



Pea Vine

From Derek Morricks journal. Summer Farm Cook 2004.

These little shoots were a very welcome sight to me this week. I went out in the afternoon and harvested a good amount of them to experiment with. To me this was a sign of new food on the horizon. These shoots are from a variety called Dwarf Grey Sugar peas and are planted close to the house along with the other peas. There are only two rows planted of this kind because they are harvested just for the shoots, not their pods.

When bunching, the vine is cut close to the ground and then tied together, but you will want to cut off some of the bottom portion because it gets fibrous and cooking will not break it down. Try one and you will see what I mean. The top 6 inches or so is very edible and has the mild flavor and sweetness of a pea, with a fresh and vibrant taste. I instantly thought of pureeing them into a soup, asparagus maybe? Or maybe a quick sauté alone or with another green, or just at the end of a stir fry or a salad of their own.

Turns out that is exactly what I did. I made a cream of asparagus soup for lunch with winter onions and pureed blanched pea vine in at the end. I thought it was great. Bright green with little bits of pea vine in every bite. I also made a kind of slaw with raw pea vine, thin sliced carrot and red cabbage with an Asian dressing. The staff who ate this rated it the best pea vine dish ever! If you make something like this I suggest you add the dressing right before you serve it because I think the pea vine will probably deteriorate quickly.

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP WITH PEA VINE

SERVES ABOUT 6

Asparagus Spears --About 1#
Butter 3 T
Winter onion (scallion) --1 Bunch or 8 spears
Flour 2T
Chicken Stock - 4 cup
Egg yolks -- 2
Heavy Cream (or half and half) 2/3 cup
Salt and Pepper to taste
Pea Vine - about 1/4 lb.

Wash asparagus and cut off tips. Reserve. Peel bottom portion if it seems tough or has a lot of the scales on it and chop into 1 to 2 inch pieces. Chop winter onion the same. Melt butter in saucepan and cook chopped asparagus and onion until tender and smelling good then add flour and stir. Add stock slowly at the beginning and stir into flour and onions. (see back)

POLENTA WITH PEA VINE SAUCE

Soft Polenta, cooked and warm
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3 cups pea vine, top 6 inches only, chopped
1 cup heavy cream, hot
2 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated
Black pepper in a mill

Cook the polenta and when it is nearly ready, place the garlic, salt, and pea vine in a food processor and pulse until it is evenly chopped. Add half the cream and process until it is well blended. Add the remaining cream, pulse just enough to mix, transfer the sauce to a small warm bowl, and stir in the grated cheese. Keep the sauce warm. (see back)



Recipes and information provided by Harmony Valley Farm; its farmers and staff.
For more information go to www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

A Midwestern Palette - Eating With the Seasons

Though many fresh foods are available year round, our regional agricultural community, and the urban communities surrounded by them, benefit when we choose to eat seasonally, from local producers. Knowing the seasonality of our favorite produce allows us to make informed choices.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
			Pea Vine Season								

Pea Vines grow in the cool of early spring. They can be planted as soon as the soil is dry enough to work in the spring. The vines are most edible before the plants begin to bloom and set pods. Blooming vines and hot weather can produce tough stems and tendrils.

Preparation and Storage Tips

Pea Vine is generally sold in bunches and is hard to find outside a farmer's market or Asian specialty store.

Pea Vine wilts easily. Rinse in cold water and shake off excess.

Wrap loosely in a paper towel and place in crisper drawer in a plastic bag.

Pea Vine should be used in 5 days or less.

To prepare pea vine one must generally trim the bottom portion of the stems off.

Anything longer than 6 inches can be cut off and discarded as too tough. Or, add the tough ends to stock for a fresh, sweet flavor. Remove before using.

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP WITH PEA VINE CONTINUED

Add remaining stock and simmer gently until everything is tender. Cool slightly and carefully puree mixture in a blender in batches not filling it too high. Pass the puree through a medium strainer with a rubber spatula until almost dry. Clean pot and return puree. In a separate small pot heat enough boiling salty water to cook your asparagus tips just until barely tender. Remove and use same water to blanch pea vine just until it wilts. Beat egg yolks with cream then add mixture to the remaining puree. Stir well and simmer slowly until mixture thickens. Puree pea vine with just enough soup to make it puree into a bright green. Return to soup with asparagus tips and adjust with salt and pepper.

POLENTA WITH PEA VINE SAUCE CONTINUED

Pour the polenta onto individual serving plates-low soup plates are ideal-and spoon the sauce over each portion. Add several turns of black pepper and serve immediately.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

To dress it up for company save a few tips and tendrils of the pea vine for garnish.