

Za'atar Crusted Roasted Whole Head of Cauliflower



January 27, 2022

Za'atar is also having a moment and is the perfect seasoning for roasted cauliflower. It is generally a dried spice mixture of oregano, thyme, sumac, sesame seeds and based on the region, other herbs and sometimes salt. It is easily found in any middle-eastern grocery store, online and even in some grocery stores. Find your favorite version and you'll find yourself using it on everything. My favorite version is a no-salt Lebanese version that is heavy on the sesame seeds which I love because it give a toasty nutty flavor to everything you sprinkle it on.

Serves 2-4

Ingredients:

- 1 whole head of cauliflower
- Olive oil
- 2 tablespoons favorite za'atar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Flaky sea salt such as Maldon or Fleur de Sel for serving

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F Rinse the cauliflower and carefully trim the leaves from the bottom using a sharp paring knife. Once the leaves are trimmed, make small cuts around the diameter of the stem and pull the stem out. You want to be careful not to cut any florets out, but you effectively want a hole underneath that the heat can travel through.
2. Place the cauliflower [stem-side down] on a parchment-paper lined sheet pan. I use a quarter sheet pan that measures about 9 x 13 inches. Rub cauliflower all over with olive oil. You will need to use your hands to make sure all the exterior surfaces are oiled. This will help prevent the cauliflower from drying out.
3. Season liberally with za'atar. Sprinkle with salt. Alternatively, you can mix the za'atar and salt together and season the whole cauliflower once.
4. Place the sheet pan in the oven and let roast 1.5 hours. At this point, an instant-read thermometer should go into the center of the cauliflower easily and the temperature reading should be between 195°F -205°F. If you don't have an instant-read thermometer, use a small knife and insert it into the thickest part of the cauliflower. It should feel like slicing through soft butter.
5. Remove the pan from the oven and drizzle lightly with olive oil and a small pinch of flaky sea salt. Cut cauliflower into quarters and serve.

Fried Caper Vinaigrette

If you don't feel like frying the capers, shallots and garlic, give them a rough chop and add them raw to the vinaigrette.



Makes 1 cup

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup red wine or sherry vinegar
- 1 tablespoon salt-cured capers*, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped shallots
- 1 teaspoon grated garlic, about 2 cloves
- 1 teaspoon whole-grain Dijon mustard
- Pinch of sea salt and freshly-ground pepper
- 2/3 cup olive oil

Method:

1. If making the fried version, heat up ¼ cup of the oil over medium heat and quickly fry the capers, garlic and shallots for 2-4 minutes or until the edges are brown but the oil is still clear. Let capers, shallots and garlic cool in the oil before making the vinaigrette. Note: If the oil got too hot and burned, discard. Otherwise use cooled oil in the vinaigrette—it will add a lot of flavor.
2. Make the vinaigrette by whisking together the vinegar, capers, shallots, garlic and cooked oil, mustard, salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in the reserved olive oil, making sure it is emulsified before adding more oil. Adjust seasoning to taste with salt and pepper if necessary and use immediately or store in the refrigerator in a tightly sealed container for up to 2 days.

*Notes

When using salt packed capers, rinse them in cold water and squeeze extra moisture out into a paper towel.