

recipe split pea and ham soup

Recipe Split Pea and Ham Soup is a comforting dish that warms the soul, especially during the chilly months. With its rich flavors and hearty texture, this soup is not only delicious but also highly nutritious. Split pea and ham soup is a classic recipe that has been passed down through generations, often associated with family gatherings and cozy nights in. In this article, we will explore the origins of this beloved dish, the health benefits of its ingredients, and provide a comprehensive recipe that you can easily follow at home.

Origins of Split Pea and Ham Soup

The history of split pea and ham soup can be traced back to ancient times. Peas have been cultivated for thousands of years, and they were a staple food for many cultures. The practice of making soup from dried legumes dates back to the Roman Empire. However, the specific combination of split peas with ham likely originated in Europe, particularly in regions where pork was a common livestock animal.

In the United States, split pea and ham soup became popular during the Great Depression when it was a cost-effective way to feed a family. It utilized leftover ham bones, making it both economical and delicious. Over the years, it has remained a favorite comfort food that evokes feelings of home and warmth.

Health Benefits of Split Pea and Ham Soup

Split pea and ham soup is not only filling but also packed with nutrients. Here are some health benefits of the main ingredients:

Split Peas

- **High in Protein:** Split peas are an excellent source of plant-based protein, which is essential for muscle repair and overall health.
- **Rich in Fiber:** They contain both soluble and insoluble fiber, which aids digestion and helps maintain healthy cholesterol levels.
- **Low in Fat:** Split peas are naturally low in fat, making them a heart-healthy option.
- **Vitamins and Minerals:** They are rich in essential vitamins and minerals, including folate, iron, and magnesium.

Ham

- Source of Protein: Ham provides additional protein to the soup, which is essential for building and repairing tissues.
- Nutrient-Rich: Ham contains important nutrients such as B vitamins (especially B12), zinc, and selenium.
- Flavor Enhancer: The addition of ham not only provides nutritional benefits but also adds a savory depth of flavor to the soup.

Essential Ingredients for Split Pea and Ham Soup

To create a hearty split pea and ham soup, you'll need the following ingredients:

1. Dried Split Peas: 1 pound, rinsed and sorted
2. Ham: 1-2 cups diced ham or a ham hock for added flavor
3. Onion: 1 medium onion, chopped
4. Carrots: 2 medium carrots, diced
5. Celery: 2 stalks of celery, diced
6. Garlic: 2-3 cloves of garlic, minced
7. Broth: 6 cups of chicken or vegetable broth
8. Bay Leaves: 2 bay leaves for flavor
9. Thyme: 1 teaspoon dried thyme or a few sprigs of fresh thyme
10. Salt and Pepper: To taste
11. Olive Oil: 1 tablespoon for sautéing
12. Optional Ingredients:
 - A splash of vinegar or lemon juice for acidity
 - Fresh parsley for garnish

Step-by-Step Recipe for Split Pea and Ham Soup

Now that we have our ingredients, let's delve into the step-by-step process of making this delicious soup.

Preparation

1. Rinse the Peas: Start by rinsing the split peas under cold water. This helps remove any dust or debris. Sort through them to discard any pebbles or damaged peas.
2. Chop the Vegetables: Dice the onion, carrots, and celery. Mince the garlic. Having your vegetables ready will make the cooking process smoother.

3. Prepare the Ham: If using a ham hock, leave it whole. If using diced ham, cut it into bite-sized pieces.

Cooking Instructions

1. Sauté the Vegetables: In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion, carrots, and celery. Sauté for about 5-7 minutes until the vegetables are softened.

2. Add Garlic: Stir in the minced garlic and cook for an additional minute until fragrant.

3. Combine Ingredients: Add the rinsed split peas, ham (or ham hock), broth, bay leaves, and thyme to the pot. Stir well to combine all the ingredients.

4. Bring to a Boil: Increase the heat and bring the soup to a boil. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and cover the pot. Allow the soup to simmer gently for about 1-1.5 hours or until the split peas are soft and falling apart.

5. Stir Occasionally: Make sure to stir the soup occasionally to prevent it from sticking to the bottom of the pot. If the soup seems too thick, you can add additional broth or water to reach your desired consistency.

6. Remove the Ham Hock: If you used a ham hock, carefully remove it from the pot after about an hour. Let it cool slightly, then shred the meat off the bone and return it to the soup. Discard the bone and bay leaves.

7. Season to Taste: Taste the soup and season with salt and pepper as needed. If you like a bit of acidity, add a splash of vinegar or lemon juice at this stage.

8. Serve: Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with freshly chopped parsley if desired. Serve with crusty bread for a complete meal.

Storage and Reheating Tips

Split pea and ham soup can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. It also freezes well, making it a great option for meal prep. Here are some storage tips:

- Freezing: Allow the soup to cool completely before transferring it to freezer-safe containers. You can portion it out for individual servings or freeze it in a larger container. It can be stored for up to 3 months.
- Reheating: To reheat, thaw the soup in the refrigerator overnight. Then, heat it on the stovetop over medium heat until warmed through. Add a little water or broth if it has thickened too much during storage.

Variations of Split Pea and Ham Soup

While the classic recipe is delicious on its own, you can experiment with various ingredients to create your unique version. Here are some ideas:

- Spicy Kick: Add a diced jalapeño or red pepper flakes for some heat.
- Vegetarian Version: Omit the ham and use smoked paprika to mimic the smoky flavor. You can add mushrooms for a meaty texture.
- Herb Infusion: Experiment with different herbs, such as rosemary or dill, to add a fresh twist.
- Vegetable Additions: Toss in other vegetables like potatoes, corn, or bell peppers for added nutrition and flavor.
- Creamy Version: Blend a portion of the soup after cooking to create a creamier texture.

Conclusion

Recipe Split Pea and Ham Soup is a timeless dish that showcases the beauty of simple, wholesome ingredients. It is a nutritious option that can easily be adapted to suit your taste preferences. Whether you enjoy it on a cold winter night or as part of a meal prep routine, this soup is sure to become a favorite in your household. So grab your ingredients and start cooking – a delicious bowl of comfort awaits you!

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key ingredients needed for a classic split pea and ham soup?

The key ingredients for a classic split pea and ham soup include split peas, diced ham (or ham hock), onions, carrots, celery, garlic, vegetable or chicken broth, bay leaves, thyme, and salt and pepper to taste.

How long should I cook split pea and ham soup for optimal flavor?

For optimal flavor, split pea and ham soup should be simmered for at least 1.5 to 2 hours, allowing the flavors to meld and the peas to fully soften. If using a slow cooker, cooking for 6-8 hours on low will yield great results.

Can I make split pea and ham soup in a pressure cooker?

Yes, you can make split pea and ham soup in a pressure cooker. Cook on high pressure for about 15-20 minutes, then allow the pressure to release naturally or do a quick release, depending on your cooker's instructions.

Is split pea and ham soup suitable for freezing?

Yes, split pea and ham soup freezes well. Allow the soup to cool completely, then store it in airtight containers or freezer bags. It can be frozen for up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator and reheat on the stove before serving.

What can I serve with split pea and ham soup?

Split pea and ham soup pairs well with crusty bread, cornbread, or a simple green salad. You can also serve it with a dollop of sour cream or a sprinkle of fresh herbs for added flavor.

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