

Add a Little Spice to Your Life!

Grab & Go Spice Kits for Adults: Za'atar

Do you love to cook? Do you like to try new flavors and recipes? Or maybe you are in a cooking rut and don't know how to start expanding your cooking repertoire. Let us help you get spicy in the kitchen. Your kit includes a pre-measured packet of za'atar spice blend and a few recipes.

What is za'atar? Za'atar is the name for both a traditional Middle Eastern seasoning blend and a pungent green herb that gives the blend its intense, earthy character. The za'atar herb (*origanum syriaca*) can be found across the Levantine region under alternative names including wild thyme, bible hyssop, Syrian oregano or Lebanese oregano. The seasoning blend is simply known as za'atar. It can vary greatly but the mainstay in the blend are the za'atar herb, sumac powder, sesame seeds and sea salt. Za'atar has a long history with it being referenced in the bible and found in food eaten by ancient Egyptians. It was often used medicinally to treat ailments such as coughs. In certain parts of the Middle East, folk tradition suggests that za'atar has brain-boosting properties. Za'atar contains vitamins A, C, E, and K and has been shown to deliver a host of healthy antioxidants, antiseptic properties, and antifungal agents.

Easy ways to add za'atar to your diet. Za'atar is tangy, savory, and slightly crunchy. It can be used in the same way you might use any other seasoning blend. Sprinkle za'atar on chicken, beef, or seafood before cooking. Toss chopped vegetables or chickpeas with za'atar and olive oil before roasting. Make a salad dressing by combining za'atar with olive oil and lemon juice. Add za'atar to hummus or olive oil to make a dip. For a festive party dip, combine za'atar with labneh, fresh garlic, feta cheese, and olive oil. Blend it in a food processor and chill the dip before serving with pita and cut vegetables.

Recipes featuring za'atar.

- *Manaqeesh (Za'atar Flatbreads)*
- *Fancy and Beautiful Tomato Salad*
- *Pita, Chickpea and Herb Salad with Tahini Yogurt*
- *Pea, Za'atar, and Feta Fritters*
- *Mushrooms and Chestnuts with Za'atar*
- *Za'atar Chicken and Lemon-Parsley Salad*

Need more inspiration?

You can watch a six-part Great Courses class called *The Everyday Gourmet: Essential Secrets of Spices in Cooking* for free with your library card by using a [Hoopla Great Courses BingePass](#) or streaming on [Kanopy](#).

Manaqeesh (Za'atar Flatbreads)

By Reem Kassis

Yield: 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the dough

- 3½ cups/450 grams all-purpose or bread flour
- 1¼ cups/150 grams whole-wheat or white whole-wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ teaspoon granulated sugar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed
- 2 teaspoons instant yeast
- 1 to 2 cups lukewarm water

For the za'atar topping

- ¾ cup/60 grams za'atar spice blend
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

1. Prepare the dough: In a large bowl, mix both the flour, the salt and sugar. Add the oil, yeast and 1 cup water, and knead in the bowl with your fingers. Gradually knead in another ¼ cup water, then knead in more water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the dough comes together into a somewhat sticky ball. Let rest 5 minutes, then knead until smooth, supple and elastic, 5 to 7 minutes. Alternatively, in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine all the dough ingredients with 1 cup water and mix on low speed, gradually adding water until the dough comes together. Continue mixing until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes.
2. Rub the dough ball lightly with some oil, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside until the dough doubles in size, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Timing will vary depending on water and room temperatures.
3. Meanwhile, make the topping: Combine the za'atar and olive oil in a bowl and mix well.
4. Divide the risen dough into 6 equal portions, roll into spheres and place on a greased baking sheet. Cover loosely with plastic wrap or a damp tea towel so the dough doesn't dry out. Let rise again until almost doubled in size, about 30

minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 500 degrees. Very lightly grease 2 baking sheets with olive oil.

5. Place a dough round on a prepared sheet. With your fingers, flatten it into a thin circle 7 to 8 inches in diameter. Use a spoon to spread about one-sixth of the za'atar mixture on top, leaving a narrow border along the perimeter and pressing the za'atar into the dough firmly with the spoon to prevent the bread from rising as it bakes. If your baking sheet can fit another piece or two of dough, repeat the process on the same sheet.
6. Bake until golden at the edges and the topping is lightly bubbling, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. While the first batch is in the oven, prepare more on the second sheet. Bake as soon as the first sheet comes out. Repeat with the remaining dough and toppings.
7. Serve as soon as they're cool enough to handle or at room temperature. Once cooled, leftovers can be stored in the freezer, with parchment or wax paper between each piece, for up to 2 months. Reheat in the oven when ready to enjoy.

Fancy and Beautiful Tomato Salad

By Sarah Jampel

Yield: 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ lb. heirloom tomatoes (about 3 medium)
- 12 oz. mixed cherry tomatoes
- 1 ¾ teaspoons kosher salt, divided plus more
- 1 lemon
- ½ garlic clove
- 6 tablespoons extra- virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons za'atar
- 2 cups pita chips
- 1 ½ teaspoons (or more) honey
- 3 ½ oz. Greek feta
- ½ cup basil leaves
- ½ cup mint leaves

PREPARATION

1. Using a paring knife, core 1 ½ lb. heirloom tomatoes, then cut each into 8-12 wedges, depending on their size, using a very sharp chef knife or serrated knife. Halve or quarter 12 oz. mixed cherry tomatoes.
2. Transfer tomatoes to a large bowl, season with 1 ¼ teaspoons salt. Stir gently to combine; set aside.
3. Zest ¼ lemon to produce about ½ teaspoon zest. Grate ½ garlic clove. Set aside.
4. Heat 6 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil in a small saucepan or skillet over medium until just starting to shimmer, about 2 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons za'atar and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and darker in color, about 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in reserved lemon zest and garlic. Wait 10 seconds, then remove from heat. Transfer za'atar oil to a heatproof measuring cup.
5. Place 2 cups of pita chips in a medium bowl. Pour 2 tablespoon za'atar oil over; season with salt. Mix well with a rubber spatula, aiming to coat chips without breaking them into too many pieces.

6. You should have about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup za'atar oil remaining. Squeeze 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon lemon juice into a small bowl. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons honey and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Add za'atar oil, stirring constantly, until emulsified. Taste dressing and add more lemon, honey, or salt if needed.
7. Slice $3\frac{1}{2}$ oz. feta into thin planks, then add to the bowl with reserved tomatoes. Tear any large $\frac{1}{2}$ cup basil leaves and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mint leaves and add to the bowl. Drizzle 3 tablespoons dressing over and toss to gently combine.
8. Add pita chips to the bowl and fold gently to combine. Spoon salad into a platter, making sure to leave no juices behind. Drizzle with remaining za'atar oil.

Pita, Chickpea and Herb Salad with Tahini Yogurt

By Christopher Kimball

Yield: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- Two 8-inch pita breads, each split into 2 rounds
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to serve
- 2 ½ teaspoons ground cumin, divided
- 1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
- ¼ cup tahini
- 2 medium garlic cloves, finely grated
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest, plus 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- Two 15 ½-ounce cans chickpeas, 3 tablespoons liquid reserved, then drained
- 1 ½ teaspoons za'atar, plus more to serve
- 1 ½ cups lightly packed fresh mint, dill, parsley or a combination, torn if large
- ½ cup roasted pistachios

PREPARATION

1. Heat oven to 400F with a rack in the middle position. On a rimmed baking sheet, brush both sides of the pita rounds with the oil, then sprinkle evenly with 2 teaspoons of cumin. Bake until browned and crisp, about 10 minutes total, flipping once about halfway through. Cool to room temperature.
2. While the pita cools, in a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, tahini, garlic, lemon zest and juice, the remaining ½ teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper; set aside. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, toss the chickpeas, and 3 tablespoons liquid with the za'atar and 1 teaspoon salt. Cover and microwave on high until hot, 3 to 3 ½ minutes, stirring once halfway through.
3. Break cooled pita into bite-sized pieces and place in a wide, shallow bowl or divide among 4 individual bowls. Using a slotted spoon, arrange the warm chickpeas on top. Spoon on the yogurt mixture, then top with the herbs, pistachios and a generous drizzle of oil. Sprinkle with more za'atar.

Pea, Za'atar, and Feta Fritters

By Yotam Ottolenghi

Yield: 8 fritters

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb 2 oz frozen peas, defrosted
- 4 ¼ oz ricotta
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1 lemon; finely zested to get 1 teaspoon, then cut into 6 wedges, to serve
- Salt and black pepper
- 3 tablespoons za'atar
- ⅔ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup mint leaves
- 7 oz. feta, crumbles into ¾-inch pieces
- About 3 ⅓ cups sunflower oil, for frying

PREPARATION

1. Put the peas into a food processor and pulse a few times until roughly crushed, then transfer to a large bowl. Add the ricotta, eggs, lemon zest, ¾ teaspoon salt, and a good grind of pepper. Mix well, then add the za'atar, flour, and baking powder. Mix until just combined, then gently fold in mint and feta; you don't want the chunks of feta to break up.
2. Pour the oil in a medium saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Once hot, use 2 small spoons to scoop up balls of the mixture. Don't worry about making them uniform in shape, but they should be about 1 ½ inches wide. Carefully lower them into the oil—you should be able to do 4 at a time—and fry for 3-4 minutes, turning once, until cooked through and golden brown. If they are cooking too quickly and taking on too much color, just decrease the temperature so that the middle also cooks through. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a paper towel-lined plate while you continue with the remaining fritters. Serve warm, with a wedge of lemon alongside.

Mushrooms and Chestnuts with Za'atar

By Yotam Ottolenghi

Yield: 6 as a side

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb 6 oz portobello mushrooms, (about 6-8) cut into 1 ¼ inch wedges
- 7 oz small shallots, peeled and left whole
- 5 ¼ oz. ready-cooked and peeled chestnuts, broken in half
- ¼ cup sage leaves, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil, plus 2 teaspoons, to serve
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- Salt and black pepper
- ¼ cup tarragon leaves, roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon za'atar
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 450F
2. In a large bowl, mix the mushrooms, shallots, chestnuts, sage, oil, and garlic with ¾ teaspoon salt and lots of pepper. Spread on a large parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 25 minutes, until the mushrooms and shallots are caramelized and soft. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 5 minutes.
3. Tip the warm mushrooms and chestnuts into a large bowl and mix in the tarragon, za'atar, lemon juice, and the 2 teaspoons of oil. Spoon into a large shallow bowl and serve.

Za'atar Chicken and Lemon-Parsley Salad

By Christopher Kimball

Yield: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast cutlets (4 cutlets), pounded to ¼-inch thickness
- Kosher salt
- ¼ cup plus 1 teaspoon za'atar, divided
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon Aleppo pepper
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon olive oil, divided
- ¾ cup lightly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced on a bias
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest, plus 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped walnuts

PREPARATION

1. Season the chicken all over with salt. In a wide, shallow dish, combine ¼ cup of the za'atar, the flour and pepper. In a 12-inch stainless steel skillet over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons of oil until shimmering. One cutlet at a time, transfer the chicken to the za'atar mixture coating and pressing onto all sides. Add the cutlets to the pan and cook until well browned, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a platter.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together the parsley, scallion, lemon zest and juice, the remaining 1 teaspoon of oil and a pinch of salt. Drizzle the molasses evenly over the chicken, then mound the greens over the cutlets. Sprinkle it with walnuts and the remaining za'atar.

Note: A few pinches of paprika and cayenne can be substituted for the Aleppo pepper.