Main dishes / Greece

Spanakopita Filling

The savory filling at the heart of every great spanakopita — wilted spinach wrung bone-dry, crumbled feta, egg, scallion, and dill stirred together into a rich, briny mixture that stays moist inside phyllo pastry.

Time 35 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 % Fresh spinach, stems removed (or baby spinach)
- ☐ 50 % Feta cheese, crumbled (not pre-crumbled — buy a block)
- ☐ 10 % Large eggs
- ☐ 15 % Scallions (spring onions), thinly sliced
- ☐ 8 % Fresh dill, finely chopped
- ☐ 8 % Extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ 0.5 % Freshly ground black pepper
- ☐ 0.2 % Freshly grated nutmeg

Let's make it.

01 Heat a large, dry skillet over high heat until it is very hot. Add the fresh spinach in large handfuls — it will collapse dramatically, reducing to a fraction of its original volume in about 1–2 minutes per batch. Stir and press the spinach to encourage even wilting. Do not add water or oil at this stage; you want the leaves to steam in their own moisture and give up as much liquid as possible. Once all the spinach has wilted, transfer it to a colander and let it cool enough to handle. Then take handfuls and squeeze them with maximum force over the sink — wring them like a wet cloth. The goal is to extract every possible drop of water. The dry spinach should feel almost gritty in your hand, not damp. Then chop the wrung spinach roughly into 1 cm pieces.

02 In a small skillet, warm the olive oil over medium heat. Add the sliced scallions and cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they are wilted and sweet-smelling but not browned. The goal is to take the raw edge off the scallion flavor — raw scallion in a baked filling can be sharp and pungent, whereas briefly cooked scallion becomes sweet and integrated. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. The scallions will continue to soften in the residual heat. They should look translucent and smell mild and sweet.

03 In a large bowl, combine the wrung, chopped spinach, cooled sweated scallions, crumbled feta, beaten eggs, chopped dill, black pepper, and freshly grated nutmeg. Mix thoroughly with your hands or a large spoon, breaking the feta into crumbles no larger than a small pea — some very fine feta dust is fine and helps bind the filling. Do not add salt before tasting: the feta carries significant salt and the filling may need none. Taste critically and add salt only if truly needed. The mixture should smell of fresh dill, creamy feta, and cooked spinach — fresh and grassy with a briny background. The texture should be cohesive enough to hold its shape briefly when scooped but not stiff.

04 Leave the combined filling to rest for 10 minutes at room temperature. During this time, the egg will begin to bind more firmly with the spinach and feta, and the dill and scallion flavors will bloom and integrate. After resting, taste once more — flavors will have mellowed and merged. Make any final adjustments: more dill if the herb flavor is too subtle, a few more grinds of pepper if it tastes flat, a drop of lemon juice if it needs brightness. The filling is now ready to be used with buttered phyllo sheets for triangles, a pan pie, or rolled cigars. It holds refrigerated for 24 hours with minimal quality loss; the flavors actually deepen slightly overnight.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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