



YOUR TRASH IS SOMEONE ELSE'S TREASURE.

Post your garage sale online with NJ.com.



Site Search Search Local Business Listings

Search by keyword, town name, Web ID and more...

- Home News Weather Sports Entertainment Living Interact Jobs Autos
Entertainment Arts Celebrities Food & dining Forums Music Things to do TV & film

Dining

Latest news and listings

ENTERTAINMENT

with The Star-Ledger

Local event coverage and:

- Home TV/Film Music Arts Celebrities Dining Ticket

Browse by day posted:

Select a date [dropdown] [GO]

Browse by week posted:

Select a date [dropdown] [GO]

ADVERTISEMENT

- California Closets - Request a FREE consultation now!
Game Day Drink Specials -- All games available on 16 HDTV Plasmas
Dream big with New Jersey Lottery's Mega Millions
> Need new Carpet or Flooring? Never pay store prices again. Click for details!

Going green with peas

by Mary Ann Castronovo Fusco/ For The Star-Ledger

Tuesday June 03, 2008, 10:00 PM

Packaged the way nature intended -- in neither boxes nor cans, but in pods that dangle from dainty plants with pretty pansy-like white flowers -- green peas should be ready for harvesting at area farms for about the next three weeks.

Kneeling alongside the delicate vines, a seasoned farm hand can pick a bushel of peas in about an hour, said Liz Wightman of Wightman's Farms in Harding Township, where 10 (400-foot-long) rows of low-bush peas arc on a Watchung hillside with its face to the southeast. Her husband, Ken, put in three varieties, Spring, Knight and Utrillo, each of which will yield two pickings.

"They ripen six to seven days apart so that by the time the first variety has had its first picking, the second variety is just ready for its first picking and then the first variety will be ready for its second picking," he explained. Pod size varies: Spring's measures about three inches; Knight's, four; and Utrillo's, five. "You don't want to let them get real big. If you let them get too big, then they taste starchy," said Ken.

Peas have been growing on his family's property since the farm was founded, back in 1922. Though his wife didn't grow up on this particular parcel of farmland, she has fond memories of afternoons spent shelling peas at her grandparents' dairy farm in Sussex County.

"In those days, it was a social thing. You sat on a rocking chair on the back porch," she recalled. Shelling freshly harvested peas -- munching on a few as they were popped out of their pods -- fit the rhythm of that bygone era, when family visits and even weddings and funerals were timed around the cows'



JULIA EWAN

milking schedule, she added.

Today, shelling a batch of peas might seem more like a nuisance than a pleasant pastime to generations accustomed to picking their peas -- already shelled, thank you very much -- from a supermarket freezer case, especially since the frozen product -- processed within hours of being picked -- offers good flavor and convenience. Still, picked at their prime, fresh peas are likely to be sweeter and more tender than even the best of their frozen counterparts -- so much so that they can be eaten raw, which is how Ken Wightman likes them best.

If they must be cooked, fresh peas should be placed into boiling water just long enough to warm them up. "If you boil them, you're boiling them out of their little jacket, the shell around the pea," warned Liz.

-- Shopping Hints: Look for pods that are shiny, plump, unblemished and crisp. Avoid those that are yellowed, withered, or rubbery.

-- Shelling Tips: Rinse the pods. Working over a bowl, cut or snap off the stem of the pod, pulling it down the side so the string running along the edge of the pod comes off with it, breaking the seal. Pull open the pod, allowing the peas to fall into the bowl.

-- Cooking Suggestions: The easiest way to go is with a pat of butter and a dash of salt and pepper. Chopped fresh mint is a classic accent. For a change of pace, season peas with chopped fresh chervil, parsley or tarragon. Always use fresh peas as close to purchase as possible, for the sugars in green peas begin to convert to starch as soon as they're picked, and even while still on the vine if they're past their prime.

-- Nutrition Notes: Green peas are an excellent source of vitamin C, a good source of vitamin A, and contain iron.

-- Fun Facts: Thomas Jefferson grew 30 varieties of peas at Monticello. Gregor Mendel laid the foundation for the science of genetics with his studies of pea plants in the 19th century. Canned peas look drab because the heat from the canning process destroys their chlorophyll.

-- Farm Info: Wightman's Farms, 1111 Mt. Kemble Road, Morristown, 07960. Farm is in Harding Township but has a Morristown mailing address. (973) 425-0840. Web site: www.wightmansfarms.com. For more sources of fresh peas, go to these web sites: Jersey Fresh: www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/NJ Farm Bureau: www.njfb.org

See more in [In Season](#)

 [Send To A Friend](#) |  [Print this](#) | [Permalink](#)

 [Reddit](#)  [Digg](#)  [del.icio.us](#)  [Google](#)  [Facebook](#) [Buzz up!](#)

COMMENTS (0)

[Post a comment](#)

Username (Don't Have a Username? [Sign up here](#)): |

Password:

Remember Me