

Menu

[Spinach Crostata](#)

Mesclun Salad with [Basic Vinaigrette](#)

[Caramel Budino](#)

The Game Plan

Two days ahead:

- Put the frozen spinach for the crostata filling in a dish or on a plate and transfer it to the fridge to thaw.

Early in the day (at least 5 hours before dinner):

(2 hours hands on, plus chilling time)

- Make the crust for the Spinach Crostata, wrap and chill it while prepping the dessert.
- Make the crust and pudding layers of the Caramel Budino; chill the glasses of pudding, uncovered.
- Make the caramel sauce for the Caramel Budino and let it sit at room temperature until needed.
- Make the filling for the Spinach Crostata and assemble the dish, up to the point just before brushing the crust with egg wash; chill.
- Clean up the kitchen, load and run the dishwasher.

1½ hours before dinner:

(40 minutes)

- Heat the oven to 350.
- Make the Basic Vinaigrette and let it sit at room temperature.
- Empty the dishwasher
- Set the table.
- When the oven is hot, brush the crostata with egg wash, and bake it for 1 hour.
- Gently heat the caramel sauce over low heat, whisking constantly, just until it's loosened to pourable consistency, but not warm. Pour the caramel sauce over the pudding in each glass of Caramel Budino. Chill uncovered.
- Whip the cream for the Caramel Budino; chill it until needed.

Relax for half an hour with a glass of wine!

20 minutes before dinner:

(20 minutes)

- Open the dinner wine.
- Light the candles.
- Take the Spinach Crostata out of the oven and let it sit for 10 minutes.
- Toss a simple salad of mesclun greens and vinaigrette.
- Start the dinner music.
- Slice and plate the crostata.

After dinner:

(5 minutes)

- While your partner clears the table, finish assembling the Caramel Budino with the sea salt, prepared whipped cream, and cookie crumbs reserved from making the crust.

Notes:

- *All of the dishes in this menu have make-ahead steps, and you have options for how far ahead to do some of these steps. This game plan represents one option that would work well but you can adapt the prep to fit your schedule. See the individual recipes for more tips on what can be made ahead, and how far in advance.*
- *The hands-on work time estimates (in parentheses below the start times) are for one person doing it all, but some of these tasks can be shared or delegated, shortening the prep time.*