

# Make Easter eggs

Happy Easter weekend! I LOVE this weekend. It is a chance to take a break from work that you kind of forget about— there is so much emphasis on summer long weekends, that I find this one always takes me by surprise.

We normally host Easter dinner or Easter brunch at our house sometime over the weekend. This year is a bit different though, as it is Dad's birthday as well as Easter, all on the same day. And, the standing rule is that the birthday person gets to pick the menu for their special meal. So, you'll never guess what we are having for Easter brunch— a yummy Torta Rustica? No. Quiche? No. BBQ? No. Eggs Benedict? No. We're having Thai. Those of you who really know my Dad are probably a bit shocked. But, yes, its true. My Dad— the original meat and potatoes man, has become a lover of Thai food. Who would have thought?

So, while we have chocolate decorations on the table and coloured eggs at each place, we will be dining on something a little wilder than the usual Easter fare. Speaking of Easter eggs, some of you may be planning on delving into your Martha personalities and whipping up some coloured eggs for the family. Here's how:

Decide amongst yourselves whether you are going to blow the eggs out first or just cook the eggs. A hint— unless you are going to use the natural dye method (listed below) then you probably want to blow the eggs out, otherwise, all that egg will go to waste because you do not want to eat the eggs if they have been around paints and glue and left out at room temperature for goodness only knows how long!

To blow the eggs out, take a needle and make a small hole in the narrow end of the egg. Make a slightly larger hole in the wider end of the egg. Wiggle the needle around a little to ensure that you have broken the membrane surrounding the egg at both ends. Then, holding the egg over a clean bowl, blow from the narrow end; all the egg

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will come out the wider end. Once you have done all of your eggs— use the egg mixture for omelets, quiche, frittatas, you name it.

If you would like to use food colouring to dye the eggs, then boil 1/2 cup of water with 1 tsp of white vinegar and about 30-40 drops of food colouring. Once it has come to a boil, set aside and allow it to cool. Once it is cool, it is ready to use.

In order to "fancy" up your eggs you can use: ribbons, lace, felt tip markers, paints, glitter, sequins, crayon etc. If you'd like to make patterns in the dyes, try using rubber cement (not the one-coat kind, it's too sticky). Drip some rubber cement onto your egg, then place it in the dye of choice. Allow the egg to dry for about 30 minutes and then by rubbing the rubber cement with your fingers, it should come right off and leave you squiggly patterns on your eggs.

If you would like to use the natural dye method (so that you can eat the eggs afterwards) then try using the items listed below. Place your eggs in a pan and cover with cold water. Add a teaspoon of white vinegar. Add the natural dye. Bring the eggs to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and leaving the eggs in the dye, allow it to cool slightly. Then place the entire pan— eggs, dye and all into the refrigerator and allow to sit overnight. By the next morning, your eggs should have good colour.

Red: beets, frozen cranberries, frozen raspberries. Blue: red cabbage or blueberries. Yellow: ground tumeric. Brown: strong coffee. Pale green: spinach.

Have fun and keep cooking! E-mail: [whatscookin@independentfreepress.com](mailto:whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)

# Torta Rustica

## Ingredients

- 1 1/2 boxes butter puff pastry (the pre-rolled kind— or about 400 g of the block kind)
- 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 chopped
- 2/3 pound (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, 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. Sauté 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, lay out one of the rolls of puff pastry. 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. Save scraps. Continuing on the floured surface, lay out another roll of the puff 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. Lay out the last roll of puff pastry and cut into three strips, slightly wider than



the height of the pan. These pieces will form the sides. Take the three 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. When layering, 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.

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

5. Layer half of the ham first. Cover this with half of the spinach mixture. Next goes the sliced Fontina cheese, followed by all of the red pepper 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.

6. 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). Refrigerate for at least one hour, up to four hours.

7. In a preheated 350 F 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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