

Lady Pea and Heirloom Tomato Salad with Lemon Vinaigrette

This salad is as beautiful as it is delicious, the best of late summer on a platter. It's an opportunity to look for and feast on the freshest and most delicious field peas and heirloom tomatoes grown where you live. I love to showcase elegant Lady Peas in this recipe. They are a small, pale, elegant variety that doesn't darken when cooked, and they are my favorite of all. But please do not fret or skip this recipe if you cannot find Lady Peas. There are many varieties of fresh field peas and you can use what you find and like. The point is to consider something other than black-eyed peas, which are certainly not bad, but are not the only option. I often say that BEPs are to field peas what Red Delicious are to apples: the most common, but not the most interesting or tasty.

Makes 6 servings

Salad

2 cups (12 ounces) fresh or thawed fresh Lady peas or other similar field peas, rinsed
1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
2 cups cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
3 tablespoons chopped basil and/or mint leaves
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
Ground black pepper, to taste
2 to 3 large heirloom tomatoes, cored and sliced
Garnish with: fresh basil sprigs and coarse salt, such as Maldon or Fleur de Sel

Vinaigrette

Finely grated zest and juice of 2 lemons (about 1/3 cup)
2 medium-size shallots, finely chopped (about 1/4 cup)
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon wholegrain Dijon mustard
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Ground black pepper, to taste

1. For the salad: Rinse the peas under cool running water to remove any stickiness and loosen any bits of leaves and hulls. Pour into a medium-size saucepan, add the 1 teaspoon salt, and cover with water to a depth of 1 inch. Bring to a boil, skim away any foam, reduce the heat, partially cover, and simmer until tender, 15 to 25 minutes. The fresher and smaller the peas, the more quickly they will cook. Taste the peas. If they need more salt, stir in another 1/2 teaspoon and let stand (off heat) for 10 to 15 minutes. Make the vinaigrette while the peas cook because you'll want to dress them while they're still warm.

2. For the vinaigrette: Stir together the lemon zest, lemon juice, shallot, garlic, and salt in medium-size bowl. Let stand 5 minutes. Whisk in honey and mustard. Whisking constantly, add oil in slow, steady stream. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Drain the peas and pour them (while still warm) into the vinaigrette. Let stand until cool, stirring occasionally. This gives the peas time to absorb flavor from the vinaigrette.
4. Stir in the cherry tomatoes, basil, and parsley. Season with salt and pepper.
5. To serve, arrange sliced tomatoes on serving platter. Top with the pea mixture. Garnish with basil, sprinkle with coarse salt, and serve at once.

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