

## Perfect Picnic Parcels

With flavors that evoke sunshine on a Greek island, these feta and spinach pockets can be served straight from the oven or at room temperature and with a simple tomato and red onion salad or with a dollop of tzatziki.

Everything seems perfect about the outing to Box Hill in Emma—the weather, the countryside, the guests . . . Seemingly most perfect at all, of course, is Emma herself, as the host of the picnic, Mr. Weston, gallantly points out in his famous conundrum offered over the picnic cloth:

“What two letters of the alphabet are there, that express perfection?”

“What two letters!—express perfection! I am sure I do not know.”

“Ah! you will never guess. You (to Emma), I am certain, will never guess. I will tell you. M. and A. Em-ma. Do you understand?”

The conundrum is lame, not to say untruthful, as the more sensible among the party and we the readers are well aware. Emma is far from perfection, and the picnic too has fallen flat. As the narrator herself with typical irony points out, when the party is en route to the beauty spot, “Nothing was wanting but to be happy when they got there.”

Oddly, in a novel almost obsessed with food, we don’t get to hear anything about the food. Perhaps it was perfect, just like these spinach-and-feta phyllo parcels—the ultimate in picnic foods.

### SERVES 2

PREP + COOKING TIME: 25 MINUTES

8 cups packed baby spinach leaves  
1 cup crumbled feta cheese  
large pinch of freshly grated nutmeg  
2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley  
4 sheets of phyllo pastry  
¼ cup olive oil  
salt and black pepper

1. Place the spinach in a large saucepan without any extra water, cover, and cook for 2 minutes until wilted. Drain and squeeze out the excess water.
2. Chop the spinach and mix with the feta, nutmeg, and parsley in a bowl. Season with pepper (the feta is salty, so check before adding salt).
3. Place two sheets of phyllo pastry on top of one another and brush lightly with oil. Place half the filling at the end of the sheet, then fold over to make a triangle and continue folding until the filling is enclosed. Brush with oil and repeat.
4. Place the pockets on a cookie sheet and bake at 400 F for 15 minutes until crisp and golden.

