



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

PEAS APLENTY!



“How luscious lies the pea within the pod.” - Emily Dickinson

Fresh peas are calling to us this spring with their gorgeous color and crisp sweet taste. The season for peas is upon us and that means snap peas, English peas, pea shoots, and snow peas are appearing at your local farmers’ market.

To get the best flavor from your peas, freshness is important when selecting them. All peas develop sweetness as they grow to maturity, but if left on the plant for too long, those sugars are converted into starches so the peas become fibrous and tough with less sweet flavor. That’s why the farmers’ market is a great place to purchase them. They come to the market freshly picked, at just the right ripeness, directly from the farm to you!

Peas are members of the legume family of plants and are divided into two categories, those with and those without edible pods. The peas we know as the garden pea or English pea fall into the latter category. They’re also called shelling peas. “*Petit pois*” is not a variety of pea, but merely green peas that have been picked before full maturity. Thus, they are just smaller than fully ripe green peas – and just as sweet and tender.

Snap peas look like mini versions of the pods of green peas. The difference is that these pods are edible. Sugar Snap and Sugar Daddy are the two varieties of sugar snap peas, the latter being a cross between the green pea and the snow pea. In addition, the Sugar Daddy is string-less. However, even sugar snaps with strings don’t necessarily need to be stringed before cooking.

Snow peas used to be seen as part of Asian cuisine in stir fry and noodle dishes. Now they’re more common and available everywhere. The pale green, edible pods are flat and wide with little bulges—the immature peas inside—rippling throughout the pod. Snow peas

are also called sugar peas, China peas, and in French, *mangetout*, meaning “eat all.”

The farmers’ market also offers young pea shoots, sometimes called pea greens, as a specialty product. You won’t find them in the grocery store! These delicious edible stems, leaves, and curly tendrils of pea plants have a delicate texture and subtle flavor that make them worth trying. Find a farmers’ market vendor who offers them and ask how to prepare them.

You’ll find fresh green peas at your farmers’ market from J&M Farms out of Hollister, Fifth Crow Farm from Pescadero, and both Andreotti Farms and Iacopi Farms from Half Moon Bay.

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