

Perfect pie



Nicole Oliver

Crash Test Mommy feels more real these days.

Since its 2004 debut, the series (Thursdays, 8 p.m. ET, Life) has developed a

genuine feel, thanks to some savvy alterations. Real-life parent and actress Nicole Oliver now hosts, and all the sticky situations are as authentic as can be.

"Some events last season were manufactured," Oliver says. "You don't need to do that – taking care of children is tough enough!"

The premise of *Crash Test Mommy* remains unchanged: a much-maligned mother is whisked away for a weekend at a plush spa with Oliver, while an overconfident family member or friend takes over at home.

"Some of these moms are away from their kids for the first time in years," Oliver says.



When the moms reunite with their families at the end of the weekend, Oliver returns to her husband and two sons in Vancouver and the real work begins: juggling a burgeoning career and a hectic household.

Oliver adapted this recipe for Mediterranean pie to cater to her vegetarian husband, and she says it tastes just as good with veggie meat slices as it does with the real thing.

SPINACH FACTS

1. Spinach combines well with eggs – no real surprise considering the recipe below. Its faintly bitter taste and bright green colour make it an attractive ingredient. Spinach juice is routinely used to colour pastas.
2. Spinach shrinks greatly when it is cooked – a large pan of the raw greens will reduce to one-tenth its original volume.

MEDITERRANEAN PIE

Vegetarians can substitute Yves brand products instead of ham.

1 tbsp/15 mL	butter	8 oz/250 g	Pastry for a double crust pie
1 cup/250 mL	onion, chopped	8 oz/250 g	ham, sliced
1	clove garlic, minced	4	mozzarella cheese, sliced
1	red pepper, seeded and cut in strips	2 tbsp/30 mL	eggs, beaten
1	8 oz (250 g) bag of spinach, washed and stems removed	1/2 tsp/2 mL	light cream
			salt
			pepper, to taste

In a skillet over medium heat, melt butter. Add onion, garlic and red pepper strips; cook, stirring often, until onions and peppers are soft, about 5 minutes. Remove onion mixture from skillet and set aside to cool. Add spinach to skillet and cook until wilted. Using paper towels, squeeze the excess moisture from the spinach; chop the spinach. Roll out half the pastry and line the bottom of a 9-inch (23 cm) pie plate. Layer the ham slices evenly in the pie crust. Top with cheese slices. Spread the onion and pepper mixture over the cheese and sprinkle with chopped spinach. In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs with cream, salt and pepper to taste. Pour egg mixture over filling ingredients, saving a small amount to brush on top crust. Roll out remaining pie crust and cover pie; seal the edges. Brush with a small amount of remaining egg mixture. Using a sharp knife, make a cross in the centre of the crust for the steam to escape. Bake in a 400°F (200°C) oven for 35 to 40 minutes or until the crust is golden and filling is set. Makes 6 servings.