

## **Matthew Ostrowski's Spanakopita (version 2) that no Greek would support for Nic Collins**

for 12-14 people, plus some leftovers for later

19 December 2021

Feta: About 2 pounds hard feta (see below), and 1 pound of something creamier.

Most important is your cheese – if humanly possible, go to a proper Greek market, and don't just grab anything you find in a tub at the local bodega. The difference is immense. I prefer feta from kalavryrta or kefalonias – they are a bit on the harder side, and have a bit more spice to them, which I'll often blend with Epiros, which is a bit milder and creamier. This is your most critical ingredient, so do it right!

Phyllo: 2 boxes

While you're at the Greek market, get this – fresh if you can, but the frozen ones are okay if you remember to move them from the freezer to the fridge the night before you cook. They're graded by numbers – the higher the number, the thicker it is. For Spanakopita, you'll want either #10 or 'country style.' Only insane people try to make this themselves.

Greens:

3 bunches spinach  
2 bunches parsley  
1 bunch kale

Traditionally, Spanakopita is made with spinach, parsley, and dill, but I go for something a bit heartier, and do a mix of spinach, parsley and kale. Many recipes online recommend using frozen spinach. It's less work, but the texture is bland. Spinach loses a lot of its volume when cooked, so get more than you think you need. I've had to run out to the store in the middle of cooking to grab more....

And...

2 large yellow onions  
Half a head of garlic  
4-5 eggs  
pepper  
olive oil  
2/3 cup black olives, pitted & halved. (No Greek person would ever do this!)  
Some scallions if you feel like it

Procedure:

1. Dice the onions, and chop the kale roughly, removing the stems. Sauté the onions with the kale first, and once the kale is soft, toss in the spinach and wilt. ( you can chop the spinach as well, but I find it easier to do in the next step)
2. Take this mixture, and let cool enough for you to handle. Using a sieve or a colander, and a potato masher or the back of a ladle, get as much liquid as you can out of it. This is very important, and I will often take handfuls of it and squeeze it out that way. If you haven't chopped your spinach in step 1, chop the whole business now until it's reasonably fine. (I find it easier to get the liquid out when the bits are bigger.)

3. Break up about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the fetas, and mix them together with 4 eggs in an enormous bowl. Chop the parsley finely, stems included, and add them, as well as the spinach/kale/onion mixture. Mix all this together (I usually do it with my hands – messy, but easier to get everything blended). At this point, I assess the texture, and add more cheese or eggs if I need to – I’m usually looking for something almost, but not quite dense enough to form into a sticky ball.
4. Toss the olives in. Very non-standard, but a nice flavor surprise. Don’t use too many – my theory is not to have an olive in every bite.
5. Wash your hands, and lightly oil two large baking dishes, and I mean large.
6. Now comes the tricky part: Dampen two clean tea towels, and unroll the phyllo on top of one, and cover it with the other. Trying to keep your stack of phyllo sheets covered as much as possible, take a sheet, put it in the baking dish, and brush it with olive oil. The sheet will most likely be larger than your dish – let it flop over the sides. Repeat – I usually use 6-8 sheets, depending on how badly I damage them while trying to do this. Shovel half your cheese/veg mixture in, spreading it evenly in the pan, and fold over the excess dough. Repeat the process again, with another 6-8 sheets – this time I usually fold or cut the sheets so they fit nicely on the top, tucking the sheets down he sides.
7. Gently slice the top layers with a knife at you serving sizes, and if you’re feeling fancy, you can do an eg wash. Go through the whole megillah again with the second dish.
8. Call Katherine, and tell her to preheat the ovens to 350°.
9. Cover your dishes with tinfoil, and drive to Phill’s. It’s a short drive for me, so the ovens are ready when I get there.
10. Uncover your dishes, pop them in the oven, pour a glass of wine, and chitchat for 30-40 minutes.
11. Serve!