

Rough and Ready Spinach Pie

Combine the earthy flavour of spinach, the boldness of fetta, the creaminess of ricotta and the crispy lightness of filo pastry, and in no time you'll have this ultra easy homemade spinach pie.



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Greek spinach pie (Spanakopita) is very popular in Greek cuisine and there are probably as many versions of this pie as there are islands in the Aegean. Dill, parsley, spring onions, garlic, thyme or nutmeg are flavourings that could be added. One of my Greek cookbooks even includes heavy cream or evaporated milk. For special occasions, I do add some dill, parsley and a couple of sliced spring onions. My rough and ready version arose from a desire to cook something healthy for dinner with as little chopping or slicing as possible. Called 'rough and ready' because it can be knocked up in next to no time and you don't have to be very precious with it.







The central ingredients are the spinach, fetta cheese and the filo pastry. In my recipe, the spinach doesn't require any

chopping as I use frozen chopped spinach which has been **thawed**. It is important to **squeeze out** as much liquid as possible from the spinach. When you think you have squeezed out all you can, **squeeze some more**. You don't want a soggy-bottomed pie!!



The fetta cheese you select is a matter of preference. I have written about what to look out for when choosing a fetta cheese in my [Classic Greek Salad](#) recipe and the same applies here. The saltiness of the fetta you select will determine how much salt you add to your mixture. There's no better way of knowing if the pie (or any other dish) requires more salt than to taste as you go.

Working with filo pastry can be a little tricky as it can dry out quickly. In my experience, some brands are better than others. I have bought brands that dry out very quickly even when covered with a damp cloth. Other times I have ended up with most of the sheets in the bin as they have stuck together as they thawed. Be picky with which filo you buy. It may mean that, like me, you need to experiment with a couple of different brands.

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves 4 – 6

Ingredients

- 2 x 250 g (9oz) packets of frozen spinach (thawed)(Note 1)
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 200 g (7 oz) fetta cheese, crumbled
- 150 g (5 oz) ricotta cheese (Note 2)
- 8 – 10 sheets of filo pastry
- 2 medium eggs, gently beaten
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- salt, pepper to taste
- extra olive oil for brushing

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 200 C (375 F)
2. Heat the olive oil in a medium fry-pan. Add the chopped onions and sauté over low- moderate heat until very soft and transparent. Make sure your spinach is **fully thawed** and you have **squeezed out** any excess liquid.
3. Add the spinach and sauté over moderate heat until any residual liquid has evaporated. Set aside to cool. (Note 3)

4. Remove the filo pastry from the packet and slightly dampen a tea-towel. Place the tea-towel over the pastry sheets to prevent them from drying out.
 5. Lightly oil a 20 cm (8 inch) spring form baking tin. Lay one sheet of pastry over it. The edges will hang over the sides. Arrange each sheet at a slightly different angle as you work your way around the tin in a clockwise direction, brushing each sheet with oil as you go. Cover with another tea-towel. (Note 4)
 6. Tip the cooled onion and spinach mixture into a medium size bowl. Add the fetta, ricotta and eggs. Mix together. Season to taste.
 7. Add the mixture to the spring form baking tin lined with filo pastry. Fold the overhanging edges towards the centre of the tin. Brush the top of the pie with olive oil. Return any remaining filo sheets to their packaging. Seal well and freeze for future use.
 8. Divide the pie into quarters by scoring the surface with a sharp knife. Do not go all the way to the bottom; score the top layers of pastry only. This will allow any steam that builds up to be released.
 9. Place the baking tin in the lower half of your oven and bake for 30 minutes or until golden and crispy. If the top of the pie colours too quickly, cover it loosely with foil. (Note 5)
 10. Allow to cool for a few minutes before removing the pie from the tin. Serve and enjoy!!
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Notes

1. Avoid buying spinach that has been frozen into cubes as they tend to be hard to break apart. Remember to squeeze out as much liquid as you can.
2. Some brands of ricotta that are wetter than others, meaning they contain more moisture. If you have bought a

wetter variety, allow it to strain in the refrigerator for about 1 hour to remove any excess liquid.

3. To speed up the cooling process, I spread my onion and spinach mixture onto a plate and place it in the refrigerator. By the time you have lined the baking tin with filo pastry, the mixture will have cooled down adequately.
4. The spring form baking tin makes it very easy to transfer the pie to a plate. It also acts as a good conductor of heat. If you don't have one, all is not lost. Use whatever baking tin or dish you have. I use a 20 cm (8 inch) baking tin as I like nice thick slices of pie. The larger the baking tin, the thinner the slice. I tend to 'dab' the filo pastry with oil using a brush. It isn't necessary to cover every square inch of pastry with oil.
5. If I suspect that my pie may be a bit too wet on the bottom, I place the baking tin on the floor of the oven for about a minute or two to crisp up the base just before cooking time is up.

In just an hour, you'll have a crispy, golden spinach and cheese filled pie, and you don't have to be a seasoned baker to make it!!

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