)

**Sow peas thickly, preferably in wide rows-** Peas grown close together shade out weeds, keep the soil cool, increase yields, and make the most efficient use of garden space. Simply broadcast the seed in the row, allowing the seeds to fall as they may, some even touching. Cover with an inch of soil in the spring; two inches in the summer for your fall crop. Don't thin the pea plants when they germinate.

**Don't overfertilize-** Peas are light feeders and don't generally require fertilizer. In fact, too much nitrogen will make the plants develop lush foliage at the expense of pod production and be more susceptible to frost damage.

**Watering-** Water deeply once a week. Never allow the soil to dry out totally or you'll drastically reduce pea production. The critical time for watering is when the plants are blossoming and producing pods. When pods are maturing in hot weather, water daily if needed to maintain pod quality.

## SUPPORT

Source: [www.burpee.com](http://www.burpee.com)

All peas, even the dwarf varieties, grow best with support. Peas are productive and less susceptible to rot if given some support or, for taller varieties, planted along a fence or trellis. Interlace untreated twine between posts to act as a trellis. At the end of the season, just cut down the twine, pea vines and all, and toss on the compost pile. Use 'pea brush' broken tree branches shoved into the soil of the pea bed to provide support for the 'bush' types like 'Maestro' and 'Wando'.

# First Peas to the Table – Learning about Peas Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## True or False:

- \_\_\_ 1. Peas like very hot weather.
- \_\_\_ 2. Keep peas in a plastic bag and tightly sealed in the refrigerator.
- \_\_\_ 3. Peas generally do not require additional fertilizer.
- \_\_\_ 4. Peas belong to the legume family.
- \_\_\_ 5. All peas grow best with support as they are less susceptible to rot.

## Fill in the blank with the correct term or answer:

- 1. Prior to use, \_\_\_\_\_ all types of peas thoroughly and shell garden peas.
- 2. Peas were originally grown for their \_\_\_\_\_ seeds.
- 3. Sugar snap peas should be \_\_\_\_\_ green, firm and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. You may \_\_\_\_\_ peas but they will lose their crunchy quality.
- 5. Peas originated in northern India and date back to \_\_\_\_\_.

## List five important steps in planting or cultivating peas:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.