

SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

February 2024

Join us to discuss

Tuesday, 2/27 / 6:00pm / Annex

Spend the month cooking with your spice and join us to discuss your opinions, experiences, and recipes!



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This month's spice: Ground Sumac

History

Sumac trees grow wild in the Mediterranean region and in North America. They are found in southern Italy and Iran. Sumac berries were used by the Romans, who referred to them as "Syrian sumac." At the time, lemons were unknown in Europe; sumac was a pleasing souring agent, less sharp than vinegar and more agreeable than tamarind. All parts of the tree yield tannins and dyes that have been used for centuries in the leather industry. American native peoples used to make a sour drink from the berries of smooth (scarlet) sumac (*Rhus glabra*). **Poison sumac** (*R. vernix*) is also known as "poison ivy tree." Western markets have been introduced to sumac by immigrants from the Middle East who have opened shawarma restaurants, where it is sprinkled over fresh onions.

Use

In the Middle East, sumac is used extensively as a souring agent instead of lemon juice or vinegar. It is sprinkled on kebabs before cooking and used to garnish salads. It is delicious on roast meats when mixed with paprika, pepper, and oregano. It is also used to make the blend za'atar.



Grilled Adana-Style Kebabs

Total prep and cook time: 1 hour, 45 minutes, with 1 hour for chilling

Yields 4-6 servings

INGREDIENTS:

Kebab:

- 30 (12-inch) bamboo skewers
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 3 tablespoons mild biber salçası
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground sumac
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1½ pounds ground lamb
- 3 large rectangular lavashes, halved crosswise

Salad:

- 3 plum tomatoes, cored and chopped
- 2 small red onions, thinly sliced (2 cups)
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice, (2 lemons)
- 2 tablespoons ground sumac
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt

STEPS:

1. **FOR THE KEBABS:** Place 12 by 13-inch-long sheet of aluminum foil on counter with long side parallel to edge of counter. Place 5 skewers together (parallel to edge of counter) about one-third of way up sheet of foil. Fold bottom third of foil up over skewers and press foil down firmly to hold skewers in place. Fold skewers up and over themselves to wrap tightly in foil, pressing foil down firmly with each fold until you have a single 1-inch wide, flat skewer. Fold ends of foil over top and bottom of skewer and pinch firmly to seal. Repeat with remaining bamboo skewers and 5 additional pieces of foil to create 6 wide skewers; set aside.
2. Pulse onion and garlic in food processor until very finely chopped but not pureed, 15 to 20 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Transfer to large bowl. Stir in biber salçası, salt, paprika, cumin, sumac, pepper, and cayenne. Add lamb to bowl with onion mixture and knead with your hands until thoroughly combined, about 1 minute.



STEPS:

3. With your moistened hands, divide lamb mixture into 6 equal balls (about 5 ounces each). Working with 1 ball and 1 skewer at a time, press ball of lamb around middle of skewer. Squeeze lamb mixture to cover skewer and press into flat, 9-inch long kebab, moistening your hands periodically if mixture begins to stick. Use your thumb and forefinger to press ridges evenly across entire length of kebab. (If lamb mixture becomes too warm to work with easily and shape onto skewers, transfer to freezer for 15 to 30 minutes to firm it up.) Transfer kebabs to lightly greased baking sheet. Cover kebabs with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

4. **FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter mounded with charcoal briquettes (7 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes. **FOR A GAS GRILL:** Turn all burners to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave all burners on high.

6. Clean cooking grate, then repeatedly brush grate with well-oiled paper towels until grate is black and glossy, 5 to 10 times. Cover grill and heat about 5 minutes longer. Uncover and wipe grate twice more with well-oiled paper towels.

7. Arrange lavash on large serving platter. Place kebabs on grill at 45-degree angle to grate. Cook, covered, until well browned and meat easily releases from grill, 3 to 4 minutes per side. (If kebabs stick to grill grates, use thin metal spatula to gently loosen before flipping with tongs). Top lavash with kebabs, tent with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes.

8. **FOR THE SALAD:** Meanwhile, toss all ingredients together in large bowl.

9. To remove kebabs from skewers, pinch piece of lavash around base of kebab and pull out skewer. Serve kebabs with salad and lavash.

Grilled Halloumi Wraps

Total prep and cook time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Yields 4 servings

INGREDIENTS:

1 red onion, halved and sliced thin	4 (8-inch) pitas, divided
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar	12 ounces halloumi cheese, sliced
1 tablespoon ground sumac	crosswise ½ inch thick
¾ teaspoon table salt, divided	1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice	¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 garlic clove	2 ounces (2 cups) arugula
½ cup plain Greek yogurt	
1 large red bell pepper	

STEPS:

1. and gently press so it opens to create long strip. Slide knife along insides to remove remaining ribs and seeds.
2. Lightly moisten 2 pitas with water. Sandwich remaining pitas between moistened pitas and wrap tightly in lightly greased heavy-duty aluminum foil.
3. Turn all burners on gas grill to high; cover; and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave primary burner on high and turn off other burner(s). Clean and oil cooking grate. Arrange halloumi slices and bell pepper pieces, skin side up, on hotter side of grill. Cook, covered, until undersides of cheese and bell pepper are lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Using tongs, flip cheese and bell pepper and continue to cook until second side of cheese and bell pepper are lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes longer.
4. Meanwhile, place packet of pitas on cooler side of grill. Flip occasionally to heat, about 5 minutes. Transfer cheese and bell pepper to cutting board. Cut bell pepper into ½-inch pieces and transfer to second small bowl. Add oil, pepper flakes, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and toss to combine.
5. Lay each warm pita on 12-inch square of foil or parchment paper. Spread each pita with one-quarter of yogurt mixture. Place one-quarter of cheese in middle of each pita. Top with pepper, onion, and arugula. Drizzle with any remaining onion liquid. Roll pita into cylinder. Wrap in foil, cut in half, and serve.