



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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PUT ON YOUR JACKET AND GO: FARMERS MARKETS ARE GREEN WITH FIRST CROPS OF SPRING

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Evening temperatures may still plummet, and blustery days may keep the faint of heart indoors, but Tennessee farmers are already making their way to local farmers markets. The year's very first crops are in, and farmers market customers can find greens, lettuces, onions, radishes, early potatoes and sugar snaps as fresh as the season.

Hoppin' John Soup with Collard Greens is a perfect way to use the crops of early spring while chasing off its chill. The recipe comes from Tammy Algood, author of "The Complete Southern Cookbook." Algood creates recipes using seasonal farm-direct products for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Pick Tennessee Products campaign, a statewide promotion to help customers to find and choose locally grown or processed foods.

The origins of the name are uncertain, but one good theory is that the name is a misunderstood version of a Haitian Creole term for black-eyed peas: "pois pigeons" over time became "hoppin' John."

However it got its name, the basic recipe hasn't changed much since it left Africa, where rice and beans were mixed with bits of meat, then seasoned with available ingredients. The dish already dubbed "hoppin' John" had made its way into print by 1841 in a Southern newspaper and has since become a regional classic.

"Adding chicken stock gives the dish a lighter touch, and deep green leafy vegetables are a smart choice whenever they can be included," says Algood. "Leafy vegetables are high in protein per calorie, high in fiber, iron and calcium, and very high in vitamin C, folic acid and vitamin K."

"This soup calls for collard greens, but as with most recipes using greens," says Algood, "turnip greens, mustard greens or any other variant will work just as well and be just as delicious. Use what's in season and what you find at your local farm or farmers market." Tennessee's early crops typically are available from mid-March through May.

To find local farmers markets, pick-your-own farms, farm-direct foods or recipes featuring Tennessee farm products, visit TDA Market Development at www.picktnproducts.org or call 615-837-5160.

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Hoppin' John Soup with Collard Greens

Yield: 4 servings

1/4 cup olive oil (or enough to cover bottom of stockpot)
2 medium sweet onions, peeled and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 pound cooked ham, coarsely chopped
1 pound collard, turnip or mustard greens, chopped
6 cups water
2 cups chicken stock
2 (16-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
1-1/2 cups cooked rice
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons cider vinegar

Place the oil in a large stockpot over medium heat. Add the onions, garlic and ham. Cook, stirring occasionally until the onions are completely soft, about 13 minutes.

Add the collards, water and stock. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered until the collards are tender, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mash half of the peas with a fork. Stir in the mashed peas, whole peas and rice into the soup. Simmer uncovered 5 minutes. Stir in the salt, pepper and vinegar. Serve warm with hot cornbread.