

Black-Eyed Pea Soup – Alex Parker

1 pound dried black-eyed peas (about 2½ cups) [I use the fresh peas that are available in December, saves time]

5 slices thick-cut bacon

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large diced onion

2 large diced carrots

2 ribs diced celery

1 bunch of fresh collard greens [or spinach], chopped @ 1.5cups

3 cloves garlic, minced

4 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1 smoked ham hock [or leftover unglazed ham]

½ cup rice blend [or quinoa]

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Sort through the peas and pick out any pebbles or other debris. Rinse the peas under cold water. Put the peas in a 5-quart Dutch oven and cover with 5 cups cold water. Place over high heat and bring to a boil; boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, cover and let peas soak for 1 hour. Pour off remaining liquid. [If using fresh peas, skip this step]
2. Cook the bacon in a large skillet over medium heat until crispy, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate to cool. When cool, crumble the bacon and set aside. Add the oil to the skillet with the bacon fat. Add the onions, carrots and celery and cook, stirring frequently, until tender, about 10 minutes. Add the collard greens and garlic and cook until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute.
3. Add the vegetables to the Dutch oven along with the chicken broth, ham hock, crumbled bacon, rice (or quinoa) and 4 cups water. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, until the peas and rice (quinoa) are tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour.
4. Remove the ham hock from the Dutch oven. Discard the skin and bone. Chop the meat into small pieces and return it to the Dutch oven. Season the soup with salt and pepper.