

MENASHA PUBLIC LIBRARY:

SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



WHAT IS ZA'ATAR?

IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO BRANCH OUT BEYOND THE BASIC SALT AND PEPPER MIX, ZA'ATAR IS AN EXCELLENT STARTING POINT. SUBTLE YET DYNAMIC, ZA'ATAR IS A SPICE BLEND ORIGINATING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST. IT IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS EARTHY, NUTTY AND EVEN TANGY-WITH A STRONG AND SHARP SCENT.

THERE IS NO SINGLE FLAVOR BLEND FOR THE MIX, BUT MOST OFTEN YOU WILL FIND: THYME, SUMAC, MARJORAM, SESAME SEEDS, HYSSOP, AND SALT. IN FACT, ZA'ATAR CAN VARY BY REGION AND EVEN BY FAMILIES, WITH EACH HOUSEHOLD HAVING THEIR OWN SPECIAL BLEND. IN LEBANON, WOMEN WILL BRING THIS WITH THEM TO THEIR LOCAL BAKER, WHO WILL MAKE FLATBREAD (MANOUCHE ZA'ATAR) USING THE FAMILY'S OWN BLEND OF SPICES.

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ZA'ATAR WAS USED IN ANCIENT EGYPT. MAIMONIDES, A 12TH-CENTURY JEWISH PHILOSOPHER, DESCRIBED THE MIXTURE OF HERBS AND SPICES IN HIS WRITINGS AND CALLING IT "BRAIN FOOD." ZA'ATAR HAS BECOME A STAPLE OF ISRAELI CUISINE AND TODAY JORDAN IS ITS LARGEST EXPORTER.

FEBRUARY

ZA'ATAR



8 USES FOR ZA'ATAR

- **ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR USES OF ZA'ATAR IS TO TOSS IT WITH OLIVE OIL AND THEN BRUSH IT ONTO FLATBREAD. YOU CAN ALSO DIP THE BREAD INTO OLIVE OIL AND THEN THE ZA'ATAR BLEND.**
- **ELEVATE YOUR ROASTED VEGETABLES BY BRUSHING THEM WITH A SIMPLE MARINADE OF OLIVE OIL AND ZA'ATAR. IT WILL ALSO PAIR WELL WITH MEAT AND FISH.**
- **YOU WILL WANT TO BLOOM ZA'ATAR TO UNLOCK ITS FLAVOR IF YOU ARE USING IT IN A COLD DISH. HEAT UP OIL OR BUTTER IN A SKILLET, REMOVE FROM HEAT AND THEN ADD THE ZA'ATAR. THIS GENTLY FRIES THE SPICES AND HERBS WHILE ALSO HELPING TO EVENLY DISTRIBUTE FLAVORS.**
- **JAZZ UP YOUR POPCORN! PLACE POPPED POPCORN IN A LARGE BOWL. DRIZZLE MELTED BUTTER OVER THE POPCORN AND MIX THOROUGHLY. SPRINKLE NUTRITIONAL YEAST AND ZA'ATAR OVER THE POPCORN AND MIX.**
- **WANT TO MAKE YOUR OWN ZA'ATAR BLEND? THERE'S NO RULE FOR HOW MUCH OF ANY ONE INGREDIENT TO INCLUDE; HOWEVER, EQUAL MEASUREMENTS OF ALL INGREDIENTS IS A GOOD GUIDELINE TO START WITH. EXPERIMENT FROM THERE.**
- **SESAME SEEDS, NEARLY UBIQUITOUS IN ZA'ATAR BLENDS, ARE GREAT SOURCES OF B-COMPLEX VITAMINS. THEY ALSO CONTAIN MAGNESIUM AND CALCIUM.**
- **ZA'ATAR CAN BE A GREAT BLEND TO USE ON BREAKFAST FOODS-ESPECIALLY AS SEEN IN LEBANON. SPRINKLE IT ON ALL TYPES OF EGGS, OR ADD IT TO GREEK YOGURT TO MAKE A DIP THAT IS SIMILAR TO TZATZIKI SAUCE.**
- **THE EASIEST WAY TO USE ZA'ATAR IS AS A CONDIMENT. SIMPLY SPRINKLE IT OVER COOKED FOODS THE WAY YOU MIGHT USE SALT AND PEPPER.**



Add Za'atar to:

-Pita Bread

-Hummus

-Fish



Note: This information is meant to supplement, not replace advice from your healthcare provider and is not meant to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions or adverse effects.

Sources Consulted: Encyclopedia Britannica; Consumer Health Complete; spiceography.com; Gale Health and Wellness; MasterClass

Za'atar Garlic Spinach Pasta

Courtesy of: Suzy Karadsheh



Yield:
5 Servings

Time:
Prep: 5
Minutes
Cook Time:
15 Total
Time: 30
Minutes

Ingredients:

- ½ pound spaghetti (or other thin pasta)
- Kosher salt
- ½ to ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 5 to 6 large garlic cloves (minced)
- 12 ounces baby spinach
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 3 to 4 tablespoons za'atar (divided)
- Parmesan cheese (shredded), to your liking (anywhere from ½ cup to 1 cup)
- 1 lemon (zest and juice)
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley

Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season well with kosher salt. Add the pasta and cook according to al dente package instructions (about 8 to 9 minutes). You will need 1 cup or so of the cooking water later.
2. When the pasta is nearly done, work on the olive oil sauce and the spinach. In a large pan, warm the olive oil over medium heat and add the garlic. Cook briefly until the garlic is fragrant (you want some color but do not burn the garlic). Add a little bit of the pasta cooking water (start with ½ cup and add more as needed), and lemon juice, then add the spinach in batches, seasoning with Kosher salt as you go. Toss the spinach and cook until it is fully wilted (about 5 minutes). Add crushed red peppers and 1 tablespoon of za'atar.
3. When the pasta is ready, drain, still keeping a little bit more of the cooking water.
4. Add the pasta to the pan of spinach and toss everything to combine. Add the remaining za'atar, cheese, lemon zest, and parsley. Toss until everything is well-combined. And if you need to, add a little more olive oil or a bit of the pasta cooking water. Serve with more cheese and za'atar on the side.

Za'atar Pull-Apart Rolls

Courtesy of: allrecipes.com

Time:

Prep: 20 Minutes

Cook Time: 25

Total Time: 2 hours 20
Minutes

Yield:

12

Servings



Ingredients

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup warm whole milk (110 degrees F (43 degrees C))
- 1 (.25 ounce) package active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, melted
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
- Cooking spray
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup za'atar, divided
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil

Directions:

1. Combine warm milk, yeast, and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Let stand until mixture is foamy, 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Beat milk mixture on low speed. Add 1 cup flour, beating just until combined. Add melted butter, 2 tablespoons olive oil, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour; beat until combined. Beat in eggs. Add remaining 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups flour and salt. Beat until a soft, sticky dough forms.
3. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray; add dough. Cover loosely and let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 12-cup muffin tin with cooking spray.
5. Punch dough down gently. Pinch off 36 small pieces of dough and roll into balls.
6. Whisk 6 tablespoons za'atar and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil together in a bowl. Immerse dough balls in oil mixture to coat all sides. Arrange 3 dough balls in each muffin cup. Sprinkle remaining 2 tablespoons za'atar over dough.
7. Cover muffin tin loosely with greased plastic wrap. Let rise until dough balls puff up over the rim of the tin, about 25 minutes.
8. Bake in the preheated oven until puffed up and golden, about 25 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes in the pan. Lift out of the pan and cool briefly on a wire rack, about 5 minutes more.