Green is Good!

This is our dear friend Louise Roomet's version of an Elizabeth David classic. While it's simply delicious as a chilled soup, it's just as wonderful served hot. The vibrant green makes it the perfect soup for Christmas dinner. This soup is easily adaptable for vegetarians. (Serves 4 to 6)

- 1 medium-size head iceberg lettuce
- 1-pound bag frozen peas (baby peas are sweetest) or 1¾ pounds fresh peas in the pod
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3½ cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 to 2 lumps (teaspoons) of sugar (optional)
- Optional garnishes: Mint sprigs, pea shoots, edible flowers, black sesame seeds.

1. Remove the tough outer leaves of the lettuce. Wash and cut the lettuce into quarters, then into fine strips, ¼ to ½ inch wide. Shell the peas if using fresh.

2. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the lettuce strips and the peas. Cover and cook gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, as the lettuce begins to cook down. Add the salt and sugar to taste.

3. Add the water. If using fresh peas, cook further until the peas are tender. No further cooking is needed if using frozen peas.

4. Using a blender, puree the soup (in batches, if necessary).

5. Refrigerate, or return to the pan to heat to serving temperature.

6. Serve in bowls and garnish with mint sprigs, pea shoots, or edible flowers, or sprinkle with black sesame seeds.