

SPICE CLUB

Welcome to Spice Club! Each month we explore a new spice.

December's featured spice: Za'atar Seasoning

Spice Kits are available on the 1st of each month at 2:00 p.m. in the Civic Center Library Foundation Room. Registration required on Library online calendar.

Please help the Library in its sustainable programming efforts by returning your spice jar to the front desk at any Oceanside Library location after use.

History

Za'atar is a spice blend composed of herbs such as thyme, oregano, marjoram or a combination of the three, and often found with other spices including sesame, sumac, cumin or coriander. The flavorful seasoning originated in Palestine in the 12th century, making it one of the oldest spice blends in the world. After its creation, za'atar seasoning quickly spread throughout the Middle East and is now considered a staple in many Middle Eastern cultures and cuisine.

The not-so-secret ingredient to za'atar's signature flavor profile is sumac. This tangy spice is made from dried sumac berries. Sumac give za'atar its unique citrus flavor profile.

How to Use

Za'atar, like many spice blends, is extremely versatile. Za'atar makes for a tasty topper to any dip, or used in a marinade for meat and vegetables. Mix za'atar with oil to create a paste, or drizzle directed over vegetables before roasting to give them a simple yet elevated flavor.

To unlock all of za'atar's flavors, you can use a technique called blooming. To bloom the seasoning, gently fry the spices and herbs in olive oil or butter. This technique is great for when adding the seasoning to bread, pita, crackers, and other baked goods that go well with oils and fats.

How to Make

Za'atar can be made easily at home. A start your own za'atar blend you'll need: 1/3 cup dried thyme or oregano, 1/4 cup ground sumac, 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, and 1 teaspoon salt. Combine these ingredients and store in an air tight jar to keep fresh with your other spices. Experiment adding other spices and herbs to your blend to customize it and create the za'atar that's perfect for you!

Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : *Baked Sweet Potato Fries with Za'atar (vegan)*

SERVES : 4-6

PREP TIME : 15 minutes

COOK TIME : 45 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean and cut into wedges
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2tsp za'atar seasoning
- 1 1/2 tsp paprika
- pinch of cayenne
- salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

- Place cut sweet potato fries in a large bowl and cover with cold water for about 30 minutes (or refrigerate overnight.) This is an optional step, but can absolutely help the fries crisp up. Drain and rinse out the bowl and dry it well.
- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
- Pat the fries dry and return to the clean dry bowl. Drizzle generously with extra virgin olive oil (about 2 to 3 tbsp.) Toss to make sure all the fries are well-coated with the oil. Mix the za'atar and paprika, and cayenne pepper in a small bowl, then add to the fries and toss to evenly coat.
- Transfer the fries to a large sheet pan, lined with parchment paper. Do not crowd the pan; if you have to, use 2 pans.
- Bake in the heated oven for about 15 minutes, then carefully remove the pan to flip the fries over and arrange them nicely. Return the pan back to the oven and bake another 15 to 20 minutes or so or until cooked through and crispy.
- Remove from heat and transfer and season with salt. Sprinkle with more of the za'atar and spices to your liking. Transfer the fries to a cooling rack and let them rest for about 5 minutes or so before serving.
- Serve with preferred dipping sauce. Enjoy!

NOTES:

Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : Spinach Pasta with Za'atar, Lemon, and Parsley (vegetarian)

SERVES : 5

PREP TIME : 10 minutes

COOK TIME : 25 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 pound spaghetti (or other long, thin pasta)
- Kosher salt
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 5 to 6 large garlic cloves, minced
- 12 ounces baby spinach
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 3-4 tablespoons za'atar, divided
- 1/2 to 1 cup grated parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS

- Cook the pasta. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season well with kosher salt. Add the pasta and cook according to al dente according to package instructions (about 8 to 9 minutes). Reserve 2 cups of pasta water, then drain.
- Soften the garlic. In a large pan, warm the olive oil over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the garlic and stir until fragrant, about 1 minute (you want some color but do not burn the garlic).
- Wilt the spinach. Add the lemon juice and a splash of the pasta cooking water (about 1/2 cup). Begin adding in the spinach in batches, stirring until wilted and seasoning with a pinch of salt as you go. When all of the spinach is fully wilted, about 5 minutes, stir in the crushed red pepper flakes and 1 tablespoon of za'atar
- Combine the pasta and sauce. Add the pasta to the pan of spinach and toss everything to combine. Add the remaining za'atar, parmesan, lemon zest, and parsley. Toss until everything is well-combined. If the pasta looks a bit dry, add a little more olive oil or a splash more of the pasta cooking water and stir until it's gloss
- Serve with more cheese and za'atar on the side for extra flavor. Enjoy!

NOTES:

Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : Za'atar Garlic Salmon

SERVES : 4

PREP TIME : 10 minutes

COOK TIME : 15 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 12 baby potatoes (about 12 oz), scrubbed
- 2 cups grape tomatoes (about 10 oz), halved if you like
- 6 oz broccoli florets
- 3 tbsp fresh minced garlic (about 5 to 6 cloves)
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper
- 2tsp za'atar seasoning, divided plus more for later
- 1 tsp coriander divided
- 1 lb salmon fillet, no skin
- 1 lemon, juice of

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, add the potatoes, grape tomatoes, and broccoli. Pour 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil and toss. Then, add a little salt and pepper, 1 tbsp minced garlic, 1 tsp za'atar spice, 1/2 tsp coriander. Toss again so that the spices are distributed to coat the vegetables. Transfer the vegetables to a large baking sheet with a rim.
3. Pat salmon dry. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle just a little extra virgin olive oil. Spread the remaining garlic evenly on top. Sprinkle the remaining za'atar and coriander
4. Cut seasoned salmon into 4 equal pieces, and place on the prepared baking sheet with the vegetables. Add another generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil over the salmon and veggies, if needed.
5. Bake in heated oven for 15-16 minutes. Remove from heat and squeeze lemon juice on salmon. Sprinkle more za'atar all over.
6. Serve hot and enjoy!

NOTES:

Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : Labane

SERVES : 1 cups

PREP TIME : 5 minutes

COOK TIME : 5 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp lemon paste
- 1 tbsp za'atar seasoning
- 2 tsp olive oil

Optional to taste preferences

- sour cream (richer flavor)
- chives
- scallions
- dill
- cucumber
- sun dried tomatoes
- olives

DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, mix the preserved lemon paste into the greek yogurt. Taste and add more according to your preferred level of tanginess
2. Add optional seasonings of your choice depending on your preferences and mix
3. When ready to serve, sprinkle za'atar and drizzle with olive oil

Serve with bread, crackers, fresh or roasted vegetables, or as a side for grilled fish. This versatile combination can be used in myriad ways. Explore and find the right one for you!

NOTES

Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : Za'atar Chicken Thighs

SERVES : 4

PREP TIME : 10 minutes

COOK TIME : 25 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 4 bone-in chicken thighs, with skin
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons za'atar, divided, or more to taste

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- Pat chicken dry with paper towels. Place chicken in a bowl and coat with olive oil. Season liberally with sea salt and black pepper on all sides.
- Heat a cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken thighs, skin-side down, to the hot skillet. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon za'atar immediately over each chicken thigh. Cook chicken, without turning, until skin is crispy and browned, 7 to 10 minutes.
- Turn chicken so skin side faces up and remove skillet from heat. Sprinkle remaining za'atar quickly and evenly over each chicken thigh. Spoon some of the rendered chicken fat from the pan over the top of the za'atar
- Place the skillet in the preheated oven and roast until juices run clear and chicken is no longer pink near the bone, about 15 minutes

NOTES