

Tyropitas

serves 6–8

These phyllo-wrapped treats, made small, are excellent for appetizers or a side dish; made medium, for an elegant luncheon; or made large, for a dinner entrée. If you've never worked with phyllo, try to get a demonstration from someone. It really is quite simple, and a picture is worth a thousand words!

3 T. olive oil	2 c. roughly chopped spinach or chard leaves
1 1/2 c. onion, 1/2" dice	4 oz. plain chèvre or feta
1 tsp. balsamic vinegar	1 c. shredded sharp cheddar
1 tsp. dry sherry/white wine (opt.)	1 c. shredded jack
2 c. white mushrooms, thin slices	1/4 c. grated parmesan
1 bunch broccoli, sm. florets	1 egg, lightly beaten (optional)
3/4 tsp. salt	1 pkg. phyllo dough
1/2 tsp. fresh ground black pepper	4 T. unsalted butter, melted
1 tsp. dried/1 T. fresh basil leaves	
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed	

If the phyllo dough is frozen, thaw it in the refrigerator overnight. If you don't have time to thaw it overnight, leave it out at room temperature for at least 2 hours. It may be a bit more difficult to work with, but it's usually okay thawed like this.

Heat the olive oil in a large fry pan on medium high heat. Add the onion and sauté until medium brown and soft, about 8 minutes. When the onions begin to stick to the pan, add the balsamic vinegar to release the stuck bits. This is called the fond. It will add deep flavor to the sautéed veggies. When the onions are soft and nicely colored, add the mushrooms and sherry or white wine (or substitute wine vinegar) and continue cooking for 5 more minutes, then add the broccoli, salt, pepper, basil, and garlic. Sauté for an additional 3 minutes, then add the greens. Cook for 2 minutes, then taste and adjust the seasoning to suit your tastes. Scrape the veggies into a bowl, let cool for 10 minutes, then add the cheeses and the egg (if using; it will make the filling a bit lighter), and stir well.

Open the phyllo package and unfold onto a clean counter. Have your veggies and melted butter with a pastry brush close at hand. Carefully lift one phyllo sheet and place it onto the surface right in front of you, vertically oriented. Very lightly spread it with melted butter. Repeat 3 times. Cut the stack of 4 sheets vertically into 4 or 5 or 6 equal strips, depending on the size of tyropita you'd like. Spoon 1–3 T. of filling onto the bottom edge of each strip. Grab the lower right corner of one of the strips and bring it up to meet the left edge, forming a small triangle. Then grab the lower left corner and bring it up to meet the right edge, and so on, as if folding a flag.

Repeat until all filling or phyllo dough is used up. Brush the tyropitas lightly with butter and bake at 400° until golden brown and flaky, 20–30 minutes. If you have made extra, freeze them before they are baked, wrapped individually, and then bake frozen. You can add sautéed chicken, crab, or beef bits, with a little heavy cream to moisten the meat, to the filling for a meat lover's delight. You can also vary the vegetables to suit your taste. Enjoy!