

CLASSIC SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE DIP

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| 12 oz (375 g) cream cheese, softened | 2 jars (6 oz/170 mL each) marinated artichoke hearts, drained and chopped |
| 1/2 cup (125 mL) mayonnaise | 1 cup (250 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese |
| 2 tbsp (25 mL) fresh lemon juice | 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped |
| 1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) hot pepper sauce | |
| 1 pkg (10 oz/300 g) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry | |

Using medium speed of an electric mixer, beat together cream cheese, mayonnaise, lemon juice and hot pepper sauce until smooth. Stir in spinach, artichokes, Parmesan cheese and garlic until blended. Spoon into a greased 1 quart (1 L) pie plate. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 25 minutes or until bubbly and heated through. Serve with crackers or baguette slices. Serves 8.

CREAMY LEMON SPINACH

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| 4 strips bacon | 2 pkgs (10 oz/300 g each) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry |
| 1 medium onion, sliced | 2 tbsp (25 mL) fresh lemon juice |
| 1 clove garlic, crushed | 1 tsp (5 mL) grated lemon peel |
| 3 tbsp (40 mL) flour | 1/4 cup (50 mL) grated Parmesan cheese |
| Dash nutmeg | Salt and pepper |
| 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) milk | |

In a heavy frypan, cook bacon until crisp. Drain bacon on paper towels; crumble and set aside. Drain all but 2 tbsp (25 mL) drippings from frypan. Add onion and garlic and sauté until softened. Add flour and nutmeg; cook and stir 2 minutes. Gradually whisk in milk. Increase heat to high and whisk until sauce thickens, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low; add spinach, lemon juice and peel, stirring until heated through. Stir in Parmesan cheese and reserved bacon. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serves 6.

SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE PIZZA

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| 1 pkg (10 oz/300 g) frozen chopped spinach, thawed | 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt |
| 8 oz (250 g) ricotta cheese | 1/4 tsp (1 mL) red pepper flakes |
| 2 green onions, thinly sliced | 1 Italian bread shell (Boboli) |
| 2 cloves garlic, crushed | 1 can (14 oz/398 mL) artichoke hearts, drained and quartered |
| 1/2 tsp (2 mL) oregano, crumbled | 1 cup (250 mL) shredded mozzarella cheese |
| 1/2 tsp (2 mL) freshly ground pepper | |

Squeeze moisture from spinach until dry. Combine spinach with next 7 ingredients (ricotta through pepper flakes). Place bread shell on a cookie sheet. Spread spinach mixture over shell, leaving a 1 inch (2.5 cm) border. Top with artichokes and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 450°F (230°C) for 12 - 15 minutes or until cheese is lightly browned and pizza is heated through. Serves 4.

Cook's Note: For additional colour, add sliced ripe olives, slivered oil-packed dried tomatoes or canned roasted red peppers along with artichokes.

MEDITERRANEAN SPINACH AND CHEESE CASSEROLE

1/3 cup (75 mL) fine dry bread crumbs	1 cup (250 mL) ricotta cheese
1/3 cup (75 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese	3/4 cup (175 mL) shredded dry pack feta cheese, divided
1/2 cup (125 mL) butter, melted	1 pkg (10 oz/300 g) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
8 sheets phyllo pastry	1/2 tsp (2 mL) basil, crumbled
1/4 cup (50 mL) olive oil	1/2 tsp (2 mL) freshly ground pepper
1/3 cup (75 mL) sliced green onions	Dash nutmeg
1/4 cup (50 mL) flour	
3/4 cup (175 mL) milk	
3 eggs, beaten	

Combine bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese; set aside. Lightly brush an 8 inch (20 cm) square baking dish with some of the melted butter. To prepare phyllo crust, brush top of one phyllo sheet with some of the melted butter and sprinkle with 1 tbsp (15 mL) of bread crumb mixture. Lay a second phyllo sheet on top; brush with melted butter and sprinkle with 1 tbsp (15 mL) of bread crumb mixture. Repeat layering procedure with remaining phyllo, remaining melted butter and bread crumb mixture. Reserve remaining bread crumb mixture for topping. Gently ease phyllo crust into prepared baking dish, pleating phyllo as necessary. Using scissors, trim phyllo crust so that it extends 1 inch (2.5 cm) beyond baking dish. Cover and set aside. To prepare sauce, heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and saute for 1 minute. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Gradually stir in milk. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened and bubbly. Gradually whisk sauce into beaten eggs until blended. Stir in ricotta cheese, 1/2 cup (125 mL) feta cheese, spinach, basil, pepper and nutmeg. Spoon mixture into phyllo crust. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup (50 mL) feta cheese and reserved bread crumb mixture. With scissors, snip extended phyllo crust at 1 inch (2.5 cm) intervals. Bake, uncovered, at 350°F (180°C) for 45 minutes or until a knife inserted in centre comes out clean. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. May be baked in advance and refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Remove from refrigerator and let stand for 20 - 30 minutes. Reheat, loosely covered with foil, at 350°F (180°C) until heated through. Serves 6 - 8.

BAKED TORTELLINI WITH SPINACH

2 pkgs (350 g each) fresh cheese tortellini	1 tsp (5 mL) basil, crumbled
8 cups (2 L) baby spinach	1/2 tsp (2 mL) red pepper flakes
1 tbsp (15 mL) oil	1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
1 jar (700 mL) tomato-based pasta sauce	1 cup (250 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped fresh parsley	

Cook tortellini in boiling salted water according to package directions until just barely tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in spinach and cook until wilted, about 1 minute; drain. In a bowl, toss tortellini and spinach with oil. Stir in pasta sauce, parsley, basil, red pepper flakes and salt. Spoon half of tortellini mixture into a greased 8x11 inch (20x28 cm) baking dish. Sprinkle with half of Parmesan cheese. Spoon remaining tortellini mixture over top. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil. May be prepared to this point and refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Bake, covered, at 375°F (190°C) for 25 - 30 minutes. Remove baking dish from oven; uncover and bake for 5 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serves 4.

RICE FLORENTINE

1 pkg (180 g) long grain and wild rice mix	8 oz (250 g) cream cheese, cubed
2 cups (500 mL) sliced fresh mushrooms	1 tbsp (15 mL) butter
1/2 cup (125 mL) sliced green onions	2 tsp (10 mL) Dijon mustard
1 pkg (10 oz/300 g) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry	1/4 tsp (1 mL) nutmeg
	2 1/2 cups (625 mL) boiling water

Place contents of rice mix package in a greased deep 3 quart (3 L) casserole dish. Add next 7 ingredients (mushrooms through nutmeg). Pour boiling water over rice mixture, stirring to combine. Bake, covered, at 350°F (180°C) for 30 minutes. Uncover and stir rice mixture. Continue baking, covered, for 30 minutes or until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed. Serves 8.