

Food Fans, it's a special time of year. Everyone who just had a big ham dinner is wondering, what am I going to do with all of these leftovers? Sure you could make ham sandwiches, but what my family has always done is to make

Split Pea and Ham soup

I love this soup. It's one of my favorite recipes that reuses leftovers. It makes 8 servings, but I never halve this recipe. I want as much of it as I can get. Whatever I don't eat at the time, I freeze and have later. It's a great meal to heat and have on a cool night when you don't want to put a lot of work into dinner.

The cook time on split pea soup is close to 4 hours, but don't be daunted by that. Most of the cook time is just letting the soup simmer and string it every half hour a so.

Here's what you'll need:

2 ¼ cups dried split peas, (1 pound), sorted and rinsed
8 cups water
1 large onion, chopped (1 cup)
2 medium celery stalks, finely chopped (1 cup)
¼ teaspoon pepper
1 ham bone or 2 pounds shanks
3 medium carrots, cut into 1/4-inch slices (1 1/2 cups)

When it comes to meat, I prefer using the leftover ham bone from a ham dinner, and whatever leftover meat there is, but if you don't have that and are still looking to make split pea soup, ham shanks will do great. The can usually be found at the meat counter at your grocery store, or even pre-wrapped in a meat case. Split peas can be found easily enough in a 1lb bag at your local grocery, usually in the same aisle as the rice.

First, you're going to want to bring the water with the peas to boiling in a large pot. Boil them uncovered for about 2 minutes. Then remove the pot from heat. Cover the pot and let the hot water and peas stand 1 hour.

Once the peas have softened for the hour, stir in your onion, celery, and pepper. Then add in the ham bone or ham shanks. If you're using ham bone and meat that's already been carved off, you don't need to add the meat yet. If you're using shanks or hambone with the meat still on it, leave the meat on the bone for now. Heat everything to a boil, then reduce the heat to simmer heat. Cover the pot and let everything simmer about 1 hour 30 minutes or until peas are tender.

After cooking the soup for the hour and a half, remove ham bone or shanks and cut the meat from the bone. Trim excess fat off of the ham and cut it into 1/2-inch pieces.

Finally, mix the ham and carrots into soup. Bring it back to a boil, then reduce the heat. Cover the soup and let it simmer for another 30 minutes or until carrots are tender. Soup is ready to serve! You won't be disappointed!

Happy eating!