

Greek food made with grandma's touch

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BY VERONICA HINKE

When her family gave her a computer for Christmas five years ago, Dorothy Bezemes of Chicago's Portage Park taught herself the word processor, then began cataloging her 83 years of Greek-American recipes.

The culmination of her recording efforts has become a glossy, spiral-bound cookbook, *From our Hearts to Your Table: Favorite Recipes from a Greek-American Family*. It includes not just recipes from Greece, but from all over the world. And not just recipes, but Bezemes' inspirations.

"Love makes you cook. It makes people happy," Bezemes said.

So does her book. It's a family treasure for many reasons.

"My mom has boxes and boxes of recipes. But now I have them all written down in one place," said Bezemes' granddaughter Dori Walstrom of Glenview. "Yiayia, (Greek for grandmother), called on cousins -- here in the Midwest, in California and Massachusetts -- to have everyone's say on the recipes. It's not just her stuff."

Phyllo fright

"Before reading my mom's book, my non-Greek friends never thought they could make things with ingredients like phyllo dough, which is scary for some people to use," said Bezemes' daughter, Kathy Walstrom, also of Glenview. "She takes amazing pride -- tweaking recipes and presentation and using only the finest ingredients."

Bezemes added to her legacy with "*Yiayia's Kouzina*," aka "Grandma's Kitchen," the volunteer cooking project she developed for the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Basil in Chicago's Greektown.

Thirty members of Bezemes' cooking club meet Wednesday nights in the church kitchen to bake Greek specialties they sell to raise funds for the church. Orders for the sale will be taken until April 6.



Greek Orthodox Easter falls five weeks later this year, on April 27. The night before the Orthodox Lent begins, Greeks feast on *kapama*, a traditional Greek macaroni.

Magic macaroni

"When I was growing up, on that night, girls would put a piece of macaroni under their pillows. The man they dreamt of would be the man they would marry," Bezemes explained.

At Bezemes home they call it "St. Spaghetti Day," and the annual gathering lasts hours.

"We Greeks, we don't get up from the table. We just sit down for hours and hours, talking and laughing," Bezemes said.

"There's never too much food," Walstrom noted. "Two things that are really important to Greeks: Church and food. I married a non-Greek so helpful he would get up and collect the plates. But Greeks don't get up from the table." It's tradition.

Inquire about St. Basil's upcoming sale of Greek specialties through Dorothy Bezemes' Web site: www.ACupfulofLove.com, where you can also purchase *From our Hearts to Your Table*. The book is also available at the Hellenic Museum, 801 W. Adams, Chicago, (312) 655-1234, Favor the Moment, 6776 N. Northwest Highway, Chicago, (773) 631-8470.

Spanakopita

4 10-ounce packages frozen chopped spinach
4 large onions, minced
3 bunches scallions with tops, sliced
1 stick butter, or half olive oil and half butter
1 C fresh minced dill, loosely packed
1/2 C minced parsley, loosely packed
1/4 tsp. salt
1 lb. feta cheese, crumbled
1/2 C freshly grated parmesan cheese
(or use a mixture of kefalotiri and mizithra cheese, available in Greek food stores)
8 eggs
1lb. phyllo leaves
Unsalted Butter (clarified)
Farina (if needed)



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Defrost spinach, squeeze out the liquid, and reserve the spinach in a colander. In a skillet, saute the onions, sliced scallions, (including the green tops), in one stick of butter (or half butter and half olive oil) until onions are golden. Add minced dill and parsley and continue to saute for 5 minutes. Add spinach and salt and saute for 10 more minutes. Transfer mixture to large bowl and let cool. Stir in all the cheeses. In another bowl, beat eggs until they are frothy and fold them into the spinach mixture. (If mixture seems too thin, add 2 teaspoons Farina).

To make triangles: Cut the phyllo 2-1/2 inches wide and 8 inches long. Brush two sheets with melted butter and place one generous teaspoonful of mixture near the bottom of the phyllo. Fold in a triangle as if you were folding a flag. With a toothpick, punch a couple of holes in the triangle to aerate. Brush triangles with melted butter and right before putting into oven sprinkle lightly with cold water. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden.

To make rolls: Have 25 phyllo sheets ready and 3 sticks of butter. Measure out the spinach mixture into 5 bowls. Brush 5 of the phyllo leaves with melted hot butter. Spread one bowl of spinach mixture along the long side of the buttered phyllo. Roll the phyllo and spinach mixture over twice and then fold in the ends to contain the mixture and continue rolling up jelly-roll fashion. Continue to make all rolls the same way. Place seam side down in baking pan and brush with melted butter (pierce with toothpick to aerate). Sprinkle lightly with cold water and bake for about one hour or until brown and crisp. Cut the rolls into slices and serve warm. Makes 5 rolls.

To make in pans: Brush the bottom of an 11- x17-inch inch pan with melted butter and place 10 sheets of phyllo in pan brushing each sheet with melted butter. Make sure at least the first four sheets overlap the sides of the pan. Pour the spanakopita mixture in the pan, fold in the hanging phyllo so all the mixture is encased. Top with 10 sheets of phyllo, brushing each with butter. Cut top phyllo only into desired sizes, sprinkle lightly with cold water and bake 40 minutes.