**Singing The Praises of Peas**

1. **What are they and how do they grow**
2. Peas are classified as legumes along with beans and legumes.
3. They were first found in the middle east, specifically Syria, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan by early archeologists.
4. Peas grow in a pod. Sometimes the pod can be eaten and sometimes not.
5. Scientifically, peas are fruits because they come from a blossom, but like many other “fruits”, we treat them as vegetables in the culinary world.
6. Peas grow in a cool, wet environment 60-65 °F
7. Plant as soon as the ground can be worked in the spring
8. Sandy soil is best
9. Trellises or poles to climb up and they can grow to more than 6’ tall! Makes for easier picking too.
10. There are three basic types of peas
11. English Garden Peas: inedible pod with sweet, tender green peas inside
12. Snow Peas: small flat pods that are edible
13. Snap Peas: flat, tender pods with small underdeveloped peas inside.
14. **Health Benefits**
15. Peas provide about 100 calories per cup
16. Peas are a good source of vitamins A, B6, C, thiamin, folate, fiber and protein. They also contain a good amount of vitamin K.
17. Peas contain lots of phytochemicals (or plant substances) that have the potential to help with a variety of conditions. Lots of study is still needed
18. **Coumestrol** is a plant substance that has recently been linked to protection against stomach cancer.
19. **Saponins** are plant substances that help to slow the reproduction of cancerous cells, reduce blood cholesterol and stimulate the immune system.
20. **Lutein** has probably received the most study and has been shown to improve/maintain eye health by lowering risk of cataract formation. Also being studied as it relates to macular degeneration.
21. Peas are a good source of soluble and insoluble fiber. But you have to chew them good to get the soluble fiber.
22. Soluble fiber is very beneficial for lowering cholesterol levels. Plus, it gives form to our poop!
23. Insoluble fiber is beneficial for reducing the risk of colon cancer. Insoluble fibers “sweep” the colon and are what we often call roughage.
24. Fiber combined with protein in peas also helps to regulate the breakdown of starches into sugars. This is important in helping our blood sugar levels stay steadier.
25. Peas are low in fat, and the little bit of fat they have is a healthy fat (omega-3).
26. Peas have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.
27. **Fun Facts**
28. Only 5% of all peas grown are sold fresh to the consumer. That means 95% of peas are processed for canning or freezing.
29. China, India, USA, France and Egypt (in that order) are the top growers of green peas in the world.
30. Because of the challenge in keeping peas on the fork, upscale restaurants rarely serve them. Afterall, we wouldn’t want to stress out diners who chase peas around on plates only to have these tasty morsals end up on the floor.
31. One of President Andrew Jackson’s favorite dishes was a Peas Pudding seasoned with onions, cloves, carrots, celery, butter, nutmeg, sour cream, salt, pepper and sugar. (Nope, I did not include this in the recipe).
32. The flower called the “sweet pea” get it’s name from the fact that they smell sweet. There is varying opinions on whether these flowers are poisonous so better to be safe than sorry. Stick to the garden, snow and snap varieties.
33. Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, Oregon and New York (in that order) are the top five pea growing states in the US.
34. **Selection, Storage and Handling of Peas**
35. Firm pods that appear smooth and velvety. Go green! Some buyers like to shake the pod in order to determine if there is too much empty room in the pod.
36. Know what you are buying. Snow peas are suppose to be flat. English or garden peas are rounded. Snap peas are somewhere in between.
37. If you aren’t going to use the same day, store in the refrigerator in a container that is open to air. Don’t wash until just before preparing.
38. Watch the sodium content of canned. Even frozen peas may have sodium added particularly if it is a seasoned vegetable blend. (During processing, in order to sort out the spoiled or overripe peas, they may be soaked in salt water. The older peas sink while the younger ones float. )
39. If you want to freeze fresh peas yourself, simply blanch for 1-2 minutes and store in freezer for up to 6 months.
40. When shelling peas, rinse the pods first. Usually a thread can be pulled right down the pea pod length. You don’t need to wash the peas that come out of the pod…they’ve been inside the pod the whole time!
41. **Activity ideas (prizes can be given) in addition to any cooking demo you want to do.**

* See if anyone can recite the Pease Porridge rhyme.
* See if anyone can tell you who wrote the fairy tale The Princess & The Pea. (*Hans Christian Andersen*)
* Ask if anyone can summarize the fairy tale. Then ask if anyone can recall how many mattresses were piled on top of the single pea.

A young prince wanted to marry and searched his land to find a "real" princess. He almost gave up when on a windy and rainy night a young woman, who said she was a princess, arrived at the castle door drenched and soaking wet. The queen put her through the test by putting a pea on a bed, then piling 20 mattresses on top of the pea. The young woman was to sleep on this bed. In the morning the queen asked her if she had slept well. The young woman lamented that she hadn't slept a wink because she was lying on something so hard it made her black and blue all over. When the queen declared that no one but a real princess could be that sensitive, the prince knew he had at last found his real princess. And, they lived happily ever after.