KALI OREXI

sharing our Greek culinary heritage

KO's Paspaliara

Yiayia Antigoni's Recipe

You will need...

2 bunches of English spinach, leaves and stalks, leaves cut widthways into 4cm wide ribbons

2 bunches spring onions, cut into 4cm lengths

3 teaspoons salt

¾ cup sweet trahana (or ½ cup fine burghul)

380g feta cheese, crumbled

2 eggs, lightly beaten

¾ cup extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) + more for drizzling on top

1 large bunch dill, finely chopped

40-50g butter (salted or unsalted), softened, for basting

2 cups fine-medium grit polenta (1 ½ cups for the base and ½ cup for the topping)

Water

Preparing the filling

• Wash the spinach and spring onions thoroughly to remove any dirt. Drain them gently by holding them in your hands and allowing the water to fall away. Do not squeeze the water out of them – the moisture they hold will help cook the polenta

• Put the greens and salt into a large bowl. Rub and squeeze the greens to release their juices and macerate them *a little*. Do not discard the juices. (I had to do this in two batches and then combine them into one bowl)

• Add the beaten eggs to the greens. Add a little water to the egg bowl to wash out any remaining egg. Add this to the bowl with the greens

• Add the trahana, feta, EVOO and the dill and mix well

Preparing the paspaliara

• Using your fingers, spread the butter evenly across the entire base of a medium-sized, heavy-based baking dish (with an internal diameter of 30-32cm) The butter layer will be quite thick. (Do not substitute the butter with olive oil, as the crust at the base of the paspaliara will not form)

• Add 1 ½ cups of the polenta evenly across the base of your baking dish (hold on to the sides of your baking dish and shake it gently to even out the polenta)

• Add the filling to the baking dish and again spreading it out evenly

• Add ½ cup of water to the bowl that the filling was in and wash down the sides of bowl to capture any remaining filling. Add this to the baking dish too. Note: The filling should be wet enough so that when you press your hand down on it, water rises to the surface

• Lightly spread more polenta evenly on top; just enough to cover the greens and ensuring no gaps (approximately ½ cup)

• Leave the paspaliara to sit until ALL the polenta on the top looks wet; about 30-40 minutes

Baking the paspaliara

• Drizzle the top generously with EVOO so all the polenta is moistened with the oil (at this point you can freeze the pie and bake it another day without even needing to defrost it)

• Bake on the lowest or second lowest level in a fan-forced oven, preheated to 210°C. Bake until the top and base are both golden brown. The top of the paspaliara should develop cracks on the surface.

If the top of the paspaliara browns before the bottom, place a piece of foil on top and change your oven's setting to only heat the oven from the bottom. Continue to bake until the base is golden brown – I baked mine for 1 hour and 15 minutes

Serving the paspaliara

• Allow the paspaliara to rest for 30 minutes before serving. Slice the paspaliara into wedges and serve warm with a Greek salad and your favourite glass of wine! Kali Orexi!

Recipe serves 8-12

Recipe Notes

• You can use zucchini flowers and tender, young zucchini plant leaves too for added sweetness

• You can substitute the spinach for chard or use one bunch of each. If using chard, remove and discard the white stalk and cut the leaves widthways into 4cm wide ribbons

• You must allow the paspaliara to rest for 30 minutes before serving, so that the crust on the base is able to form properly. Otherwise, the polenta-base will crumble.