

Split Pea Soup - NYT

INGREDIENTS

6 slices bacon or 1 (1-pound) smoked ham hock, or 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed
2 medium leeks, white and pale green parts rinsed and thinly sliced (about 1¾ cups)
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium onion, diced (about 1½ cups)
Salt and black pepper
2 medium carrots, scrubbed and diced (about 1½ cups)
1 pound dried split green peas
2 fresh thyme sprigs
8 to 12 cups chicken stock or water
Lemon wedges, for serving (optional)

PREPARATION

Step 1 If using bacon: In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp, 12 to 13 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a plate lined with a paper towel, leaving behind the rendered fat for cooking. Once cool, crumble the bacon and set aside for garnish. If using ham hock: In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high, heat the olive oil, then brown the ham hock until golden, about 6 minutes. If making the soup vegetarian: In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, heat the olive oil.

Step 2 Add the leeks, garlic and onion, and season generously with salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5 to 8 minutes. (If the vegetables seem dry, add a little olive oil.) Stir in the carrots, paprika (if using), half of the split peas, thyme and 8 cups stock or water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, partly covered, stirring occasionally, for about 45 minutes until peas are tender.

Step 3 Mash the soup coarsely with a potato masher or give it a few quick blitzes with an immersion blender (watch out for the thyme sprigs). If you'd prefer a smoother soup, blitz until nearly smooth. Add the remaining ½ pound split peas and simmer about 1 hour, or until the peas are soft. If at any point the soup looks too thick, add more stock or water; if it looks too thin, remove the lid during the second simmer until it thickens. If using ham hocks, remove any meat from the bone, cut it into small cubes and stir into the soup. Season soup to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with crumbled bacon, if using, and lemon wedges.