





This vegetarian pie is broadly based on one by Marchesa Eta Polesini and uses what she calls *'la famosa pasta speciale'* (famous special pastry), a forgiving all-purpose pastry that does not need to be blind-baked – which is, she writes, what makes it special. Unlike most types of pastry, baking powder is worked into the dough after it has rested. I vary the original recipe, substituting part of the plain flour with spelt flour, which gives the pastry a nuttier taste and a darker colour. It is a terrific dough that can be rolled very thinly.

The filling uses up those vegetables lurking at the back of the fridge or pantry; feel free to substitute the ones in the recipe below with what you have on hand, as long as the quantities remain roughly the same. Using Marsala as the braising liquid gives the vegetables a lovely sweetness.

# Silverbeet & cauliflower vegetable pie

*(Torta salata con blede e cavolfiore)*

**Serves 6–8**

## **For the pastry**

250 g (1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour – or a mix of 200 g (1⅓ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour and 50 g (½ cup) spelt flour, plus extra for dusting

sea salt

160 g (5½ oz) chilled unsalted butter, chopped into small dice

2 eggs

1 tablespoons rum (or milk), plus a splash more if needed

2 scant teaspoons baking powder

To make the pastry, use your fingers to rub the flours and a good pinch of salt into the butter, until it resembles wet sand. (You can also use the pulse function on your food processor.) Work in the eggs and rum or milk until you have a smooth, cohesive dough. Roll out into a large disc on a floured work surface, then wrap (I use baking paper) and allow to rest for 1 hour in a cool spot.

To make the filling, finely dice the silverbeet and onion. Place the olive oil and butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the silverbeet and onion and a good pinch of salt and sauté for about 10 minutes without allowing the mixture to brown. While this is happening, chop the cauliflower (including the central spine) into chunks no larger than 1 cm (½ in).

Add the garlic to the pan and cook until fragrant. Next add the cauliflower and peas and allow to warm through, then add the Marsala and increase the heat to medium-high. Cook for a few minutes, then reduce the heat and cover. Cook for about 12 minutes, or until the cauliflower is tender. If there is a lot of liquid in the pan, remove the lid and cook for a few more minutes so the liquid evaporates.

Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and allow to cool. Add the remaining filling ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Mix together and set aside.

### For the filling

250 g (9 oz) silverbeet (Swiss chard) or rainbow chard, including the white leaf spine, but not the thick lower stalks  
½ white onion, peeled  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
15 g (½ oz) unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing  
sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper  
½ small cauliflower, about 250 g (9 oz)  
1 garlic clove, finely diced  
155 g (1 cup) frozen peas  
60 ml (¼ cup) Marsala  
50 g (½ cup) grated parmesan  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley  
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F) fan-forced. Line the base of a 24 cm (9½ in) tart (flan) tin with baking paper (my tin has a removable base). Carefully rub butter around the side of the tin.

Scatter the baking powder over the ball of dough and knead quickly and vigorously until it is incorporated. Cut off about one-third of the pastry to use as the pie lid; the larger portion will be for the base and side of the pie.

On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the larger dough portion to a circle a little bigger than your tart tin. Drape the dough over the tin and press it down into the side; you should have a small amount of dough overhanging the edge. Spoon the filling into the base.

Roll out the remaining dough to make a pie lid, then drape it over the filling. Seal the pie by rolling the overhanging dough over the pastry lid into a raised crust all around the top of the pie. Use any pastry scraps to cut out shapes to decorate the top of the pie, if you like, and insert a small hole in the centre for steam to escape.

Bake for 50–55 minutes, checking periodically that the pie is not browning too much; if it is, reduce the oven temperature slightly. The pie is cooked when the top is firm and golden.

Place on a wire rack and serve warm, or at room temperature. Once cooled, the pie will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for 3–4 days.