

## ON THE SIDE Minty Sugar Snap Pea Salad

Good technique and a few surprise ingredients transform mint and peas into a sophisticated salad. BY MARÍA DEL MAR SACASA

WARM ENGLISH PEAS with mint is a winning spring-time classic, so we were intrigued when we came across recipes for a contemporary variation: sugar snap peas with mint in a room-temperature salad. Unfortunately, the recipes we tested disappointed us. The sugar snaps were either raw or overcooked, and several were slicked with vinaigrette that tasted more like mouthwash than bright, fresh mint.

Before even considering how we might improve the salad, we snapped off the stems from each pod and removed their fibrous strings. Then, we turned to the test kitchen's standard method for achieving emerald green, crisp-tender snap peas: We blanch them in well-seasoned boiling water, then plunge them into ice water to stop the pods from cooking further and lock in their texture, flavor, and color.

To make the vinaigrette, we gently heated the mint leaves in oil in the hopes they would impart their flavor. It didn't go as planned. We intended infusion; we got mouthwash, and began to understand where the other recipes had gone wrong. We changed track, now reaching for a lemon, with the idea that the acidity (from both the zest and juice) would help draw out the herb's flavor. To offset sharp mint and sour lemon, we added minced shallot and a teaspoon each of Dijon mustard and honey.

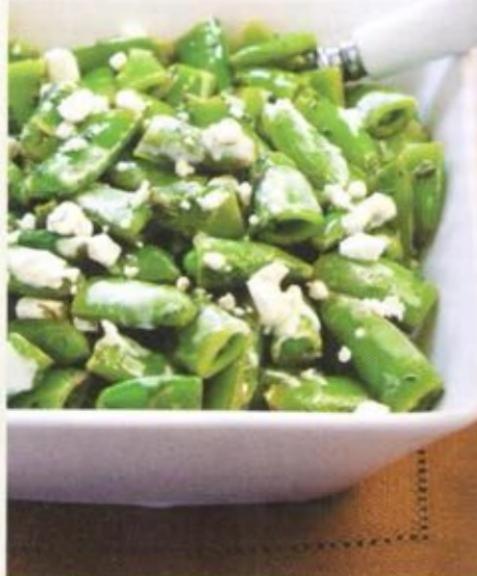
We thought we were done, but our salad still tasted like a work in progress. We wandered the test kitchen for

ideas, opening cabinets and investigating the contents of refrigerators. After a few unsuccessful additions, we tried goat cheese. A restrained  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup was enough to pull the salad together, providing tangy, creamy richness without weighing it down. Finally, to make for easier eating and to help the peas hold more dressing, we sliced the pods in half crosswise.

### MINTY SUGAR SNAP PEA SALAD Serves 4 to 6

- 1½ pounds sugar snap peas, stems snapped off and strings removed
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh mint
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated zest plus 1 tablespoon juice from 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese

**1. PREP PEAS** Combine 4 cups water and 4 cups ice cubes in large bowl; set aside. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot over high heat. Add peas and 1 tablespoon salt and cook until crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Drain peas, then transfer to ice bath to cool completely. Remove peas from water, pat dry with kitchen towel,



To the classic combination of mint, peas, and lemon, we added outliers: goat cheese and honey. They fit right in.

and cut in half crosswise. (Hulled peas can be refrigerated in zipper-lock bag for 2 days.)

**2. DRESS SALAD** Whisk mint, shallot, lemon juice, mustard, honey, and oil in large bowl. Add peas and cheese to bowl and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper. Serve chilled or at room temperature. (Salad can be refrigerated in airtight container for 1 day.)