Cook's Country

Hoppin' John

SERVES 4 TO 6

This recipe is inspired by a cook-through with Ms. Emily Meggett and is based on the hoppin' John recipe in her cookbook, Gullah Geechee Home Cooking: Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island (2022). We split the ham hock in half so that it cooks through at about the same rate as the peas. We enjoy adding the optional smoky pieces of ham hock to our Hoppin' John. If you prefer your rice and peas with less meat, feel free to leave it out. Note that not all salt pork is sold with its skin on.



PEAS

- **1 cup Sea Island red peas**
- **1 smoked ham hock, split in half vertically along bone**
- **1 tablespoon table salt**

HOPPIN' JOHN

- **6 ounces salt pork, skin removed, rinsed, patted dry, and cut into ¾-inch pieces**
- **¼ cup vegetable oil or lard**
- **1 cup chopped onion**
- **3 scallions, sliced ½ inch thick**
- **1½ cups long-grain or Carolina Gold rice, unrinsed**
- **1 teaspoon table salt**
- **¾ teaspoon pepper**
- **¾ teaspoon granulated garlic**
- **½ teaspoon onion powder**

1. FOR THE PEAS: Place peas in medium bowl and cover with water. Slosh peas around with your hand to knock off loose dirt. Let peas settle, then pour o! excess water along with any floating peas; repeat rinsing and pouring o! excess water until no peas float.

2. Combine rinsed peas, 4 quarts water, ham hock, and salt in Dutch oven. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce to medium-low; cover; and simmer until peas are tender, 50 minutes to 1 hour.

3. Reserve 2¼ cups pea cooking liquid and transfer ham hock pieces to plate to cool. Drain peas in colander in sink. (Cooked peas and liquid can be refrigerated separately for up to 24 hours or frozen for up to 1 month. Defrost before proceeding with recipe.) When cool enough to handle, chop ham hock into ½-inch pieces and reserve ¾ cup for hoppin' John, if desired (reserve remaining ham for another use or discard).

4. FOR THE HOPPIN' JOHN: Combine salt pork and oil in large saucepan. Cover and cook over medium heat until pork is evenly browned, 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally and being mindful of splatter. (Pork will initially stick to bottom of pot but will eventually release as it browns.)

5. Add onion and scallions to salt pork and cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in rice until grains are evenly coated with oil and cook, stirring often, until edges of rice are translucent, about 2 minutes. Stir in salt; pepper; granulated garlic; onion powder; cooked peas; reserved pea cooking liquid; and chopped ham hock, if using, and bring to simmer. Once simmering, cover pot with sheet of aluminum foil, then cover with lid. Reduce heat to low and cook for 20 minutes without removing lid.

6. Off heat, let hoppin' John sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Fluff rice with carving fork. Transfer to shallow serving dish. Serve.