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## SPINACH SOUFFLE BAKED IN CONVECTION

The key to success is using room-temperature eggs, making sure not a speck of yolks is mixed with the whites, and adding a pinch of cream of tartar to help stabilize the beaten egg whites.

Take your time separating the eggs, set out 3 bowls, one for the whites, one for the yolks, and one to crack the eggs over. That way if you have a mishap and some yolk gets mixed with the white you can save that egg for another use or carefully remove the yolk using an eggshell.

This recipe works well for a straight-sided 1 ½ quart soufflé dish, but can also be baked in any high-sided pan of the same size. Adding a paper or foil collar is not necessary as the soufflé will only rise to the height of the pan.

Soufflés are traditionally baked in the traditional Bake mode at 375F (190C); however, I have also baked perfect soufflés using the Convection mode but dropping the temperature to 350F (176C) is important for even baking. I have also baked dessert soufflés in individual ramekins in the Steam oven again the key is reducing the baking temperature by 25 degrees.

The steps for preparing the soufflé are as follows. Cook the spinach, make the béchamel sauce, then combine the eggs and cheese with the sauce and fold in the spinach. Finally, whip the egg whites and combine them with the prepared sauce.

### Ingredients

#### For the Spinach

- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 1 bunch, spinach, stems removed, leaves rinsed, dried, and chopped

#### For the Béchamel Sauce

- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
  - 2 tbsp unbleached flour
  - 1 cup heated milk (heating the milk prevents lumps)
  - Pinch grated nutmeg
  - ½ tsp Kosher salt
  - Pinch freshly ground black pepper
  - ½ cup grated Gruyere cheese
  - 4 egg yolks from large eggs
- For the Egg Whites
- 5 room temperature egg whites from large eggs
  - ⅛ tsp cream of tartar

### Preparation

Saute the spinach and shallot in the butter and oil until the spinach has wilted then set aside.  
Melt the butter in a heavy 2qt saucepan over moderate heat, stir in the flour and cook the roux over low heat for 2 - 3 minutes until frothy.



Gradually stir in the heated milk and stir vigorously to combine. Increase the heat to medium and cook stirring with a whisk until the sauce is thick and smooth. Simmer on low heat for a few minutes then stir in the salt, pepper, and nutmeg.

Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the egg yolks, then stir in the cheese and finally the cooked spinach mixture. Set the prepared sauce aside in a cool spot until ready to use.

### Baking the Soufflé

Arrange the oven racks so the soufflé can be baked without a rack resting over it.

Heat the oven in the Convection or Convection Bake Mode at 350F (176C).

Generously butter the inside of the soufflé pan, this helps the soufflé rise and form a nice crust.

Beat the egg whites until foamy then add the cream of tartar. Continue beating rapidly until the whites are thick and stiff

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enough to hold their shape, just drooping over in soft peaks. Now fold the egg whites into the soufflé mixture before they subside.

Begin by folding in  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the beaten whites into the prepared sauce, then add this mixture into the bowl with the rest of the egg whites. Using a light touch and a silicone spatula cut through the center and draw it towards the edge of the bowl, folding it up and over rather than just mixing in a circular pattern. This way you won't deflate the egg whites. Smooth the top of the soufflé and place the dish in the oven.

Bake for 30 - 35 minutes until the sides are firm but the center is still slightly creamy. Serve immediately.

Serves 4