

Spices: Sumac



[Close-Up of Sumac Fruit](#)

Description

Sumac, a member of the genus *Rhus*, is a shrub or small tree with leaves arranged in a spiral pattern. Its red fruits, which grow in dense clusters called “drupes,” are ground up to make a reddish-purple spice. The young shoots also are edible.

Origin

Sumac grows in subtropical and temperate zones all over the world, with particular concentration in North America, Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia.

Varieties

There are approximately 35 species of flowering plants belonging to the genus *Rhus* in the family *Anacardiaceae*.

Flavor Profile

Sumac has a tart flavor that is reminiscent of lemon. The shoots are strongly astringent.

Nutrient Profile

Sumac is an excellent source of vitamin C, as well as of calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and magnesium. It also contains malic, citric, fumaric, and ascorbic acids.

Preparations

Sumac is prominent in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cooking. It is used to flavor meat and fish dishes, and can serve as a substitute for vinegar or lemon zest. Sumac is used to flavor soft drinks, hummus, and salads. In Iran, it is frequently mixed into rice or used to season kebabs. The iconic Middle Eastern spice *za'atar* contains sumac. In North America, sumac can be used to make “sumac-ade,” “rhus juice,” or “Indian lemonade.”

Sumac shoots are eaten raw, especially in salads. They were a traditional Native American food in North America.

Did You Know?

The word sumac comes from the Old French word *sumac*, dating from the 1200s. This in turn was derived from *sumach*, a Medieval Latin word meaning “red.”

Source: Jennifer Williamson for World Trade Press

Lebanese Fattoush (Bread Salad)

This is a fresh and delicious salad originating from Lebanon. The fresh parsley and mint make this salad particularly yummy! Recipe by cookie. Source: allrecipes.com

Prep Time: 20 mins

Cook Time: 5 mins

Additional Time: 1 min

Total Time: 26 mins

Ingredients

Salad:

- 2 pita bread
- 1 head romaine lettuce, chopped
- 4 radishes, diced
- 1 English cucumber, sliced
- 1 tomato, diced
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed (Optional)
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint
- salt and ground black pepper to taste

Dressing:

- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon ground sumac

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Place pita bread on a baking sheet.
2. Bake in the preheated oven until the bread is a light brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool, 1 to 2 minutes. Break toasted bread into bite-size pieces.
3. Combine lettuce, radishes, cucumber, tomato, garlic, green onions, parsley, mint, and salt and pepper together in a bowl; toss until salad is well mixed.
4. Pour lemon juice, olive oil, and sumac into a salad dressing bottle with a lid; cover and shake until blended. Add dressing to salad and toss.
5. Garnish salad with toasted pita.

Look for more recipes on our website: chelmsfordlibrary.org/spice-club

Shish Tawook (Mediterranean Chicken Kabobs)

Grilled, marinated, Mediterranean-style chicken. This recipe was inspired by the Lebanese restaurant for which I used to work. Its flavor is so unique and outside the box and will have everyone trying to guess the ingredients because its flavor is so mouth watering! Goes great with a plain or bland rice pilaf. Also fatoosh or tabbouleh salad goes well with it as a side. You'll need metal skewers or a grilling basket (I prefer the basket). Recipe by soulman. Source: allrecipes.com.

Prep Time: 20 mins

Cook Time: 20 mins

Additional Time: 4 hrs

Total Time:

4 hrs 40 mins

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

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.

Sumac Berry Pudding (Chil'chin)

Red sumac—also known as staghorn sumac, three-leafed sumac, squawbush, and skunk brush—is native to the American Southwest. Red sumac berries, called *chil'chin* in the Navajo language, also are called lemonade berry in the Southwest. Harvested for culinary use, cleaned berries are sun-dried before being ground into a powder. Powdered

sumac berries are most often used in Navajo cuisine for two things: a steeped beverage, similar to a tea, and this sumac berry pudding. Thickened with flour and sweetened with sugar, this traditional Navajo delicacy is still made in home kitchens today

Ingredients:

8 cups water, divided
1 cup *chil'chin* (sumac) powder
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ cup sugar

Directions:

1. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil in a large pot. Continue to boil.
2. Place 4 cups of cool water in a large mixing bowl.
3. Add the *chil'chin* to bowl and mix to combine.
4. Whisk in the flour and stir until thoroughly mixed.
5. Slowly add the *chil'chin* mixture to the pot of boiling water. Whisk.
6. Continuing to whisk and add the sugar.
7. Continue to stir until the pudding thickens.

Za'atar Pickles

These are half-sour pickles spiced with harissa and all the traditional components of Turkish za'atar. The toasted cardamom adds a citrusy finish to these very bold pickles. After 10 days, they will continue to improve with age. Recipe by veithk

Prep Time:

10 mins

Cook Time:

5 mins

Additional Time:

10 days

Total Time:

10 days 15 mins

[Ingredients](#)

- ¼ cup salt
- 2 quarts water, at room temperature
- 2 cloves garlic, minced, or more to taste
- 3 sprigs chopped fresh thyme
- 3 sprigs chopped fresh oregano
- 2 teaspoons harissa
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 cumin seed
- 1 tablespoon sumac powder
- 16 small pickling cucumbers, or as needed

Directions

1. Pour water into a 1-gallon glass jar with a lid and dissolve salt. Add garlic followed by thyme, oregano, and harissa.
2. Heat coriander, sesame seeds, and cumin seed in a dry pan over medium-low heat, stirring to avoid burning, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add toasted spices to the salt mixture along with sumac. Cover tightly with a lid and shake to combine.
3. Place as many cucumbers as will fit into the jar while remaining submerged in the brine. Keep sealed in the refrigerator for 10 days to pickle.

Source: [allrecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com)