

What's Cookin': Torta Rustica—ideal for New Year's Eve supper

Readers have requested a repeat of this recipe, Torta Rustica — ideal for a New Year's Eve dinner.

Have fun and keep cooking!

Ingredients

- 1 package (about 400 g) frozen puff pastry, thawed in refrigerator overnight
- 1 egg, beaten (for glazing)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb (500 g) spinach or swiss chard, washed, well drained, stems removed and coarsely chopped
- 2/3 lb (350 g) thinly sliced black forest ham or turkey
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp whipping cream or half and half
- freshly ground black pepper
- 7 oz (200g) sliced fontina cheese
- 4 red peppers, roasted and sliced into wide strips
- 1 tbsp each chopped parsley, chopped basil and chopped oregano
- 7 oz (200 g) sliced jarlsberg cheese
- 2 plum tomatoes, sliced thinly
- salt
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method

1. In a large pan, heat olive oil. Sau-



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té onion and garlic. Add spinach and cook until wilted and dry. Place in a strainer over a bowl and allow to cool.

2. Spray a 9-inch springform pan well with non-stick cooking spray.

3. On a floured surface, roll out one third of the puff pastry into a square shape. Lay the springform pan on the rolled out pastry and cut a circle, exactly the size of pan. This will be the top of the pie. Set this round top piece of pastry aside, covered with a damp cloth.

4. Continuing on the floured surface, roll out another one third of the pastry. This time, using the pan as a guide, cut a round piece slightly larger than the pan— this will be the bottom piece. Set this bottom piece aside, covered with a damp cloth.

5. Roll out the last one third of the pastry into two long strips, slightly wider than the height of the pan.

These pieces will form the sides.

6. Take the two strips and line the edge of the springform pan. Brush some of the beaten egg around the bottom edge of the pastry. Place the round bottom piece in the pan. This piece should come up the sides slightly in order to form a good seal.

7. When layering the pie, ensure that each layer is spread evenly and goes all the way to the edges of the pan, pressing down on each layer as you work.



8. Beat together the two eggs and cream. Add this to the spinach mixture. Season with freshly ground pepper.

9. Layer half of the ham first. Cover this with one half of the spinach mixture. Next goes the sliced fontina cheese, followed by all of the red pep-

per strips. Sprinkle the red pepper strips with half of the each of the herbs. Next goes the remainder of the ham, then the remainder of the spinach mixture, then the jarlsberg cheese, then the sliced tomatoes topped with the remainder of the herbs, some ground pepper, salt and the parmesan cheese.

10. Fold the edges of the pastry over the fillings. Brush the folded over edges with egg. Place the top round piece on. Using a sharp knife, make several small slits (air vents) in the pastry. Brush the entire top with the egg. Cover with plastic wrap (remove plastic wrap before baking).

11. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, up to 4 hours.

12. In a preheated 350 degree oven, bake the pie for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Let cool at least 30 minutes before unmolding and serving. Can be served warm or cold.

Notes:

- For a vegetarian version of the same pie try replacing the ham with grilled eggplant, zucchini, thinly sliced sweet potato or regular potato
- Be careful to ensure that spinach is extremely dry or else the pie will be quite wet on the bottom.

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