

EATING & DRINKING

# Flake News

Delicate layers of phyllo pastry are easier to achieve than you might believe.

By CHARLOTTE DRUCKMAN

**R**ECENTLY, A WELL-MEANING person recommended Sharon Brenner's "A Pie Project"—a digital cookbook devoted solely to Greek pies—specifically, the part where I could learn how to make phyllo dough from scratch.

But I've always found the store-bought frozen sheets difficult enough to maneuver. That's what I needed to learn how to do. You might want to do the same, because frozen phyllo can be one of the handiest ingredients to stock in your kitchen. It contains multitudes of one-pan recipes.

When I spoke to cooks with phyllo fluency, they effused on the pleasures of the golden, shattering pastry and encouraged me to practice elementary doughmanship by sharing recipes involving fewer layers to fuss with.

**Frozen phyllo can be one of the handiest ingredients to stock in your kitchen.**

Ms. Brenner, an immigration lawyer in Los Angeles, told me of marathopita, a small, round, Cretan fennel pie filled with the vegetable's fronds. Robyn Eckhardt, author of "Istanbul and Beyond," recalled a pumpkin borek she watched a woman named Esen make in Erfelek, a small town in the Black Sea region of Turkey. The manti dish described by Selin Kiazim—the Turkish-Cypriot, London-based chef behind the restaurant Oklava and the cookbook of the same name—sounded similarly simple, and delicious: You fill the phyllo with (usually) mincemeat, roll it up and cut that roll into shorter cylinders. These "get stood-up in a buttered tray and baked until crispy," she relayed via email. The little-known dish is served with a garlicky yogurt and tomato-chile butter. "Proper delicious stuff."

Poopa Dweck, who wrote "Aromas of Aleppo," a cookbook celebrating the flavors of Syria's Jewish community, reminisced about the wedges of pistachio-filled phyllo soaked in rosewater syrup she first created when newly married. The Crete-born, London-based chef and author of "Aegean," Marianna Leivaditaki, noted that while most of her native island's pies are either sweet or, if savory, heavy on the meat and mincemeat, those she was taught are a showcase for seasonal greens—except the "kreatotourta," traditionally a vehicle for unboned lamb and cheese.

Whatever the recipe, the primary concern is to protect your phyllo from desiccation. It's the reason you have to work so quickly. "Unlike puff pastry, [phyllo] dough has almost no fat," Ms. Dweck explained. She recommended



**TEAM LAYER** Pistachio filling rolled inside sheets of phyllo and spiraled makes an easy yet striking pastry. Find the recipe at [wsj.com/food](https://www.wsj.com/food).

HEAVI LEE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. FOOD STYLING BY PEARL JONES, PROP STYLING BY REBECCA BARTOSHEK



**Feta, Garlic and Poppy Seed Crisps**  
Total Time 35 minutes  
Makes 18-24 crackers

- 7 ounces Turkish white cheese or feta, finely crumbled
- ¼ cup poppy seeds or nigella seeds
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 4 (18- by 11-inch) sheets phyllo pastry

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment. (The baking sheet must be big enough to allow the phyllo to lie completely flat.)

2. In a small bowl, mix feta, poppy seeds and grated garlic together.  
3. Brush parchment with a little melted butter and lay a sheet of phyllo on top. Brush top of phyllo with more butter. Scatter one third of feta mixture across phyllo in a thin, even layer. Place another sheet of phyllo on top, pressing down firmly. Brush top with butter.  
4. Distribute another third of feta mixture across phyllo in an even layer. Repeat layering and brushing, finishing with a sheet of phyllo on top. Place a sheet of

parchment on phyllo and another baking sheet on top of that. Push down firmly. Remove top baking sheet and parchment, and cut phyllo sandwich into any shapes you wish. (Rectangles work nicely.)  
5. Put the parchment back on top, followed by the baking sheet. Bake, checking halfway through, until golden brown and crisp, about 15 minutes. Remove top baking tray and parchment. Let crisps cool completely.

—Adapted from "Oklava" by Selin Kiazim (Mitchell Beazley)

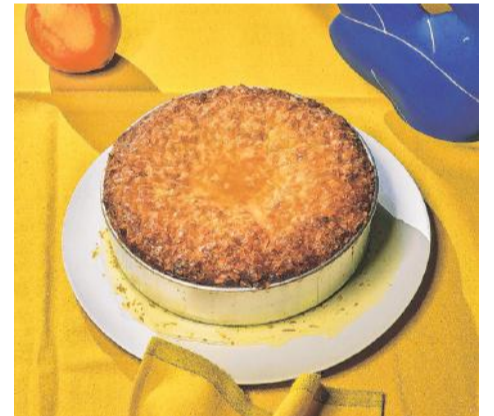
purchasing phyllo fresh, from a Middle Eastern grocer. But for many, that isn't an option.

So, let's assume you're going with frozen. Be sure to let it thaw it in the refrigerator overnight. Ms. Dweck cautioned against going straight from the freezer to room temperature. "Moisture will develop, causing the dough to stick together," she said.

While working with the dough, always keep it covered with a slightly damp cloth to keep it from drying out. "And don't be afraid of using lots of butter or olive oil," Ms. Kiazim said. "This brings flavor but also a delicious fried-like texture to the pastry." She imparts a terrific trick for the crispiest layers in her recipe for feta, garlic and poppy seed crisps: Compress the layers using heavy baking sheets.

In Ms. Leivaditaki's recipe for what's called a pie but eats closer to a syrup-doused bread pudding, dried ribbons of phyllo soak in a custard-like batter; you don't even have to unfurl the dough. And Reem Kassis, the Palestinian expert on Middle Eastern cooking, shared a brilliant baklava for beginners (spelled baklava in this case, as it is when referring to some Middle Eastern versions). Each of the pistachio-filled phyllo snails consists of a single sheet of phyllo, rolled cigar style, then spiraled, baked and doused in a floral syrup.

Once you've executed these easy recipes, you might feel confident enough to tackle a traditional Greek spanakopita—or even make the dough yourself.



► Find a recipe for orange and broken phyllo pastry pie at [wsj.com/food](https://www.wsj.com/food).

**IPA HAS BEEN** the top-selling style of craft beer since the turn of the century. Drinkers can't get enough of the fragrant, juicy hops varieties that provide that distinctive backbone to IPAs—and now, to the burgeoning category of non-alcoholic drinks known as hop waters.

"The first hop water batch was like nothing I had ever tasted: green, grassy, floral, citrusy and not especially bitter," said Paul Tecker, a Southern California brewer. His love for hoppy IPAs made him wonder what the Columbus hops he was growing in his backyard would taste like by themselves, apart from the malt and other elements that round out a beer. Soon, local craft beer shops were selling what he labeled H2OPS. "It was not beer for sure, but something entirely different," Mr. Tecker said.

Today you can find over a dozen brands of hop water, most of which are exactly what the name indicates: water, usually carbonated, that has been generously hopped.

Hoplark, based in Boulder, Colo., launched in 2018 as a line of hopped teas, inspired by a month when co-founder Dean Eberhardt stopped drinking alcohol. Hop waters followed in 2021. Many people, said Mr. Eberhardt, discovered his hop water "on a sobriety occasion then transition to it being an all-day beverage."

Most Hoplark offerings focus on a single variety of hops. Each month Hoplark also offers a limited-edition release in its Hop Explorer Series, based on a lesser-known variety such as Meridian or

**HALF FULL**

## All Bite, No Buzz

Hop waters deliver IPAs' aromatic punch, minus the alcohol and calories

Triumph. Packaged in 16-ounce cans, the waters don't just look like IPAs; they're similarly aromatic and bracingly bitter, yet light and refreshing in body.

Hop waters can help moderate consumption, whether as a way to take a break from alcohol or as something to alternate with boozy drinks in a drinking session. They typically have zero calories, as opposed to non-alcoholic beers, which

can also have a cloying sweetness.

While some brands use just water and hops, others add flavors. HOP WTR offers Vitamin-C-fortified hop waters in flavors such as Peach, Lime and Mango, all hopped with the same blend of Citra, Amarillo, Mosaic and Azacca. "We really wanted to pay homage to the West Coast IPAs we loved," said HOP WTR co-founder Jordan Bass. Lagunitas Brewing Co. is one of

the only major beer brands in the hop-water game. Since 2019, the Petaluma, Calif.-based brewery has sold Hoppy Refresher, dry-hopped with Citra, Ekuanot and Centennial plus a pinch of yeast, which, brewmaster Jeremy Marshall said, pulls out the hops' aromatic terpenes. Lagunitas also makes cannabis-infused hop waters called Hi-Fi Sessions, available only at dispensaries in Colorado and California.

**HIT REFRESH / TOP HOP WATERS TO TRY**

1. **Lagunitas Hoppy Refresher** Dry-hopped with Citra, Equinox and Centennial and carbonated at Champagne-like levels, this hop water has notes of citrus, pine and even pink bubblegum.
2. **Hoplark Citra** Extremely aromatic on the nose, with hints of grapefruit on the palate, this one has teeth-chattering acidity and notes of lemon-lime, passion fruit and lychee.
3. **H2OPS Original Hop Water** Made with Northwest hops such as Citra and Mosaic, this is floral and a bit dank on the nose, with a piney, bitter finish.
4. **Lolo Hops Pomelo Sage** Bright notes of Citra hops are bolstered by zesty pomelo, balanced by piney, savory sage.

Even without infusions of cannabis, hop waters are taking hold in states where the substance has been legalized. In Oregon, in early 2021, Victoria Pustynsky launched the Lolo Hops line of herbal, bitter, spritzzy drinks conceived to work with the "California sober" lifestyle. "The cans fit into a cooler filled with beer," said Ms. Pustynsky. "It doesn't feel like a complete shift in your drinking." —Aaron Goldfarb

E. MARTIN BARNUM/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL