

PHYLLO DOUGH

From Nancy Gaifyllia, former About.com Guide

(PRONOUNCE: fee- low) Alternate Spellings: filo, fyllo, fillo - (Pronounced "fee-low")

Definition: In Greek: φύλλο ~~~ The Greek word "phyllo" means "leaf," a good description of this dough that is formed in delicate sheets. Phyllo most often refers to tissue-thin dough used in making Greek pastries and filled pies. It is most commonly used in multiple layers coated with butter or oil, and creates a flaky crust that has become the signature of Greek pastries such as baklava. For home use, **commercially prepared phyllo dough can be found in the frozen food section of most grocery stores, packaged in rolled sheets, next to pie crust and puff pastry.** While many recommend using strudel leaves if phyllo is hard to find, results will differ considerably as strudel leaves are not as thin and delicate. Phyllo is also sold under the label of "country" phyllo, which are thicker sheets, similar to puff pastry but with no eggs or sugar. **Also Known As:** Greek pastry dough, strudel leaves (inaccurate but used)



Spanakopita

Flaky phyllo sheets are layered with a savory spinach and feta cheese filling. Spanakopita can be made as a "pie" or pita, or as individual [phyllo triangles](#). I always keep trays of uncooked spanakopita in the freezer as a handy appetizer or side dish for guests. It freezes very well and heats beautifully. This recipe makes enough filling for one 9x12 rectangular pans or about 50 folded phyllo triangles.

Ingredients:

- 1 lg bag baby spinach, chopped (you can substitute frozen, thawed well)
- 1 bunch green onions, diced (incl. green end!!!)
- ¼ cup fresh dill, chopped (substitute 3 tbsp. dried)
- ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp ground pepper
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 1/2 lb. feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ cup low fat cottage cheese
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ¼ cup olive oil
- About ½ lb. phyllo pastry sheets

Preparation: -- Pre heat oven to 350 °

1. Wash and drain the chopped spinach very well. If using frozen spinach, thaw completely and squeeze out excess water. **Spinach should be dry.**
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the feta, eggs, cottage cheese and spices, then fold in the spinach and scallions until combined.
3. Whisk together the melted butter and the olive oil in a bowl. Using a pastry brush, lightly grease one 9 x 12 rectangular or round pan.

Unwrap the Phyllo:

1. Carefully remove the Phyllo roll from the plastic sleeve. Most packages come in 12 x 18 inch sheets when opened fully. Using a scissor or sharp knife, cut the sheets in half to make two stacks of 9x12 inch sheets. To prevent drying, cover one stack with wax paper and a damp paper towel while working with the other.

Prepare the Pita:

1. Layer about 10 sheets on the bottom of the pan making sure to brush each sheet with the butter/olive oil mixture. Add half of the spinach mixture in an even layer and press with a spatula to flatten.
2. Layer another 10 sheets on top of the spinach mixture making sure to brush well with butter/olive oil mixture. Repeat the process with the second pan.
3. Before baking, score the top layer of phyllo (making sure not to puncture filling layer) to enable easier cutting of pieces later. I place the pan in the freezer to harden the top layers and then use a serrated knife.
4. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven until the pita turns a deep golden brown. If the pita is frozen when you put it in the oven, you will need approximately 45 minutes cooking time. If fresh, plan for approximately **20 to 25** minutes of cooking time.

TIROPITA

Cheese Pie

- ❑ 6-8 oz. ATHENA FETA (or other Greek or imported feta-avoid domestic or cow's milk version)
- ❑ 6-8 oz. SHREDDED KEFALO-GRAVIERA CHEESE (or GRUYERE – look for goat's or sheep's milk version, as sharp as possible)
- ❑ 2 EGGS
- ❑ ABOUT 1 CUP BESAMEL SAUCE(see following recipe)
- ❑ 1.5 TSP (APPROX.) FINELY CHOPPED FRESH DILL PLUS SPRIGS FOR GARNISH
- ❑ 1 TSP(APPROX.) - FRESHLY GRATED IS BEST – NUTMEG
- ❑ 1 BOX FROZEN PHYLLO DOUGH, DEFROSTED
- ❑ 2 TBSPs MELTED UNSALTED BUTTER – AND – 2 TBSPS OLIVE OIL, COMBINED

- ❶ PRE-HEAT OVEN TO 350°.
- ❷ PUT COOLED BESAMEL SAUCE INTO DEEP BOWL AND ADD EGGS, 1 AT A TIME, MIXING EACH EGG IN WELL.
- ❸ ADD CHEESES, PEPPER AND DILL – BLEND THOROUGHLY.
- ❹ FOLLOW DIRECTIONS FOR WHATEVER PHYLLO SHAPE YOU'LL BE FILLING -- WHOLE PIE, APPETIZER TRIANGLES, ROLLS, ETC – AND BAKE AT 350 FOR ANYWHERE FROM 15 MINS TO 30 MINUTES, DEPENDING UPON THE TYPE OF SHAPE YOU'RE DOING.

NOTE: BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERDO WHEN BRUSHING ON THE BUTTER-OIL MIXTURE OR YOUR PASTRY WILL BE TOO GREASY...BRUSH ON JUST ENOUGH TO SEAL THE EDGES AND KEEP THE PHYLLO MOIST.

SAL TSA BESAMEL

INGREDIENTS

- ❑ 6 TBSP UNSALTED BUTTER (OR BUTTER BLEND)
- ❑ 6 TBSP UNBLEACHED ALL PURPOSE FLOUR
- ❑ 3 CUPS MILK, WARMED
- ❑ 3 - 6 EGG YOLKS, LIGHTLY WHISKED
- ❑ ½ TSP SALT
- ❑ ABOUT 1 TSP NUTMEG (FRESHLY GROUND, PREFERABLY)

PREPARATION

- ❶ Melt the butter in a medium sized saucepan over med-hi heat until foaming.

Add the flour slowly and whisk continuously until mixture is smooth and **REDUCE HEAT** to medium.

Cook, stirring (w/whisk) until mixture begins to turn golden (about 2 minutes)
- ❷ Whisk in the milk and salt and cook over medium heat, whisking frequently until thickened and creamy (12 –15 minutes).

Remove sauce from heat and let cool for a minute

Add spoonful of sauce to egg yolks, stirring in gently, then repeat a few times until this mixture is warm. Then whisk this into the sauce.
- ❸ Use right away or allow to cool and refrigerate for as long as 10 days. Reheat slowly before using, thinning sauce with a bit of milk if it is too thick.

Add remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly.

FILLINGS FOR TRIANGLES AND ROLLS

WILD MUSHROOM DUXELLES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup finely chopped crimini mushrooms
- 1 cup finely chopped morels
- 4 oyster mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 cup shiitake mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 TBSP butter
- 2 tsps olive oil
- 1 tsp finely chopped thyme
- 1 tsp finely chopped tarragon
- 1 tsp finely chopped chervil
- 4 small shallots, finely chopped
- 1 tsp lemon juice

PREPARATION

1. Finely chop mushrooms in a food processor and scrape mushrooms out into a clean, cotton towel. *(Note: Do **not** use terry cloth, and choose an old towel as you will stain it.)*
3. Twist towel around mushrooms and wring out as much liquid as you can over the sink.
4. Heat a large (10-inch) non-stick skillet over a burner set between medium and medium-high.
5. Add 1 tablespoon butter and swirl to melt and avoid burning.
6. Add mushrooms, shallots, a pinch of salt, a pinch of black pepper, and herbs and cook, stirring frequently, until mushrooms appear dry and are beginning to brown; about 5 minutes.
8. Stir in olive oil and lemon juice and cook, stirring frequently, until liquid has evaporated. Remove from heat and cool.

Easy Apple Strudel with Phyllo

Lighter, flaky, crispy apple strudel with homemade apple filling and phyllo dough crust. This easy apple strudel with phyllo is the perfect dessert for a small crowd. Trust me, you'll be the hero of the party!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 2 tbsp Private Reserve Greek extra virgin olive oil, more if needed later
- 3 apples, peeled, cored, thinly sliced (1 Granny Smith and 2 Gala apples worked well)
- 1/4 cup organic brown sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp ground cardamom
- 2 tbsp orange juice
- 1/2 cup chopped walnut hearts
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 10 thawed phyllo dough sheets
- Confectioner's sugar for garnish, optional

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Make the filling.
2. In a large skillet heat ghee and extra virgin olive oil. Add the sliced apples, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom and orange juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring as needed, for about 2 minutes or so (you are not looking to cook the apples all the way, just a little bit to allow some juice to release.) Stir in walnuts and raisins. Set aside.
3. Prepare a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Pour the juices from the apple filling in a small bowl and mix with a little more extra virgin olive oil (you'll use this mixture to brush the phyllo sheets).
4. Lay 10 to 12 sheets of phyllo flat on a clean surface (you can cover with a clean towel to keep the phyllo from drying, although this should be a quick process.)
5. Take 1 phyllo sheet and lay it in the prepared baking sheet. Brush with the mixture you prepared (apple filling juice and olive oil). Sprinkle a little brown sugar on top. Repeat the process with the remaining phyllo sheets.
6. With the baking sheet placed horizontally (one long edge of phyllo facing you), spoon apple filling somewhat towards the middle leaving about a **2-inch border** of phyllo **all around**. Fold short edges of phyllo to cover 2 -inches of apple mixture on each end. Brush ends with extra virgin olive oil. Starting at long edge closest to you, fold phyllo over apple filling and roll towards the other end (jellyroll fashion, but do not roll phyllo too tightly). Keep the seam on the bottom.
7. Brush strudel with extra virgin olive oil. Bake in 375 degrees F for 35 minutes or until phyllo turns a nice golden brown.
 8. Remove from oven and **let cool** in sheet pan. Sprinkle apple strudel with confectioner's sugar, add any walnuts or raisins remaining. Slice and serve.



Savory Pumpkin Pita - Coiled Kolokithopita from Samos

This pumpkin pita is one of the specialties of the island of Samos, a beautiful island in the eastern part the Aegean Sea. It's a savory pumpkin and phyllo pie that combines sweet pumpkin with onions, feta cheese, and mint. Baked until the phyllo is crisp and golden brown, it makes a wonderful appetizer, side dish or light meal. This pumpkin pita is traditionally made using a distinctive coiled design, but you can simplify the recipe by preparing the filling and folding it into traditional [phyllo triangles](#) or by making a layered pita in a pan.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups pumpkin puree (see note)
- 2 tbsp. olive oil, plus more for brushing (about a cup)
- 3 large onions, grated or diced very finely
- 3/4 lb. feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 1/2 tbsp. dried mint
- 2 tbsp. uncooked bulgur wheat (or rice)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb. phyllo pastry sheets



PREPARATION - *Note: If using fresh pumpkin, roasting the pumpkin produces the sweetest results. A pound of fresh pumpkin will yield about a cup of puree.*

1. Clean out the pumpkin seeds, slice into wedges and roast on a sheet pan in a preheated 400-degree oven for about 45 minutes. Allow the pumpkin to cool slightly and then remove the skin with a sharp knife.
2. Cube the pumpkin flesh and place in a food mill or food processor to puree. Strain the pumpkin puree for about 15 minutes in a strainer lined with cheesecloth to extract most of the water.
3. In a large skillet or frying pan, heat 2 tbsp. of olive oil over medium high heat. Saute the onion until it is soft and translucent, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.
4. In a medium bowl, combine the pumpkin puree with the crumbled feta, eggs, mint, bulgur wheat (rice) and season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Add the cooled onions and mix well.
5. Lightly grease the bottom and sides of a 14-inch round pan with olive oil.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
7. Remove the phyllo from the package and carefully unroll the sheets. Remove a single sheet from the stack and cover the remaining sheets with a clean towel.
8. Place the sheet of phyllo horizontally (landscape position) in front of you. Brush the sheet well with olive oil. Fold the sheet in half horizontally toward the top edge (the folded edge will be closest to you) and brush again with olive oil.
9. Leaving about an inch margin on the sides and bottom of the phyllo sheet, place a thin line of filling (about 2 1/2 tbsp.) along the bottom edge. Fold the sides in and begin to roll the bottom edge up as if to make a tube. The tube should be approximately an inch in diameter.
10. The key to a smooth roll is to brush the phyllo log with olive oil as you are rolling it upwards

Glyki Kolokithópita

Sweet Pumpkin Pie

A real change of pace from the traditional Thanksgiving pumpkin pie. Crispy phyllo layers, a delicately spiced pumpkin filling, and it's all drenched in a luscious light honey syrup. Different and delicious.

Ingredients:

Filling:

- 2 large cans pumpkin
- 1/2 cup sweet, unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 1 cup golden raisins

Syrup:

- 3 cups sugar
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 cup honey

Pastry:

- 1 pound phyllo dough
- 2 cups finely chopped walnuts
- 1/2 - ¾ pound (2-3 cubes/1-1 1/2 cups) sweet, unsalted butter

PREPARATION:

Filling:

- In large saucepan, combine canned pumpkin, 1/2 cup butter (1 stick), and salt.
- Simmer over medium/low heat for 15 minutes to evaporate moisture and thicken; stir frequently and do not allow to burn.
- Remove from heat, then add sugar, cinnamon, cloves, raisins, and 1 cup walnuts.
- Set mixture aside.

Syrup:

- In saucepan, combine sugar, water and honey and bring mixture to boil.
- Continue to boil until syrup is slightly thickened, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat, set aside.

Glyki Kolokithopita Assembly:

- Brush bottom and sides of 10" x 15" baking pan with melted butter.
- Layer about 5 phyllo sheets for bottom of pita.
- Do not cut bottom phyllo sheets to pan size; keep sides up.
- Brush butter between each layer of phyllo; brush sides.
- For next 5 phyllo sheets, brush with butter and sprinkle with chopped walnuts.
- Spoon in pumpkin filling; spread evenly.
- Fold phyllo sides over to completely enclose filling and brush generously with butter.
- Cut remaining phyllo sheets to pan size.
- Layer next 5 phyllo sheets, brushing with butter and sprinkling with chopped walnuts.
- Layer last phyllo sheets, brushing butter between each layer only.
- Trim excess phyllo dough from sides and corners of pan and brush top generously w/butter.
- Cut through TOP 3-4 phyllo layers ONLY; do NOT cut all the way through.
- Bake pita at 350 degrees for 50 – 60 minutes; pita should be light, golden brown.
- Let cool for 15 minutes, then pour syrup over warm pita.
- Let Glyki Kolokithopita cool and absorb all of syrup before cutting all the way through.
- Do not cover until completely cooled. Serve at room temperature or cold - refrigerate leftovers.

Pumpkin Pie – Kolokithopita

In Greece, Pumpkin Pie or Kolokithopita is made from pumpkins or marrow. They are both from the same vegetable family and this pie recipe tastes delicious made from either. It has a fabulous creamy texture, contrasting with the crisp [filo pastry](#). Pumpkin Pie is a very versatile snack. It is ideal to eat when you are busy and need a snack to keep you going. Or have as a light lunch. It is great to add to childrens lunch boxes instead of boring sandwiches, they love the creamy flavour of the pumpkin and feta cheese mixed together. It is also healthy, packed full of nutrients in the pumpkin and [feta cheese](#).

INGREDIENTS

- 8 sheets filo pastry
- butter, melted (for coating the fillo)
- 1 large pumpkin (or marrow)
- 4 eggs
- 300 gms feta cheese, crumbled
- 125 gms melted butter
- pepper
- evaporated milk

PREPARATION

1. Cut out all the flesh of the pumpkin or marrow and use a Grater to grate the pumpkin and place on a large plate.
2. Shake a little salt over it. Leave it for a little while then strain it by squeezing it with your hands to get rid of any juice.
3. In a Mixing Bowl , place the pumpkin, along with the eggs, feta cheese, melted butter, pepper and a little bit of evaporated milk. Don't put too much milk in at this stage.
4. Mix all in together. Separate into 4 portions.
5. Prepare and grease a large baking tray (it needs to be as long as the length of filo).
6. On a bench, lay 1 sheet of filo pastry, then using a Pastry Brush, carefully brush a thin layer of the melted butter over the top of the pastry, add another sheet directly on top and repeat with a coating of butter.
7. Take one portion of the mixture and place it along the length of the pastry. Don't take the mixture to the very ends, leave a bit of filo dough to be tucked in. Drizzle a little more evaporated milk to the mixture.
8. Fold the ends over the mixture, like an envelope, then holding it firmly, roll it up.
9. Place on the baking tray with the loose end underneath. Repeat with the other three portions.
10. Each length of pie makes four portions. With a sharp knife, carefully cut through the top layer of pastry to mark the portions, (to be able to cut through later without causing the pastry to crack).
11. Bake at 200 - 220 degrees for about 50 mins - 1 hour. After 25 minutes of cooking, take the tray out of the oven and cut portion marks all the way through. Return to the oven for remainder of cooking.
12. Pumpkin Pie - Kolokithopita can be served hot, room temperature or cold. Keep in the fridge.
13. This recipe has been in my family for generations. The only change I have made to this recipe is to use ready made filo pastry as it becomes rather time consuming when you also need to make the pastry!
14. Pumpkin pie tastes delicious, especially so when made using the home made fillo dough recipe. For those who would like to make their own filo pastry, click here for an authentic home made filo pastry recipe.