

Baked Za'atar Chicken with Mint Yogurt Sauce

Serves 4-6

Za'atar is a blend of spices and herbs that is commonly used in eastern Mediterranean cuisine. It is very easy to make at home and is very versatile. You can use it to season chicken or fish or stir it into yogurt to make a quick and easy dip for pitas or veggies. The main ingredient in za'atar is sumac which has a fresh, lemony flavor. The sumac that grows in the Mediterranean is a different variety than the staghorn sumac that grows in North America but when the bright red drupes of both trees have been dried and ground the flavor of the resulting spice is similar.

6 – 8 bone-in, skin on chicken thighs or breasts, trimmed of excess fat
1 tablespoon za'atar (recipe follows)
2 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon olive oil
2 large red onions, peeled, halved and thickly sliced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Chopped fresh parsley

Pre-heat the oven to 425°F. Combine 1 tablespoon of za'atar with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Set aside. Pat the chicken thighs dry with paper towels and season lightly with salt and pepper. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Place the chicken thighs in the hot pan, skin side down, and sear the chicken until the skin is crispy and browned, about 5 minutes. Turn the chicken and sear for 3 more minutes. Using tongs, transfer the chicken, skin side up, to a plate. Reduce the heat to medium-low.

Pour off any excess fat from the pan and add the red onions. Return the chicken to the pan and arrange on top of the onions. Brush the chicken with the za'atar oil. Place the skillet in the oven and roast until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 175°F for thighs, 165°F for breasts, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with fresh parsley to garnish. Serve with mint yogurt sauce and the roasted onions.

Za'atar Spice Blend

The three basic ingredients for za'atar are sumac, thyme and toasted sesame seeds. Oregano and marjoram are also added to some blends. Oregano is used here. You can make as much or as little as you need, just keep the ratios the same. A “part” can be whatever measurement you like, tablespoons, teaspoons or even cups. Combine all ingredients in a jar and shake to combine. Or pulse ingredients together in a food processor. Store the in a cool, dry place.

1 part thyme
1 part sumac
1 part toasted sesame seeds
1/2 part oregano