

# Bob's Za'atar

What is Za'atar? It is a family of related Middle Eastern herbs that contains among other things sesame seeds and dried ground sumac. The name *za'atar* alone most properly applies to *Origanum syriacum*, considered by biblical scholars to be the hyssop (Hebrew: **זרע** [e'zov]) of the Hebrew Bible. Much like curry powder (not by taste) za'atar has hundreds of actual recipes. So here is my version of this versatile spice mixture.

Note: If you grow and dry you own herbs, it's always best to use your home grown version. If not, then use the freshest possible dried herbs from the store. Sumac may be hard to find at the stores, but Amazon does have several versions available.

## Ingredients

- 4 Tablespoons Sumac
- 2 Tablespoon dried Thyme
- 2 Tablespoon dried Oregano
- 2 Tablespoon dried Cumin Seeds
- 2 Tablespoon dried Coriander Seeds
- 4 Tablespoon lightly toasted Sesame Seeds
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- ½ Teaspoon more or less of Aleppo Chili Flakes (optional)
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil (optional)

## Process

First, like many spice and herb combinations it is best to 'toast' many of the ingredients. So that's where we will start. We want to toast things but NOT burn them. Using a dry sauté pan first toast the Cumin and Coriander. When they are almost done toasting place the Thyme and Oregano in the pan and continue to toast. When finished transfer the lot into a bowl to cool. We do this because things will continue to 'toast' in the hot pan especially if you are using a heavy bottomed pan like cast iron. We DON'T want to burn things.

If your Sesame Seeds are not toasted, give them a quick toasting and stop when some of the seeds turn a light brown, then transfer them into another bowl to cool.

It's best to use a mortar and pestle for this next step, but a spice/coffee grinder can be used if necessary. So add the Cumin Seeds, Coriander Seeds, Thyme and Oregano mix and grind them into a ruff coarse mix.

Transfer the coarse mix to the bowl with the Sesame Seeds and add the Sumac and Salt. Mix this until things are homogenous.

### **Now for the options**

If you wish to add a little heat, add a quantity of Aleppo Chili Flakes. My choice would be to hold back on the chili flakes and only add them when you are using the Za'atar. That way you can have both a spicy version and a less spicy version depending upon your use at the time.

The same holds true for adding olive oil. I like to have my Za'atar as a dry mixture and add olive oil if needed when cooking a specific recipe.

Store in an air tight glass container and place it in a cool dark place with the rest of your spices.

Check out my other recipes and those that use Za'atar at:

<http://www.snydersmart.com/recipes/index.html>