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ithaca pie recipe

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This is the local version of spanakopita which we ate in a small taverna in Stavros. It was cooked with spinach mixed with *horta* – wild greens picked from the hillside. A combination of spinach, kale, chard, dill and mint gives almost the same rich and varied taste, but if you don't like the hint of bitterness, just use spinach, parsley, mint and dill. Serve this with a finely chopped cabbage and grated carrot salad, dressed with good Greek olive oil, salt and lemon juice.

Serves 12-15

For the filling

- 1kg spinach, chard, kale (one, or a mixture of all, of these greens)
- Large bunch of dill, finely chopped
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped mint
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 300ml olive oil
- 4 spring onions, finely chopped
- 2 leeks, finely chopped
- 1 tea cup of long-grain rice
- 200g feta (optional)
- Salt and black pepper

For the shortcrust pastry

- 750g plain flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 375g unsalted butter
- 3 eggs, beaten
- Ice-cold water
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Remove tough stalks from the spinach, chard and kale. Coarsely chop the leaves and add the finely chopped herbs. Saute the onion and garlic in a little oil in a large pan and add all the greens, including the spring onions and leeks. Mix well with most of the remaining oil. Add the uncooked rice and take off the heat. Season well.

To make the pastry, sift the flour with the salt and rub in the butter or pulse in a food processor until it has the consistency of breadcrumbs. Add enough beaten egg and iced water to bring the pastry together in a ball. Wrap it in cling film and leave it in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180c/gas mark 4. Divide the pastry into two, allow it to warm up for a minute or so and roll



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it out - on a floured surface - as thinly as you possibly can.

Roll one piece around a rolling pin to carry it and put it in the base of a baking tin about 40 x 50cm and 4cm deep. It is important that there's plenty of extra pastry hanging over the side of the tin.

Add the filling and then crumble over the feta, if you are using it. Cover with the other layer of pastry. Then crimp the two layers together by brushing with a little water and pinching around the edge.

Brush a little oil over the top, scatter with a few sesame seeds and prick the surface with a knife. Bake the pie in the preheated oven for just over an hour.

This is delicious once it has cooled a little and is, perhaps, even better eaten cold the next day. It's also excellent for feeding lots of people on a picnic.

This recipe features on p74 in Sarah Raven's [Garden Cookbook](#)

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