

# For elegant desserts, lighten up with phyllo dough

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SPECIAL WRITER

Phyllo is the paper-thin dough used to make traditional Greek spinach pie and sweet, honey-drenched Turkish baklava. It is so much like the dough used for strudel, that phyllo is often used for making sweet and savory versions of this Hungarian pastry, as well.

Phyllo can be used to make a host of other dishes, too, from savory hors d'oeuvres to ethereally light, crisp pie crusts, all using a minimum of fat.

Pastry chefs seeking to lighten desserts made with butter-rich puff pastry now use phyllo instead for constructing Napoleons and for making tart shells. At home, you can follow their example.

Working with phyllo intimidates cooks because the sheets tear easily and dry out quickly. By following these simple rules, though, you will find that phyllo is not hard to use.

Follow package directions carefully. Defrost the frozen dough in the refrigerator, then let it come to room temperature before unwrapping the sheets you need. Reseal the rest and refreeze.

As soon as the dough is laid out, cover it with plastic and a damp towel.

Recover the unused dough immediately after removing a sheet to use.

If the dough tears, or is split, ignore it or patch it by placing a piece of dough over it. (When phyllo has not been stored properly during shipment, or in the store, sheets may stick together, then tear or split when separated.)

To cope with this, have ready more sheets than a recipe calls for, and you can discard those

## MINIATURE STRAWBERRY PHYLLO TARTS

4 sheets phyllo dough

Cooking spray

2 teaspoons sugar

Filling:

1 quart fresh strawberries

1 tablespoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Defrost a package of phyllo dough in the refrigerator.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Place a piece of plastic wrap on the counter. Remove 4 sheets of phyllo from the package. Set them out on the plastic wrap. Immediately cover them with plastic wrap and a damp dish towel. Reseal the remaining sheets to use another time.

Place one sheet of phyllo on the work surface in front of you. Spray generously with cooking spray. Sprinkle it with some of the sugar. Lay another sheet of the phyllo over this, covering it. Again, spray the dough well, and sprinkle it with sugar. Repeat, simply spraying the top sheet.

Cut the phyllo into 16

squares, trimming away any hard edges. Gently fit each of the squares into the openings of a miniature muffin mold with 2-inch cavities, with the corners of the squares point up. Be sure the dough is snug against the bottom and sides of the tin. Bake until the phyllo is golden and crisp, 5-7 minutes. Cool the tart shells in the muffin tins.

Remove and use, or store shells 2-3 days. If necessary, repeat with the remaining squares, or discard them.

For the filling, finely chop enough berries to make 1 cup. In a bowl, toss the chopped berries with the sugar and vanilla. Let stand 20 minutes to 1 hour, until the berries are moist and there is syrup in the bottom of the bowl. Just before serving, spoon a heaping teaspoon of the sweetened berries into each tart shell. Top with a hulled whole berry, pointed end up. Serve immediately.

**Nutrition information:** Each of the 16 servings contains 120 calories and 2 grams of fat.



Springtime dessert: Miniature Strawberry Tarts are an elegant dessert made with phyllo dough.

which are a problem.)

If these instructions make you hesitate, it may help you to know that I was fired the first day of my first catering job because it took me 30 minutes to carefully stack only perfect sheets of phyllo and to brush every centimeter of their surfaces with melted butter. So learn from my mistake, and don't expect perfection from the dough. Just patch up the tears and keep going.

Written for the American Institute for Cancer Research, author

of "The Best of Clay Pot Cooking" and "The Natural Kitchen: SOY!"

## Grill vegetables for tasty meatless meals

AP — Barbecued and grilled vegetables such as corn, sweet potatoes and eggplants, even asparagus, can form the basis for satisfying meatless meals.

Vegetarians have plenty of tasty, acceptable choices to heap on their plates, given the variety of foods that can be prepared on the grill. Side dishes such as rice and beans, crusty bread and salads can round out meals, with fruit and cookies as easy desserts.

### BARBECUED CORN WITH CHILI BUTTER

12 ears corn in their husks  
1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened  
2 tablespoons hot red pepper sauce  
1 teaspoon chili powder  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

Peel back husks; remove corn silk. Bring husks up and tie with kitchen string. Soak corn in cold water for 30 minutes. Beat together softened butter, pepper sauce, chili and garlic powders until smooth; set aside. Grill corn over medium heat for 25 minutes or until corn is tender, turning often. Remove husks. Serve with reserved butter mixture.

### Flavor variations, to blend with 1/2 cup softened butter:

3 tablespoons brown mustard and 1 tablespoon horseradish.  
3 tablespoons minced fresh herbs and 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce.  
2 tablespoons hot red pepper sauce and 1 teaspoon curry powder (for Indian flavor).  
2 tablespoons hot red pepper sauce, 1 tablespoon soy sauce, and 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger (for Asian flavor).

Makes 12 servings

Recipe from: Franks RedHot

### GRILLED SWEET POTATOES

2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch slices  
1/3 cup Dijon or honey mustard  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary leaves or 1 teaspoon dried

Place sweet potatoes and 1 cup water into large microwave-safe dish; cover. Microwave on high 6

minutes or until potatoes are crisp-tender, turning once. (If necessary, cook potatoes in two batches.) Drain well.

Combine mustard, olive oil and rosemary. Grill sweet potato slices on oiled rack over medium-high for 6 minutes or until fork-tender, turning and basting often with mustard mixture.

Recipe from: French's mustard

### EGGPLANT SANDWICH WITH TOMATOES AND FETA

Cooking spray

1 tablespoon Caesar salad dressing

1 small eggplant, cut into 16 thin slices (see note)

4 wheat Kaiser rolls, split

1/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt

1 large tomato, cut into 8 thin slices

1/2 medium red onion, cut into 4 thin slices

8 basil leaves, finely chopped

2 ounces feta cheese, finely crumbled

4 leaves romaine lettuce

Preheat the grill. Coat a grill rack with cooking spray and place on the grill.

Drizzle or lightly brush the Caesar salad dressing over one side of each eggplant slice. Arrange the slices, dressing side up, on the grill rack. Grill just until lightly browned on the bottom, juicy on the top and tender, about 15 minutes. Arrange the rolls, cut sides down, on the grill; toast for 3 minutes. Using a spatula or tongs, remove to a platter.

Spread the yogurt on the cut sides of the rolls. Layer the eggplant, tomatoes, onions, basil and feta cheese on half of the roll, starting and ending with the eggplant. Top with the lettuce and remaining roll. Serve immediately.

**Note:** The eggplant may be peeled or left unpeeled, as desired. Some cooks prefer the skin left on; others find it has a bitter taste. Judging when eggplant slices are done is tricky, so test early; if undercooked, they can always be returned to the grill for a few more minutes.

Makes 4 servings.

**Nutrition facts per serving:** 266 cal., 8 g fat (2.9 saturated fat), 13 mg chol., 39 g carbs, 530 mg sodium, 3.7 g dietary fiber.

Recipe from: "Simply Grilling" (Surrey Books, \$14.95) by Carol Munson.

## If you want to make Alzheimer's less difficult, start here.



If you're caring for someone with early-to-middle stage Alzheimer's disease, chances are you're frustrated and uncertain about what to expect and how to cope. But there are ways to maximize your loved one's quality of life, as well as their independence.

### Preserve your loved one's routine.

People with Alzheimer's need to maintain their daily routines as much as possible — like making the bed and gathering for meals. This kind of structure anchors their day in familiarity, and gives them a sense of self-worth and belonging.

### Consider an Assisted Living Residence dedicated to Alzheimer's care.

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### Look for a company with experience, not promises.

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