

From Gary's Kitchen

Slow Cooker Split Pea Soup

Difficulty: Easy

Total Time: 20 minutes prep., plus 5 to 10 hours cooking time

Makes: 6 to 8 servings

This soup freezes well, so make a batch and save the extra for later.

Make-ahead note: The recipe can be prepared through step 1 the night before and refrigerated, covered, in the slow cooker's insert.

INGREDIENTS

1 pound dried green split peas, rinsed
2 cups carrots, peeled and diced
2 cups celery, diced
2 medium garlic cloves, minced
2 fresh Italian parsley sprigs
1 bay leaf
1 meaty smoked ham bone or 2 ham hocks (about 1 pound) [Dittmer's has great hocks!]
¼ lb bacon, chopped [I buy bacon ends and split them into ¼ lb packs in the freezer to have on hand]
1 medium yellow onion, diced
4 cups (1 quart) low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
2 cups water
1 lb ham steak [or leftover ham]
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Arrange the split peas in the slow cooker in an even layer. Arrange the carrots, celery, garlic, parsley, and bay leaf over the peas. Place the ham bone or hocks on top of the vegetables. (At this point you can remove the insert from the slow cooker, cover, and refrigerate up to 12 hours until ready to continue.)
2. Cook bacon on stovetop in skillet, medium heat, until fat is rendered. Cook onions in bacon fat until they start to turn translucent and bacon bits start to crisp, then add to slow cooker. If you're omitting the bacon, just add the chopped onions to the slow cooker with the carrots and celery.
3. Pour the chicken broth and water into the slow cooker and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the peas are very soft and the meat is falling off the bone, on high for 5 to 6 hours or low for 8 to 10 hours.
4. Remove the ham bone or hocks to a cutting board. When cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones, place the meat back in the soup (discard the skin and bones), and stir to combine. While waiting for the ham bone or hocks to cool, chop ham steak into bite-size pieces and stir into soup. Allow 15-30 minutes for ham to heat before serving. You can add the ham at the start of cooking with the rest of the ingredients, but the ham flavor will be stronger if you add it at the end. Taste and season with more salt and pepper as needed.



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