



100 Recipes
for
Meze, Entrées,
and Desserts

Modern Greek Cooking

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PHYLLO PASTRIES

Spinach-and-Feta Phyllo Triangles

There isn't a single family gathering where my mother doesn't make at least one or two pie-crust versions of spanakopita, and they're always the first appetizers to go. In Greece, my thea Stella prepares a recipe using a rough puff pastry dough that she calls fila (with an "a"). I use store-bought no. 10 phyllo, a.k.a. country phyllo, and make two-bite triangles. • **MAKES 12 PASTRIES/4 SERVINGS**

1 tablespoon canola oil
4 ounces (125 g) spinach leaves, thick stems removed
Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
¾ cup (60 g) halved lengthwise and thinly sliced leeks, white and light green parts only
4 scallions, thinly sliced (½ cup)
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon finely chopped dill
2 teaspoons finely chopped parsley
1 large egg, lightly beaten
¾ cup (90 g) crumbled feta cheese (see page 163)
2 frozen country-style (extra-thick) phyllo sheets (no. 10), thawed
¼ cup (60 ml) clarified butter (see Step 3, page 199)

1. Line a baking sheet with paper towels. In a large saucepan, warm 1 teaspoon of the oil. Add the spinach, season with salt and pepper, and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until wilted, 3 to 5 minutes; transfer to the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the leeks and scallions, cooking them each in 1 teaspoon of the oil.

2. Coarsely chop the spinach and squeeze dry in cheesecloth. In a medium bowl, mix the spinach with the leeks, scallions, herbs, and half of the egg. Stir in the cheese and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill until firm, at least 1 hour.

3. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. For each phyllo sheet, lay it on a work surface with a long side in front of you. Brush with clarified butter. Using a pizza cutter or a sharp knife, cut the phyllo crosswise into 6 equal strips. Mound 1½ tablespoons (25 g) of the spinach filling at the bottom of each phyllo strip. Fold the bottom left corner of a phyllo strip over the filling to meet the right edge of the dough, making a triangle. Fold up the triangle to meet the right edge of the dough. Continue folding over and up to the end (see Note). Transfer the triangle to the prepared baking sheet and brush all over with clarified butter. Repeat with the remaining spinach filling and phyllo strips. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill until the butter is firm, at least 30 minutes.

PRECEDING SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER:
Spinach-and-Feta Phyllo Triangles (this spread);
Cheese Phyllo Cigars (page 82); Cheese and Wild
Mushroom Shredded-Phyllo Pies (page 83); Salmon-
and-Leek Phyllo Spirals with Tarama Mousse (pages
86–87)

4. Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Brush a large skillet with clarified butter and warm over medium heat. Add the pastries in batches and cook, turning them every 20 to 30 seconds so they don't burn, until lightly browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Return the pastries to the baking sheet, spacing them well apart, and bake, turning them once, until a cake tester inserted in a pastry is warm when touched to your lower lip, about 10 minutes. Let cool slightly and serve.

NOTE If you know how to fold a paper football, use the same technique for shaping the phyllo triangles.

MAKE AHEAD The triangles can be prepared through Step 3 and refrigerated for up to 2 days.

WINE Crisp Moschofilero, Greek Sauvignon Blanc, or dry Malvasia from Crete.

SAVORY GREEK PIE, WHENEVER YOU WANT IT

I used to walk three or four miles home from elementary school with my brother, Niko, and our friends, but, if we were lucky, my grandmother's spinach pie would already be out of the oven and cooling on the counter. It takes a whole hour to cool a hot pie enough for a tender mouth—that's forever in kid time. So when I could smell the filling from the doorway, I'd drop my book bag and bolt to the kitchen, hoping like crazy that the afternoon treat was ready to eat.

Pites, Greek "pies," are something like a double-crust fruit pie in that they're encased in dough. But they're eaten more like pizza or sandwiches. For the most part, pites are savory. I grew up with the spinach-and-cheese variety, but in Greece, my relatives serve innumerable fillings, such as meat, often lamb or pork; seafood; melted leeks; wild greens; and leftover combinations of all of the above. As for sweet versions, my aunt Elaine Tissura prepares a pumpkin-and-rice pite, and my pastry chef, Daniela Ascencio, has created a variation, Phyllo-Wrapped Banana with Flourless Chocolate Cake (pages 200–201).

Greek pies take many forms. They can be round (like apple pie), half-moon turnovers,

spirals, or the hefty baking-pan slabs you see at diners. At Kyma, there's a lot of sharing, so we get into the little shapes, like two-bite triangles and "cigars."

And the pastry crust varies. My mother usually prepares a no-fuss pie dough. But my aunt Stella goes all out, stacking balls of dough and rolling them into a kind of puff pastry. The layers of flour and fat create a really flaky crust. Also, there's no shame in buying readymade sheets of phyllo dough—I use it at Kyma—as well as kataifi, shredded phyllo dough.

Being savory, pites are more a food staple than an occasional indulgence. They can be a prelude to a meal, a meal in itself, and a side dish, as well as iconic, crowd-pleasing party food. My kids wake up and have pie for breakfast or eat it for lunch at school. For big Easter dinners, my mother will crank out multiple "feeds ten"-size pies, at least two spinach and two cheese. And since it's wrapped in pastry, it's easily portable for a potluck or any kind of gathering. In Greece, if you're walking around hungry and there isn't any pie waiting for you at home, you can always pick up some at a bakeshop. You don't need an excuse to eat pie.