

Spanakopitta

A classic Greek dish, this version is my favorite and was developed over the years to compensate for the lack of superb Feta cheese being available in the U.S.A. I now get a great Bulgarian all sheep's milk Feta, but still prefer the creaminess the nontraditional cream cheese adds to the recipe.

We have guests at the restaurant—a couple we consider friends—who for a long time could never remember the name of the dish. The first time that they returned after they had tried Spanakopitta he asked for some of those, “they sound like ‘Spank me Rita.” Ever since then, the joke around the restaurant has been to call them ‘Spank me, Ritas’.

The moderate difficulty of this recipe is from working with filo dough. I personally have never understood the fear of handling phyllo, maybe its the multiple spellings. If you follow the instructions in this recipe and decide that the worst that happens is that you will throw a few sheets away as you learn, you will find yourself proficient in no time.

1 small	onion finely chopped
2 Tbs	clarified butter or ghee
6 ounces	fresh spinach leaves, trimmed
1/2 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	basil
1/4 tsp	oregano
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1 Tbs	flour
1/2 cup	Feta cheese crumbled
2 ounces	cream cheese, softened
1 large	egg beaten
4 sheets	Phyllo pastry sheets, defrosted according to package directions
As needed	melted butter or ghee

Procedure

- Sauté the onion in the clarified butter until transparent. Add the spinach and wilt.
- Drain the excess liquid in a sieve or colander. Put the vegetables in a mixing bowl and cool to room temperature.
- Add all the herbs, spices, room temperature cheeses, flour and eggs. Stir well.
- **TO MAKE THE TRIANGLES:** Follow the instructions in Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats.
- Repeat with two more sheets. Continue until all of the filling is used up.
- **COOKING:** Bake Spanakopittas in a pre-heated oven at 450°F for 20 minutes. Turn pan front to back and bake for 5 to 10 minutes more or until nicely browned. Serve hot.

Yield: approximately 8