Spinach & Cheese Strata

5 stars based on 22 votes

- Recipe
- Reviews (69)
- Add Review/Question
- Print
This elegant brunch strata — really a savory bread pudding with spinach, cheese and cubes of bread baked in custard — is ideal for entertaining. You do all of the preparation the night before and then let it rest in the fridge overnight. The next morning you simply turn the oven on, place the strata in, and effortlessly wait for brunch to emerge. It’s a ‘wow’ dish so you can keep the sides simple: crispy bacon, a Strawberry & Orange Fruit Salad and Mimosas would be perfect.
Before we get started, a few words about the ingredients. It’s important to use good quality cheese. The recipe calls for a combination of Gruyère and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese but since they are both expensive, it’s fine to substitute something else; just use a good melting cheese with bold flavor, like extra sharp cheddar. The recipe is pretty flexible so you can play around with different sautéed vegetables depending on what you have on hand. Some cooked sausage or pancetta would also be good — just be sure to reduce the salt in the recipe to a scant teaspoon or the dish will be way too salty.

Begin by squeezing all of the water out of the spinach. This will take a few minutes — you won’t believe how much water is in there! Take your time; it’s important to get it all out.
Melt the butter in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the spinach and garlic and cook a few minutes more.
Layer a third of the bread in a buttered 3-quart baking dish.

Top with a third of the spinach.
Followed by a third of each cheese.

Repeat layering twice, ending with the cheese.
Make the custard by combining the eggs, half-and-half-Dijon mustard salt, pepper and nutmeg.

Pour evenly over top of the strata.
Then cover and refrigerate for at least one hour or overnight.

Bake for about 75 minutes, until puffed, set and golden all over.
Note: My starting point for this recipe was this popular strata originally published in Gourmet magazine. I increased the spinach; amped up the flavor by adding garlic and increasing the salt; and swapped the milk for half-and-half and reduced the baking temperature from 350°F to 325°F for a creamier texture.

Spinach & Cheese Strata

By Jennifer Segal, inspired by this strata originally published in Gourmet magazine
Servings: 8-10
Prep Time: 30 Minutes
Cook Time: 75 Minutes
Total Time: 1 Hour 45 Minutes, plus at least one hour to sit in the fridge

Ingredients

- 1 pound bag chopped frozen spinach, thawed
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
• 1 large yellow onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
• 3 garlic cloves, minced
• 12 ounces (3/4 pound) Italian sandwich bread, cut into 1-inch cubes (about 11 slices or 8 cups)
• 6 ounces (1-1/2 cups) coarsely grated Gruyère
• 2 ounces (2/3 cup) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
• 9 large eggs
• 2-3/4 cups half-and-half
• 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
• 1-3/4 teaspoons salt
• 3/4 teaspoon black pepper
• 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

**Instructions**

1. Squeeze handfuls of spinach to remove as much liquid as possible.
2. Melt the butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and drained spinach and cook 2 minutes more. Set aside.
3. Butter a 3-quart (or 9x13-inch) baking dish. Spread one third of the bread cubes in the dish and top evenly with one third of spinach mixture. (Try to break it up as much as possible so there are no huge clumps of spinach.) Sprinkle with one third of each cheese. Repeat layering twice, ending with cheeses.
4. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the half-and-half, Dijon mustard, salt, pepper and nutmeg and whisk until well combined. Pour the custard mixture evenly over the strata. Cover the strata with plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight.
5. Preheat oven to 325°F. Bake the strata, uncovered, until puffed, set and golden brown all over top, 70-75 minutes. Let stand 10-15 minutes before serving.
6. Note: The cook time is based on the strata going immediately from the fridge to the oven. If it sits out at room temperature before baking, the cook time will be 10-15 minutes less.

**Nutrition Information**

Powered by Edamam

• Per serving (8 servings)
  • Calories: 483
  • Fat: 30g
  • Saturated fat: 16g
  • Carbohydrates: 30g
  • Sugar: 4g
  • Fiber: 4g
• **Protein:** 25g
• **Sodium:** 1117mg
• **Cholesterol:** 280mg

**Reviews & Comments**

• 5 stars

Jen, I have tried many of your recipes and am in LOVE with them all! I have a question on this one. I bought too much dry “stuffing bread.” Can I use it in this recipe? Also please tell me your cookbook will be out in time for Christmas!

- **Mel Nelson** on November 23, 2016 [Reply]
  
  ○ Hi Mel, so glad you like the recipes! If you’re referring to bread here, that should work, but I wouldn’t recommend packaged stuffing cubes. And my cookbook won’t be released until the Spring of 2018 (so I hope you’re patient :)

  - Jenn on November 23, 2016 [Reply]

• 5 stars

Perfect brunch or dinner fare! Loved this! Thanks!!!

- **Janet Miller** on October 6, 2016 [Reply]

• 5 stars

Hi Jenn, is there any substitute for 1/2 and 1/2? by the way I love your recipes!!! thank you for making meal time so easy and tasty! Giselle

- **Giselle Gallant** on September 16, 2016 [Reply]
  
  ○ Hi Giselle, Glad to hear you like the recipes. I think you could get away with using milk here.

  - Jenn on September 16, 2016 [Reply]

• 5 stars

I made this for breakfast yesterday and it was amazing! I cut the recipe in half, using an 8×8 baking dish, and baked it for about an hour and fifteen minutes. Perfect and delicious. I did use both cheeses in the recipe, which were pricey, so I’m glad it was a success! I also served the strawberry/orange fruit salad with it. Thank you – I will visit often and will be making more recipes from this site, for sure.

- **Sarah** on July 18, 2016 [Reply]

• 5 stars

Excellent dish – we used sharp cheddar with the Parmesan reggiano, as suggested

- **Stephanie** on June 25, 2016 [Reply]

• Is it possible to freeze, and at what temp to bake frozen?
- Maureen on June 23, 2016 Reply
  - Hi Maureen, I haven’t frozen this before, but other readers have successfully. When you’re ready to serve it, I would defrost it in the fridge overnight. Before putting it in the oven cover it tightly with foil, then reheat it at 325 degrees until hot in the center, probably about 35 – 40 minutes. Hope everyone enjoys!

- Jenn on June 24, 2016 Reply
  - 5 stars

Made this for Fathers Day breakfast. Was a hit with the family.

- Michele on June 20, 2016 Reply
  - what is half & half

From Australia Adelaide

- sharlene on June 17, 2016 Reply
  - Half and half is equal parts whole milk and light cream. Enjoy!

- Jenn on June 17, 2016 Reply
  - OnceUponAChef is my go-to recipe site, by far! Quick question: if I have leftover strata, will it keep/warm up well?

- Kate on June 9, 2016 Reply
  - Yes Kate, this reheats very nicely!

- Jenn on June 9, 2016 Reply
  - 5 stars

Never made a strata before and used this for a brunch. It was delicious and everyone was asking for the recipe 🥰. Will be putting it on my go to list for sure!

- Brigit on May 17, 2016 Reply
  - 5 stars

Excellent! Froze it, defrosted overnight in the fridge, covered in foil, baked at 350° for 45 minutes, as per instructions. Everyone loved it!

- Elinor on April 26, 2016 Reply
  - Hi Elanor,

So, just to be sure, did you bake it before freezing and then just reheat it, or did you freeze it without cooking.....I love this recipe and also want it for guests coming!

  Thanks!!
Katie

- Katie on April 30, 2016 Reply
  - 5 stars

  Hi Katie,
  
  I cooked it. Froze it. Defrosted overnight. Warmed it up covered, which took 45 minutes.
  
  Enjoy,
  Elinor

- Elinor on April 30, 2016 Reply
  - Thanks!!

- Katie on May 2, 2016 Reply
  - 5 stars

  I made this for dinner last night and it turned out beautifully – It was lighter than I thought it would be, which was a nice surprise, and the texture was perfect. Another outstanding recipe, thank you!

- Mary on April 18, 2016 Reply

- Could I make this ahead and freeze it?

- Elinor on April 10, 2016 Reply
  - Hi Elinor, Its has a lot of dairy, so not sure how well it would freeze. It does refrigerate well, though.

- Jenn on April 11, 2016 Reply
  - Thanks Jenn. So not the answer I wanted! LOL. I’m having guests for ten days and much prefer knowing everything is done and in the freezer. I’ve been very successful freezing quiches. Lots of dairy, no?

- Elinor on April 11, 2016 Reply
  - Elixir, It’s certainly doable, but just may not be as good as when eaten right after baking. If you go this route, please let me know how it turns out!

- Jenn on April 11, 2016 Reply
  - I’ve never been called Elixir before. Gotta love spellcheck. So I do feel badly asking another question, when I didn’t listen to your last answer, but….the gorgeous strata is made and in the freezer. Do you suggest I defrost first or right from freezer to oven? What temperature? For how long? Promise I’ll listen this time. Thank you so much.
- Elinor on April 16, 2016

- Elixir? So sorry :)!! I’m glad you’re giving it a try this way as I’d love to know how it turns out. I would defrost it in the fridge before putting it in the oven and then cover it tightly with foil and reheat it at 325 degrees until hot in the center, probably about 35 – 40 minutes. Hope everyone enjoys!

- Jenn on April 16, 2016

- Is there anything to substitute for the spinach? My mom doesn’t like it. Thanks
  - Suzanne on March 24, 2016 Reply
    - Suzanne, you could probably use kale or collard greens here instead.
    - Jenn on March 24, 2016 Reply

- 5 stars

  This recipe was really good. I made it today for a work breakfast party and was a big hit. The only thing I did different was adding about 1/4 cup of chopped sun-dried tomatoes ….. couldn’t help myself and it was a very good addition.

  - Janice on March 22, 2016 Reply

- Hi, I’m going to make this tonight for tomorrow morning but I don’t have a 3 quart pan. Can I use a 9x13 glass pan instead and would that equate to halving the recipe? Thank you for your guidance!

  - Sara on February 20, 2016 Reply
    - Hi Sara, Yes it’s actually the same — I’ll update the recipe as I’m sure other people have the same question.
    - Jenn on February 20, 2016 Reply
      - Thanks, worked perfectly!
      - Sara on February 21, 2016 Reply

- can i make this with gluten free bread? i am a celiac.

  - betsy on February 18, 2016 Reply
    - Yes Betsy, I think you could get away with using gluten-free bread here. Hope you enjoy!
    - Jenn on February 18, 2016 Reply

- Huge fan- love everything i’ve tried from you! i’m wondering about other kinds of bread- what would the impact be if using challah? would you recommend the italian over that?

  - Anthea on January 27, 2016 Reply
I think it’d work well, Anthea — really either one is fine. Enjoy :)  
- Jenn on January 27, 2016 Reply

5 stars

This will be the 3rd potluck breakfast that I have taken this dish to, it is a hit and I love that it is vegetarian! I use the olive loaf from trader joes and a blend of several cheeses it always comes out great! I’m so glad I came across this recipie, so addicting!?

- Kelsey P. on January 8, 2016 Reply

Hi, i have lots of fresh baby spinach leaves (leftover from a salad that wasn’t made at a recent family gathering). Can I use this instead of frozen spinach, and if so how? Thank you!

- Aussieapple on December 31, 2015 Reply

- Yes, you can definitely use fresh spinach. You’d need to cook it first, then drain as with the frozen.
- Jenn on December 31, 2015 Reply

5 stars

I made this yesterday with a combination fresh kale and spinach. Next time I will add more bread. It was still very delicious!

- Samantha on December 25, 2015 Reply

For the strata is it ok to make it way ahead, like 1 1/2 days ahead, and let it sit in the fridge until baking Christmas morning. Want to make it tonight so Christmas Eve won’t be overloaded. Thanks!

- Rebekah sigmon on December 23, 2015 Reply

- Hi Rebekah, Yes, that should be fine. Hope everyone enjoys it!
- Jenn on December 24, 2015 Reply

5 stars

Hi Jenn! I’m preparing some meals in advance of my daughter’s arrival from college. This is one of our favorites!

Two questions: How will it hold up to re-heating? And, do you still think about a pound of fresh spinach is the right portion to sub for frozen? Thanks in advance and happy holidays to you and your family!

- Sandy K. on December 11, 2015 Reply

- Hi Sandy, Yes, the quiche will reheat nicely and I would suggest about 1 – 1/2 lbs. fresh spinach.
- Jenn on December 12, 2015 Reply

5 stars

I made this recipe for an important brunch and it was outstanding. I followed the directions exactly and
it looked, smelled and tasted wonderful! I also served homemade waffles with assorted fresh berries for the meal. Definitely a keeper and I plan to use it again during the holidays. It is not easy to find elegant brunch dishes. Thank you!

- Marjorie Cohen on October 29, 2015 Reply

- Do you think it will be good if it sits for about a 24 hours instead of just overnight? Making for break fast for Yom Kippur. Thanks….love your site!

- Lauren on September 19, 2015 Reply
  - Hi Lauren, So sorry I’m late to reply. It will be fine to sit for 24 hours.
  - Jenn on September 24, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

  I made this and used swirled rye bread and some french bread that I had on hand…it was great, everyone loved it. Thanks

- brenda hall on August 27, 2015 Reply

- Just made this for a back to school breakfast for the teachers at my school. Everyone loved it! I used a Gruyere/Cheddar blend from Trader Joe’s and it was perfect. Next time I will try adding bacon or ham.

- Ama Jane on August 27, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

  I made this for a breakfast pot luck at work and it went over fabulously. 3 ofr 4 people asked for the recipe and when it came up for another breakfast pot luck, it was requested again. I have to work at 6 am so it will be in the oven by 4 or 4:30. Thanks for sharing this recipe!!

- Brenda on August 6, 2015 Reply

- 4 stars

  If I use fresh spinach….how much do I use?

- madelaine on July 14, 2015 Reply
  - Hi Madelaine, I’m guessing you’d need about 1.5 pounds.
  - Jenn on July 16, 2015 Reply

- Hi, I wondered if this would be okay when it was cold? Doing a cold buffet lunch on Sunday and won’t be able to serve food hot.
  Many thanks
  Kay Frith

- Kay frith on July 1, 2015 Reply
- Hi Kay, It’s really best served hot. Sorry! You might try my Spinach & Gruyere Quiche — that’s good at room temperature (not cold though).

- Jenn on July 1, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

I have a vegetarian couple coming to our bed and breakfast for 5 nights, so I decided to try this strata with another couple and ourselves this morning. Served it with the citrus salad and received rave reviews. Gruyere is expensive especially in our small town, so I used Trader Joe’s Gruyere/White Cheddar combination I had on hand and it was fantastic!

- Rochelle Shugrue on May 7, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

I prepared this for a book club brunch and it was a very well received. The gruyere was pricey, but essential. The sandwich bread isn’t something that my neighborhood grocery store carried, but Costco came through with the bread and good cheese. I also made the orange and strawberry salad with Cara Cara oranges, because Costco, and it was especially fabulous. Thank you for making me look like I know how to cook!

- Marji on April 18, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

Fantastic for brunch. Everyone loved it and it was easy to make. It is very tasty.

- Melanie M on April 6, 2015 Reply

- Several of your recipes call for vegetable oil ,which I never buy. Can I use canola oil instead

- Linda schlereth on March 31, 2015 Reply

  - Hi Linda, Yes, canola will work just as well.

  - Jenn on December 12, 2015 Reply

- I live in a small town and cannot find the Italian sandwich bread. Is there something else that I could use?

- Rochelle Shugrue on March 30, 2015 Reply

  - Hi Rochelle, Any plain sandwich bread will work just fine.

  - Jenn on March 31, 2015 Reply

- 5 stars

Made this strata for dinner tonight. Delicious! I love this site. So happy I came across it one day.

- Celine on March 30, 2015 Reply

- I’d like to make individual portions. What would be the cooktime?
- sandy on March 29, 2015 Reply
  - Hi Sandy, Depends on the size, but I’d start checking after 30-35 min.
    - Jenn on March 29, 2015 Reply

- Maggie on March 26, 2015 Reply
  - Hi Maggie, You can leave it out; it will still be delicious.
    - Jenn on March 26, 2015 Reply
      - Ty!
    - Maggie on March 26, 2015 Reply

- Maggie on March 26, 2015 Reply
  - How about using fresh spinach? Would I need to cook it first? Thanks!
    - Karen on March 26, 2015 Reply
      - Hi Karen, You could but not sure it’s worth it. You’d need to cook it first, then drain as with the frozen.
    - Jenn on March 26, 2015 Reply

Add a Review or Question

Your review or question

Rate the recipe: 5 stars means you loved it, 1 star means you really disliked it

Your name *

Your email (will not be published) *

Your website

Send