

FRENCH EPICUREAN PEAS

Even if you don't like peas that much - like me - I think you will love this dish. It is very rich. I made a double recipe for 10 people for Thanksgiving and still had quite a bit left over, so I think a single recipe would suffice unless you want leftovers, which I did! The recipe below is a single recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

4 slices bacon, chopped
1/2 cup chopped white or yellow onion
1 Tbsp flour
2 1/2 cups drained peas (Use Le Sueur brand - silver & black label they're baby peas - don't use sodium reduced variety unless necessary. You will need one 15 oz can and one small can, if available, otherwise get two 15 oz cans)
1 cup light cream or Half and Half (non-fat is okay)
2 cups fresh sliced button mushrooms (or 1 large can, approx 8 oz, bits and pieces or slices)
2 Tablespoons REAL butter, NOT margarine (only if cooking mushrooms)
Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS:

1. Partially fry bacon.
2. Add onion to bacon and cook until golden and bacon is slightly crisp.
3. Add flour to bacon and onion and blend, stir to incorporate.
4. Add cream and cook until thickening starts, stirring often.
5. If using raw mushrooms, separately cook mushrooms in the butter (approx 5 minutes). If using canned mushrooms, omit this step and omit the butter and proceed to next step.
6. Add peas and mushrooms to mixture and heat, being careful not to boil or scald.
7. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

TIPS:

For the bacon, just peel off (all together) the appropriate number of strips of bacon and cut perpendicularly in widths similar to your thumbnail. Don't worry about separating them at this point - they will do that themselves during frying.

For a double recipe, if using canned mushrooms, I use 1 large can and 1 small can - that is plenty.

For a double recipe for the peas, I believe I used 4 or 5 15-ounce cans. If you measure out 5 cups and have some left over in another can, just toss them in and add a little more cream.

To make this dish vegetarian, just omit the bacon and sautee the onion in 2 Tbsp REAL butter. Once the onions have cooked down a little, add the flour and stir and continue to cook for a couple of minutes more before adding the cream.

You can prepare this the night before and heat it up in the microwave later. The dish is meant to be just a little "soupy" so if, after heating or re-heating, the mixture appears too thick, add a little more cream or water. Or you can leave it a little thicker, which is what I usually do so the cream doesn't run into my other food on the plate. Of course, you could also put them in a separate small dish, but who wants to wash all those additional dishes?

In general, this recipe is pretty forgiving, so feel free to make adjustments to your preference, i.e., more or less bacon, mushrooms, onion, etc., or omit some of those, as desired.