



*Imagine if a Greek pita meets Italian lasagna and had a baby. That is what Makaronopita is - the best of both worlds. Oozing cheese with meat sauce wrapped in crunchy phyllo pastry. Use homemade phyllo as you need thicker phyllo than the ready-made (you will need to make it ahead of time for best results.) This was one of my father's favorite dishes.*

## Makaronopita

### *Ingredients - Phyllo Pastry*

4 cups flour  
1 cup water + additional 1/4 to 1/2 cup  
1 tsp salt  
1/8 cup vegetable oil  
Additional flour to open phyllo pastry

### *Ingredients - Sauce*

1 kg ground beef  
1 onion, diced  
1 garlic, diced  
1 cup crushed tomato  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
1 tablespoon Kosher salt  
1 bay leaf  
1 cinnamon stick  
1/4 cup water  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 teaspoon sugar

### *Ingredients*

2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cups Cheddar cheese, grated  
1 cup Kefalogavyera, grated  
1 400g package no. 5 pasta  
2 egg whites, lightly beaten

### *Instructions*

Sift the flour and salt into a large bowl. Make a well in the flour and add the oil and some water. Knead the dough and continue adding water until the dough becomes elastic and soft. Place in greased bowl and let it rest 24 hours.

Heat the onions with 1 tablespoon olive oil over high heat until translucent (approximately 3 minutes.) Add the garlic and cook for an additional minute. Add the ground beef, and using a dough cutter, cut it into small pieces while it is cooking. Season with salt, bay leaf, and cinnamon stick. Once the beef is cooked (approximately 7 to 10 minutes), add the crushed tomato, tomato paste, water, and sugar. Cook until the water is reduced and the sauce has thickened (approximately 20 to 30 minutes.) While the sauce is cooking, boil the pasta according to package instructions and drain.

Preheat your oven to 400°F and grease the bottom of a 9" baking dish with oil. Lightly dust a clean surface with flour. Cut a 2"x2" piece of dough and use your hands to flatten it into a disc shape. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough to a slightly thin thickness. You want this dough a little thicker than for regular pita as it has to hold the weight of all the ingredients inside. Place the rolled-out piece onto your prepared baking dish, allowing some of the filo to hang over the sides. Don't worry if your sheet does not cover the entire surface as you will add a few more sheets to overlap each other. Repeat this process with an additional four to five rolled-out phyllo sheets (depending on the size you roll them out.) Lightly drizzle olive oil over the sheets.

In a large mixing bowl, toss the cooked pasta with the egg whites and spread it out into the baking pan lined with the phyllo pastry. Add the grated Cheddar and Kefalogavyera cheeses on top of the pasta. Add the sauce over the cheeses until the entire surface is covered.

Roll out an additional four to six sheets of phyllo sheets to cover the meat. Once the surface has been covered, take the edges that are hanging on the outside and roll them into each other to form a corner crust. Brush the entire surface with olive oil and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the crust is golden brown.

Let the pita rest for 15 minutes before cutting. Serves 6 to 8 people.

Note: This dish can be made ahead of time and reheated (it is just as good!)