



Spanakopita (Greek Spinach & Cheese Pie)

I developed my recipe for this classic dish years ago, in consultation with a Greek friend whose Mum made an excellent version. I use a 21cm square baking dish to give four chunky serves, but you can use whatever size you have, alternating the pastry sheets in a way to cover all of the sides as well as the base. For a more delicate presentation - and more fillo crunch - cut the fillo into long strips, place a tablespoon or so of filling at one end and fold over and over into little triangular parcels or roll into 'cigar' shapes. These smaller pastries will only take 15-20 minutes to bake and are great finger food for parties or as an entrée. I use Antoniou brand fillo made by a small family business in Sydney. I like to serve spanakopita with a salad of mixed heirloom tomatoes and red onion for a bit of contrasting colour. And while a glass of ouzo would be an appropriate accompaniment, I prefer Lark Hill's grüner veltliner, a delicious Austrian variety with the zing of riesling and some of the floral aroma of gewürztraminer. This biodynamic Canberra winery was the first to release grüner veltliner in Australia and it compares very favourably with the Austrian versions I've had. Yiasou!

Serves 4

METHOD

- INGREDIENTS**
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for brushing
 - 500g baby spinach
 - 300g ricotta
 - 400g feta
 - ¼ cup finely chopped dill sprigs
 - 5 green onions, finely chopped
 - 14 sheets fillo pastry

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Heat oil in a large, high-sided frying pan over low heat.
3. Add spinach, cover and cook for 5-10 minutes, stirring frequently, until spinach is thoroughly wilted. Depending on the size of your pan, you may need to add spinach in batches as each lot wilts a little to make room for more.
4. Tip spinach into a sieve and set aside to cool enough to handle then squeeze to remove as much liquid as possible. Chop roughly.
5. Mash ricotta and feta together, then mix in spinach, dill and green onion.
6. Brush a baking dish with olive oil.
7. Lay the sheets of fillo pastry on a flat, dry surface. Brush the top sheet with oil and lay it, oil side up, into the baking dish, ideally lining the sides as well as the base, with any excess hanging over the edge. Repeat with 11 more sheets, positioning them to line the base and sides of the baking dish.
8. Spoon the filling evenly into the pastry.
9. Brush half of another sheet of pastry with oil, fold in half, brush the top with oil and lay over the top of the filling. Repeat with remaining sheet. Fold overhanging pastry from the sides over the top. Brush the top with oil.
10. Bake for about 40 minutes, until pastry is golden.