

What are Pea Shoots?

Pea shoots are the choice leaves and tendrils of pea plants. Shoots are typically harvested from snow pea vines, although they can be from any type of garden pea.

Look for pea shoots at your local farmers' market in spring, early summer and fall. Their season is rather short, as peas do not grow well when daytime temperatures are above 65° F.

Selection

Pea shoots are harvested from the growing point of the plants and should be young and tender. Choose shoots that include the top pair of small leaves (the tip), delicate tendrils attached to the young stem, and maybe a few larger leaves or even blossoms.

Select shoots that look fresh and crisp. Choose ones that are bright green and undamaged.

Storage

Pea shoots are fragile and best used within one to two days of harvesting. Keep them wrapped in paper towels in an open plastic bag in the vegetable bin of the refrigerator.

Using Pea Shoots

Rinse pea shoots in cool water, drain and let dry. Remove any stems that look coarse. Pea shoots can be eaten raw or lightly cooked. To cook, place damp pea shoots in an empty saucepan over medium heat. The water clinging to the damp shoots is enough to steam them. Cover and heat just until wilted.

- Add raw pea shoots to a tossed salad.
- Serve a fresh mound of pea shoots with a squeeze of lemon juice.
- Add pea shoots to any stir-fry or soup near the end of cooking time.
- Toss wilted pea shoots with sprinkles of ginger and sugar to taste.

Try this flavorful way to wilt pea shoots:

Flash-Cooked Greens with Garlic

1-1/4 lb. pea shoots or other greens, rinsed
1 teaspoon canola or olive oil
8 to 10 cloves garlic, sliced thinly
2-1/2 tablespoons rice wine, sake or water
1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired

Heat oil in a wok or skillet. Add pea shoots and garlic; toss lightly about 20 seconds, then add rice wine and salt. Toss over high heat 1 minute or less, just until wilted. Lift out of pan, leaving the liquid. Serve. (From *A Spoonful of Ginger: Irresistible, Health-Giving Recipes from Asian Kitchens* by Nina Simonds, Knopf, 1999.)

How Nutritious are Pea Shoots?

Pea shoots are considered a “green.” Green leafy vegetables are typically nutrient-dense. This means that for very few calories you get large amounts of vitamins and minerals. For just 10 calories and no fat, take a look at the nutrients in 2 cups of raw pea shoots.¹

Percent of Recommended Amounts Needed for Adults—Per Day

Potassium	3%	Folate	10.5%
Vitamin C	35.5%	Thiamin	5.75%
Vitamin A	15%	Riboflavin	7%
Vitamin E	8.75%	Vitamin B-6	4.75%
Vitamin k	132%	Fiber	3.5%

Pea shoots are packed full of carotenes—strong antioxidants that protect cells from damage and help prevent certain diseases.

Pea shoots may also contain valuable phytochemicals. Certain pea plants have these natural disease fighters, but it is not known whether garden peas contain them. The phytochemicals found in other types of pea plants include lignins, a flavonoid called quercetin, and caffeic acid. Researchers believe these substances help prevent cancer in different ways and have other beneficial health effects.



¹ Data Calculated from the Japanese Standard Tables of Food Composition, 4th Edition.

Enjoying Pea Shoots

Light and flavorful, this pea-vine salad is heaven-sent.

Pea Vine Salad

1 pound pea vines, rinsed
¼ pound snow peas, trimmed
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
1 teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon hot-chili oil
2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds*

Wilt the pea vines; drain on paper towels. Fluff and separate the leaves as much as possible.

Cut the snow peas on the diagonal into thirds. Place in boiling water for 1 minute. Drain, rinse with cold water and pat dry.

Whisk together liquids and sugar. Toss the pea vines with half of the dressing and half of the sesame seeds. Arrange on a serving dish. Toss the snow peas with the remaining dressing and sesame seeds. Arrange on top of pea vines. Serves 4. (Adapted from a Seattle Times recipe, June 24, 1998.)

*To toast sesame seeds, heat a dry skillet. Add sesame seeds, shaking gently until they begin to turn golden brown and fragrant. Remove from heat and cool.

Food from the Field

Local farmers are providing new foods for your table. Traditionally grown in Asia, pea shoots are now being harvested by local farmers because of their great taste and health value.

Buying local produce not only gives you fresh, nutritious food, but also enhances your community in these ways:

- Keeps small farmers in business and supports the local economy.
- Preserves farmland and open space in your area.
- Conserves natural resources—less fuel used in transportation and packaging.
- Preserves the environment with responsible use of water, fewer farm chemicals, and less air pollution.

If these things are important to you, visit a farmers' market weekly during the growing season and look for the Puget Sound Fresh label at your grocery store. Make a difference with your food dollars!

This consumer brochure was produced with funds from the King County Agriculture Commission in cooperation with Washington State University King County Cooperative Extension. Artwork by Leslie Zenz, text by Gayle Povich Alleman, M.S. R.D. 1999. For more information, contact WSU Vancouver Research and Extension Unit (360) 576-6030, or visit our Web site <http://agsyst.wsu.edu>

Cooperative Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Washington State
University 



Pea Shoots

A delicate and delightful
"green"

Food from the Field Series