

A Greek Easter Dinner

Brighten up a traditional Easter dinner with sunny Mediterranean flavors.

Serves Eight.

To serve eight with this menu, you'll need to double the salad and potato recipes. The shopping list reflects the scaled-up amounts.



An herb-rubbed roasted leg of lamb is the centerpiece, surrounded by simple roasted potatoes, spinach-phylo pie, and a tangy herb salad with feta and roasted beets. While your guests are waiting for dinner, set out stuffed grape leaves with creamy yogurt dip.

the menu

Dolmathes Yialantzi (Grape Leaves Stuffed with Rice & Herbs)

Slow-Roasted Leg of Lamb with Mint and Lemon

Greek Spinach & Feta Pie (Spanakopita)

Roasted Potato Planks with Rosemary & Lemon

Herb, Feta & Beet Salad

Apricot & Pistachio Baklava with Orange-Cardamom Syrup



SHOPPING LIST

Fresh Produce

- 2 lb. fresh spinach
- 6 cups mesclun greens, or a mix of sorrel, watercress, arugula, and mizuna
- 3 lb. red beets (6 to 8 medium)
- 6 medium Idaho potatoes (about 2-1/2 lb. total)
- 2 medium-large red onions
- 2 bunches scallions
- 2 large bunches fresh mint
- 2 large bunches fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 large bunch fresh dill
- 1 small bunch fresh chives
- 1 small bunch fresh tarragon
- 1 small bunch fresh chevil
- 1 small bunch fresh basil
- 1 small bunch fresh marjoram
- 1 small bunch fresh rosemary
- 1 bulb garlic
- 4 medium lemons
- 2 medium oranges

Meat, Eggs & Dairy:

- 1 bone-in leg of lamb, 6 to 9 lb.
- 18 oz. feta cheese (in a whole chunk)
- 2 cups full-fat plain yogurt, preferably Greek-style
- 10 oz. (1-1/4 cups) unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup finely grated Greek kefalotyri cheese or Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tsp. whole milk

Other Groceries:

- 3 8-oz. packages frozen phyllo dough (you may need to buy 2 1-lb. "twin packs")
- 16-oz. jar brine-packed grape leaves
- 12 oz. (2-1/2 cups) unsalted, shelled raw pistachios
- 12 oz. (2 cups, packed) dried apricots
- 1-1/2 cups lower-salt chicken broth
- 1 cup raw long-grain white rice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2/3 cup pine nuts
- 6 Tbs. walnut oil or pecan oil
- 1 whole nutmeg

Pantry Staples:

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 cups extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup red-wine vinegar
- 3 Tbs. Dijon mustard
- 1-1/2 tsp. ground cardamom
- Kosher salt
- Black peppercorns



MENU TIMELINE

One Day Ahead:

- Make the baklava and drizzle with the orange syrup.
- Marinate the leg of lamb.
- Make the stuffed grape leaves.

In the morning:

- Steam the beets and make the vinaigrette for the salad.
- Make the spanakopita.

3-1/2 Hours Ahead:

- Prep the lamb for the oven and let it come to room temperature. Heat the oven to 450°F.

2-1/2 Hours Ahead:

- Lower the oven temperature to 350°F and begin roasting the lamb.

1 Hour Ahead:

- Prep the potato planks and toss them with their coating.
- Remove the stuffed grape leaves from the refrigerator and let them come to room temperature.

30 Minutes Ahead:

- Remove the leg of lamb from the oven and let rest while you make the pan sauce
- Raise the oven temperature to 450°F and begin roasting the potato planks.

Just Before Dinner:

- Toss the salad greens and herbs with the vinaigrette and arrange them on serving plates with the beets and feta.

Dolmathes Yialantzi (Grape Leaves Stuffed with Rice & Herbs)

by Diane Kochilas

A Greek classic, stuffed grape leaves make a great appetizer for parties. Brine-packed grape leaves are available in many grocery stores.

Serves twelve to fifteen as an appetizer.

Yields 50 to 55.

ingredients

16-oz. jar brine-packed grape leaves
2/3 cup plus 2 Tbs. extra- virgin olive oil
2 medium-large red onions, finely chopped (about 4-cups)
1 cup finely chopped scallions (white and some green)
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup raw long-grain white rice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh dill
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh mint
2/3 cup toasted pine nuts
2-1/2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
Juice of 2 lemons (about 6 Tbs.)
2 cups full-fat plain yogurt, preferably Greek (or substitute sheep's milk or goat's milk yogurt)

how to make

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Drain and rinse the grape leaves and submerge them in the water to soften in three batches, for 2 to 3 minutes per batch. Transfer to a colander with a slotted spoon. Rinse several times under cold water and drain.

In a 12-inch heavy skillet with a lid, heat 1/3 cup of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and scallions. Turn the heat to medium low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are very soft and translucent, about 12 minutes. Add the garlic and stir for 1 minute. Add the rice and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. Add 1 tsp. salt, a few grinds of pepper, and 1 cup water. Increase the heat to medium, cover, and simmer until the water is absorbed, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. Fold in the herbs, pine nuts, and lemon zest and season with a little more pepper.

Set aside any grape leaves that are too small or too irregular to roll. Arrange the remaining leaves, vein side up, in rows on a large surface. Snip off any stems. Pour 2 Tbs. of olive oil onto the bottom of a large (preferably 3-quart) saucepan. Lay four or five of the most irregular leaves, overlapping, over the oil, covering the bottom of the pot.

Arrange about 1 heaping Tbs. of the rice mixture (less if the leaves are very small) across the bottom center of a leaf. Fold the left and right sides over the filling and roll up, gently but tightly, until you have a small log resembling an egg roll. Set it seam side down in the pot. Repeat with the remaining stuffing and leaves, snuggling the rolls closely together. Start a new layer when the bottom is covered.



photo: Scott Phillips

TIP: These can be made up to three days ahead and refrigerated. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Drizzle the remaining 1/3 cup olive oil and the lemon juice over the grape leaves. Sprinkle on a few pinches of salt. Cut a piece of parchment to fit tightly over the surface of the leaves and set it on top. Put a heatproof plate that fits inside the pot on top of the parchment, to weigh down the leaves and keep them from opening while cooking. Slowly pour in enough water to just cover the grape leaves. Bring to a boil, lower to a simmer, and cover the pot. Simmer over low heat until the leaves are tender and the rice is thoroughly cooked, 45 to 60 minutes. (By the time the leaves and rice are cooked, most of the liquid will have been absorbed). Remove the stuffed grape leaves from the pot with a slotted spoon, cover with damp paper towels and plastic wrap, and let them cool to room temperature. Serve with the yogurt on the side.

Slow-Roasted Leg of Lamb with Mint and Lemon

by Jennifer McLagan

The lamb is rubbed with mint, lemon, and garlic and then roasted until juicy and tender. New potatoes and fresh peas with butter and more mint complete a perfect spring dinner.

Serves four with leftovers (eight without).

ingredients

1 bone-in leg of lamb, 6 to 9 lb.
1 cup coarsely chopped fresh mint, plus 1/2 cup small fresh mint leaves
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest (from 1 lemon)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup dry white wine
1-1/2 cups lower-salt chicken broth

how to make

Put the lamb in a 4-quart, 15x10-inch glass baking dish. In a small bowl, mix the chopped mint, olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, lemon zest, 2 tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Spread the mixture over the lamb and turn to coat. Cover with plastic and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight, turning once.

Remove the lamb from the refrigerator 1 hour before cooking. Put it on a V-rack in a 13x16-inch flameproof roasting pan. Cover the shank bone with foil. Add the reserved pelvic bone and 1 cup of water to the pan.

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Put the lamb in the oven and lower the heat to 350°F. Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the leg, away from the bone, reads 135°F to 140°F for medium rare, 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

Transfer the lamb to a warm platter and cover with aluminum foil. Let rest for at least 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, skim the fat from the top of the pan juices and then set the roasting pan over two burners on medium heat. Add the wine, and with a wooden spoon, scrape up all the browned bits. Bring to a boil and cook until the liquid has reduced to about 1/4 cup. Add the broth, return to a boil, and reduce the liquid again to about 1 cup. Season to taste with salt and pepper, strain into a sauceboat, and stir in the mint leaves. Carve the lamb and serve with the sauce.

Wrap the leftover lamb and store the sauce in an airtight container. Refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze for up to 3 months.



photo: Scott Phillips

Greek Spinach & Feta Pie (Spanakopita)

by Susanna Hoffman

Spanakopita can also be made with other greens, such as dandelion or chard, in place of spinach. You can use 1 lb. frozen chopped spinach instead of fresh. Thaw the spinach overnight or in a colander under warm running water. Squeeze out the liquid and skip the pan-wilting step.

Serves eight.

Yields one 9x13x2-inch pie.

ingredients

For the filling:

2 lb. fresh spinach, washed, dried, trimmed, and coarsely chopped
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 bunch scallions (about 3 oz. or 10 small), white and light-green parts only, trimmed and finely chopped
2 cups crumbled feta cheese (10 oz.)
1/2 cup finely grated Greek kefalotyri cheese or Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh dill
1/3 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
Kosher or fine sea salt

For the assembly:

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil for brushing; more as needed
Eighteen 9x14-inch sheets frozen phyllo dough (I use Athens brand), thawed and at room temperature
2 tsp. whole milk

how to make

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

Make the filling: Heat a 10-inch straight-sided saute pan over medium-high heat. Add a few large handfuls of the spinach and cook, tossing gently with tongs. As the spinach starts to wilt, add the rest a few handfuls at a time. Cook until all the spinach is wilted and bright green, about 4 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the spinach to a colander set in a sink. Let cool slightly and squeeze with your hands to extract as much of the remaining liquid as you can.

Wipe the pan dry with a paper towel. Heat the oil in the pan over medium heat. Add the scallions and cook until soft and fragrant, about 4 minutes. Stir in the spinach, turn off the heat, and let cool for 5 minutes. Then stir in the cheeses, eggs, dill, parsley, nutmeg, and 1/2 tsp. salt and mix thoroughly.

Assemble the pie: With a pastry brush, lightly coat the bottom and sides of a 9x13x2-inch baking pan with some of the oil. Working quickly, lightly oil one side of a phyllo sheet and lay it in the pan oiled side up and off center so that it partially covers the bottom and reaches halfway up one long side of the pan (the edge on the bottom of the pan will be about 1 inch from the side). Lightly



photo: Scott Phillips

TIP: You can make the pie up to 4 hours ahead. Keep warm, if desired, or serve at room temperature.

oil the top of another phyllo sheet and lay it oiled side up and off center so it reaches halfway up the other long side of the pan. (If your pan has sloped sides, the sheets may be slightly longer than the bottom of the pan; if so, let the excess go up one short side of the pan and then alternate with subsequent sheets.) Repeat this pattern with 4 more phyllo sheets.

Next, lightly oil the tops of 3 phyllo sheets and layer them oiled side up and centered in the pan. Spread the filling evenly over the last layer.

Repeat the oiling and layering of the remaining 9 phyllo sheets over the filling in the same way you layered the previous 9. With the oiled bristles of the pastry brush, push the edges of the phyllo down around the sides of the pan to enclose the filling completely.

With a sharp knife, score the top phyllo layer into 24 rectangles, being careful not to cut all the way through to the filling. Using the same pastry brush, brush the milk along all the score marks (this will keep the phyllo from flaking up along the edges of the squares). Bake the spanakopita until the top crust is golden brown, 35 to 45 minutes. Let cool until just warm. Cut out the rectangles carefully along the score marks and serve.

Roasted Potato Planks with Rosemary & Lemon

by Abigail Johnson Dodge

Serves four.

ingredients

3 medium Idaho potatoes (about 1-1/4 lb. total)
3 Tbs. olive oil
1-1/2 Tbs. Dijon mustard
1 Tbs. minced fresh rosemary
2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1-1/2 tsp. coarse salt; more to taste
1/4 tsp. finely ground black pepper

how to make

Heat the oven to 450°F. Slice the potatoes on a sharp angle into 3/8-inch slabs. Put them in a colander and rinse (this way you rinse off dirt and lose a little starch for crisper planks). Shake off the excess water and spread them onto a heavy rimmed baking sheet (about 11x18-inches) lined with two layers of paper towels. Cover with a few more paper towels and let dry.

In a medium bowl, combine the olive oil, mustard, rosemary, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt, and pepper; stir until well blended. Dump the dried potato planks into the bowl (discard the paper towels); toss with a spatula until each piece is well coated. Scrape the potatoes onto the same baking sheet and spread in a single layer. Drizzle any remaining herb mixture onto the potatoes.

Bake the planks until browned on the bottom, about 20 min., and then flip with a spatula. Continue cooking until they're well browned and tender, about another 15 min. Sprinkle with more salt, if you like, and serve immediately.



photo: Scott Phillips

Herb, Feta & Beet Salad

by Daphne Zepos

This is a composed salad with four parts: beets, feta, herbs, and a very simple vinaigrette. The four elements only meet at the last minute on the plate.

Serves four.

ingredients

For the vinaigrette:

Kosher salt to taste
2 tsp. red-wine vinegar
3 Tbs. walnut oil or pecan oil

For the beets:

1-1/2 lb. red beets (3 to 4 medium)
2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar

For the herb salad:

Tarragon leaves picked from 2 fresh sprigs (2 Tbs.)
8 fresh chives, cut into 1/2-inch pieces (2 Tbs.)
Marjoram leaves picked from 1 fresh sprig (1 tsp.)
2 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces
1/2 bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley (1/2 cup packed)
1/4 bunch fresh chervil
3 cups mesclun greens, or a mix of sliced sorrel, watercress, arugula, and mizuna

For the feta:

1/4 lb. feta, cut into 4 slabs, each about 2 inches square and 1/4 inch thick

how to make

To make the vinaigrette

In a small bowl, dissolve the salt in the vinegar. Whisk in the nut oil.

To prepare the beets

Wash the beets and cut off the leaves. Trim off the tough lower stems and discard any yellow or bruised leaves; wash and reserve any small, healthy leaves.

In a large saucepan or a stockpot with a steamer basket, steam the beets until a paring knife enters them easily, 30 to 45 minutes, depending on their size. Set aside until cool enough to handle but still warm. Peel the beets; the skin will pull right off. Cut them in half and then in 1/4-inch slices so you end up with half-moons. Put the beets in a bowl and splash them with the vinegar while they're still warm. Toss with some of the vinaigrette, enough to lightly coat (save the rest for the herb salad).

To prepare the herbs

In a large bowl, combine all the herbs and greens (including any reserved beet leaves). Toss with enough vinaigrette to just lightly coat the leaves.

To compose the salad

On a large serving platter, arrange the beet half-moons. Lay the feta slabs on the beets, and then pile the herb salad on top. You could also arrange the salad in the same way on four individual serving plates.



photo: Scott Phillips

Apricot & Pistachio Baklava with Orange-Cardamom Syrup

by Cindy Mushet

This variation of the classic baklava injects a tart, citrusy note into the sweet, flaky layers.

Yields about 30 pieces.

ingredients

1-lb. "twin pack" phyllo dough (two 8-oz. packs, each containing about twenty 9x14-inch sheets)

For the filling:

12 oz. (2-1/2 cups) unsalted, shelled raw pistachios

12 oz. (2 cups, packed) dried apricots

Tip: Use California apricots for a tart, pronounced apricot flavor or Turkish apricots for a sweeter, mellow flavor.

1/2 cup granulated sugar

10 oz. (1-1/4 cups) unsalted butter

For the syrup:

1-1/2 cups granulated sugar

2/3 cup orange juice (preferably freshly squeezed)

1-1/2 tsp. ground cardamom

how to make

Thaw the phyllo overnight in the refrigerator. Then put the phyllo box on the counter to come to room temperature, 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

Make the filling:

Put the pistachios, apricots, and sugar in a food processor. Process until the nuts and apricots are finely chopped (the largest should be the size of small dried lentils), 30 to 45 seconds. Set aside.

Assemble the baklava:

Unfold one pack of the phyllo sheets and stack them so that they lie flat on your work surface. Cover the top with plastic wrap, letting some excess plastic fall over all four edges. Dampen and wring out a kitchen towel and drape it on top of the plastic wrap; this will hold the plastic in place and prevent the phyllo from drying out.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Brush the bottom of a 9x13-inch metal pan (preferably with straight sides and a light-color interior to prevent overbrowning on the edges) with some of the butter. Remove a sheet of phyllo from the stack, re-cover the rest (be sure to cover the remaining sheets each time you remove a new one), and put the sheet in the bottom of the pan. Brush the sheet with some of the melted butter but don't soak the phyllo (remember, you'll have about 40 layers of buttered phyllo by the time you're done). Repeat until you have layered and buttered about half the sheets from the first pack—about 10 sheets in all. If your pan has slightly angled sides, arrange the sheets so the excess falls on the same side of the pan and cut the extra off every few layers with a paring knife. Sprinkle about one-third of the filling evenly over the phyllo.

Repeat layering and buttering the remaining sheets from the first pack and sprinkle on another third of the filling. Open, unfold, and cover the second pack of phyllo. Layer and butter it as described above, sprinkling the remaining filling after layering about half the



photo: Scott Phillips

TIP: The baklava is at its best about 24 hours after the syrup is added. It will keep at room temperature for up to 5 days, though the texture changes from flaky and crisp to more solid and crystallized as time goes by. Both textures are delicious and have their fans.

phyllo, and ending with a final layer of phyllo (you may not need all of the butter). Cover loosely and put the pan of baklava in the freezer for 30 minutes (this makes it much easier to cut the pastry).

Bake the baklava:

Position an oven rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Before baking, use a thin, sharp knife (I prefer serrated) and a gentle sawing motion to cut the baklava on the diagonal at 1-1/2-inch intervals in a diamond pattern. Try not to compress the pastry by pressing down on it with one hand while cutting with the other. Not only are you cutting serving portions, you are also cutting pathways for the flavored syrup to permeate the pastry, so be sure to cut the pastry all the way to the bottom of the pan. If you have an electric carving knife, this is the perfect time to use it. Bake the baklava until golden, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely. Run a knife along the cut lines to help the syrup absorb evenly.

Make the syrup:

Put the sugar and orange juice in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is dissolved and the liquid is clear, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cardamom. Pour the syrup evenly over the entire surface of the baklava, allowing it to run down into the cut marks and along the sides of the pan. Allow the baklava to cool to room temperature before serving.