

Bob's Eggplant Za'atar Salad with Tahini

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: זֵרוֹחַ [e'zov]) of the Hebrew Bible. Much like curry powder (not by taste) za'atar has hundreds of actual recipes. See my version of the spice in another document. You will need some for this recipe. If you wish to use the optional tahini, you may check that out too.

Ingredients

- 1 Large Eggplant (5"-6" across)
- 4 Tablespoon salt (for soaking)
- 2 – 4 tablespoons Za'atar
- Herbs and/or dark lettuce tops (chives, arugula, basil, tarragon, Italian parsley, etc.)
- Oil & Vinegar dressing
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ¼ ± Cup Tahini (optional)
- Pomegranate Seeds for garnish (optional)
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Process

This process can be done well in advance as you want to allow the 'salad' to sit for a while to absorb the flavors and it will be served at room temperature.

This first step is to remove the bitter taste from the eggplant. If you can't find large eggplant (about 5" across) you may use small ones and split them lengthwise rather than crosswise. If you slice lengthwise, you might want to take a little bit off the backside so that the slices lay flat and don't rock back and forth and allow you to sauté both sides.

Cut the eggplant into about ¾" crosswise slices. You should be able to get about 6 slices to a large eggplant. Throw away the end pieces. In a large bowl that will hold all the pieces place the 4 tablespoons of salt and enough water to well cover the eggplant. Mix the salt to dissolve then add the eggplant to the water. As you add each slice give it a squeeze under the water to let out some air and then absorb the salt water. Do this as you add each slice. When all are in the water place a plate or bowl on top to make sure the slices stay submerged. Leave them for about 10 minutes to soak. After 10 minutes give each of them a squeeze under the water to soak more salt water into the slices and let them rest for another 2 or 3 minutes. When ready, dump the salt water and refill the bowl with clear cold water. Rinse and squeeze each slice in the clear water to remove the salt water previously used. Dump and do a second time. Now do a final squeeze

and place each slice on a plate with a paper towel to soak up whatever water is left. Cover on top with a towel too. Let them 'dry' for a while.

Heat a large sauté pan and add some olive oil. When up to temperature, add the eggplant slices. This may take extra oil as you cook them as they soak up quite a bit. Sauté until browned on both sides then remove and let cool on a large serving plate or platter. Continue until all slices are cooked.

Sprinkle a reasonable amount of za'atar on each slice and let them sit. Add a little salt and pepper to taste.

Coarsely chop the herbs and/or dark lettuce tops and place them in a bowl. Sprinkle a little of the dressing over the combination and mix well. The intent is to cover lightly all of the chopped greens. Now place a small pile of the greens on top of each slice of eggplant. If you are using the optional tahini, drizzle some over each slice. If you are using the pomegranate seeds, make a little clump about 10 or so seeds and add them to the center top of each slice.

Set the serving plate aside until ready to serve and serve the salad at room temperature.

This recipe serves 6, but can certainly be modified to fit your guest list. I served one slice per dinner plate as a salad with dinner. This salad is meant to go with dinner not be a before dinner salad.

I used this salad for a Mediterranean meal I prepared. You can check out the other recipes and full menu here:

<http://www.snydersmart.com/courthouseladies/index.html#med>

Bob Snyder
343 Blake Street Wray, Colorado 80758
970-332-0663 – sirbobert@snydersmart.com
©October 25, 2020