

# MENASHA PUBLIC LIBRARY: SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



## WHAT IS SUMAC?

Sumac (*Rhus Coriaria*) is in the genus of small trees and shrubs belonging to the cashew family. The spice itself comes from the berries grown on the sumac shrub. These shrubs grow wild in numerous areas across the Middle East and Mediterranean regions. Although poison sumac is related to the variety of sumac that is used as a spice, they are different plants. Poison sumac has white berries as opposed to the edible red ones. Although not a nut, an allergy to cashews often corresponds to an allergy to sumac.

The flavor of sumac is often described as tart and lemony, but some consider it to be faintly astringent. Prior to the Roman Empire bringing lemons to the Middle East, sumac was used to add sour notes to certain dishes and it has an acidity level similar to vinegar. In this way, sumac is useful for adding tartness and acidity to a dish without adding extra liquid. Sumac has been harvested as a source of dye, for certain medicines, and even beverages. Native Americans once used the spice to make a traditional beverage that is similar to beer for ceremonial purposes.

**AUGUST**



**SUMAC**



# 8 TIPS FOR SUMAC

- Because sumac is so rich in antioxidants, some consider it a “super food.” Among these antioxidants are vitamin C and omega 3 fatty acids. Often, sumac can be found in stores in supplement form.
- Sumac plants are often grown as soil binders and cover plants.
- Sumac berries contain tannins, also heavily present in grapes and cranberries. Tannins are anti-carcinogenic, meaning they help prevent cancer.
- According to Canadian research, sumac may help prevent atherosclerosis, which is widely known as a precursor to heart disease.
- The acidity of sumac can be used to cut through the fattiness of lamb, duck, and similar meats. One traditional use of sumac is kebabs, which often feature fatty meats.
- Sumac is a beloved condiment in many Middle Eastern countries, but specifically Turkey and Iran. The ground spice is sprinkled over rice or mixed with onions and eaten as an appetizer. It is also a primary ingredient in the traditional za'atar spice mixture.
- Sumac is another spice that tastes great sprinkled on freshly popped popcorn. Try it on sweeter fruits, like melons or raspberries.
- Sumac’s name comes from the Aramaic word "summaq", which means dark red. In addition to flavoring a dish, then, sumac can also act as a colorful garnish.



Add Sumac to:  
-Fish  
-Soups  
-Grilled Meats



**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

# Fattoush Salad with Lemon Dressing

Courtesy of: [gimmesomeoven.com](http://gimmesomeoven.com)

Yield:  
4-6 Servings



## Directions:

1. Make the lemon dressing: Vigorously whisk all ingredients together in a small bowl (or shake together in a mason jar) for 30 seconds. Set aside.
2. Make the salad: Combine the Romaine, cucumber, red onion, tomatoes, radishes, mint, and half of the pita chips in a large mixing bowl. Drizzle evenly with the lemon dressing, then toss until evenly combined.
3. Serve: Serve immediately, garnished with the remaining pita chips, plus an extra sprinkle of sumac and freshly-ground black pepper.

## FATTOUSH SALAD INGREDIENTS:

- 1 head Romaine lettuce, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 1 English cucumber, thinly-sliced
- 1 small red onion, peeled and thinly-sliced
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 cup loosely-packed chopped fresh mint leaves
- 4 radishes, thinly sliced
- 2 to 3 cups pita chips, homemade\* or store-bought
- ground sumac and freshly-ground black pepper

## LEMON DRESSING INGREDIENTS:

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lemon juice
- 1 large clove garlic, pressed or minced
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground sumac
- (optional: 2-3 teaspoons honey to sweeten, if desired)

*Homemade pita chips: To make homemade pita chips, slice or tear pita bread into bite-sized pieces. Toss it with a drizzle of olive oil, salt and pepper. Then bake at 400°F for 7 to 15 minutes (depending on the thickness of your pita chips) until golden and crispy.*

# Shish Tawook (Mediterranean Chicken Kabobs)

Courtesy of: [allrecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com)

## Time:

Prep: 20 Minutes

Cook Time: 20 Minutes

Total Time: 40 Minutes

## Directions:

1. Season chicken breasts with salt. Cut each breast into 3 to 4 pieces. Place in a large bowl; stir in garlic. Add olive oil, apple cider vinegar, red wine vinegar, white balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, red pepper flakes, allspice, sumac, and pomegranate syrup. Mix well with your hands.
2. Cover chicken mixture with plastic wrap, pressing against the surface to remove any air. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours and up to overnight.
3. Preheat an outdoor grill and 2 grill baskets with the cover closed for 10 minutes. Divide chicken evenly between the grill baskets. Grill until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes per side.

## Yield:

**6 Servings**

## Ingredients:

- 6 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- Salt to taste
- 8 large cloves garlic, chopped, or more to taste
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon ground allspice
- 1 tablespoon ground sumac
- ⅛ teaspoon pomegranate syrup

