The aroma of za'atar "encapsulates the soul of
the Old City," according to Chefs Ottolenghi
and Tamimi, authors of "Jerusalem, A
Cookbook."

Za'atar (pronounced ZAH-ter, rhymes with
daughter) is a seasoning mix of dried herbs,
seasme seeds, sumac, and often salt. Its use in
the Middle East dates back to at least the 13th
century. Confusingly, za'atar is also the name
of the oregano in the seasoning mix, which is
widely believed to be hyssop, the wild herb of
biblical fame.

Like other regional seasoning mixes such as
curry powder and Creole seasoning, za'atar
has hundreds of variations, perhaps as many
as there are families in the region. The exact
herbs, spices, and proportions vary by region,
culture, and family. Examples of regional
variations include Jordan's za'atar mix which is
heavy on sumac, so much so that it looks red;
and Lebanese za'atar which may include dried
orange zest. Each country considers za'atar a
matter of national pride.

Recipes for regional blends are closely guarded
secrets. Typical za'atar ingredients include:
• Mediterranean thyme offers a pleasantly earthy
  flavor without overpowering the mix.
• Greek oregano (not Italian oregano) makes up
  the bulk of the blend, contributing its bright,
tangy, lemony flavor.
• Sumac adds color, citrusy flavor, and tang.
• Toasted sesame seeds provide a nutty flavor.

Za'atar is an everyday seasoning, commonly
found on Mediterranean tables like salt and
pepper in the US. It's often made into a simple
paste for dipping and spreading. Mix equal parts
za'atar seasoning and any good olive oil. Use as
a dip for fresh bread or spread on pita and toast
in the oven until crisp. Many eat za'atar straight
out-of-hand or sprinkled on popcorn. From
ancient civilizations to modern times, za'atar
enhances everything.

Za'atar Roasted Vegetable
Farro Bowl

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services
Serves 6

• 3 T. fresh lemon juice
• 2 t. tahini
• 1 T. za'atar + more for garnish
• 1 clove of garlic, minced
• 1 1/2 t. kosher salt
• 1/2 t. black pepper
• 1/2 t. cayenne pepper
• 9 T. olive oil, divided
• 2 c. medium diced butternut
  squash

Make the vinaigrette by whisking together lemon juice, tahini, za'atar,
minced garlic, salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper. Drizzle in 7 T.
olive oil while continuing to whisk.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Toss the squash, carrots, and onions with ¼ c.
of the vinaigrette. Spread vegetables in a single layer on a baking sheet
and roast for 25-30 minutes. Watch the onions as they may get done
sooner than the other veggies.

Lightly rinse the farro. Put farro and vegetable stock in a pot and bring
to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and let cook for 25-30 minutes.
Move cooked farro to a large bowl.

In a sauté pan, toast the walnuts for a couple of minutes. Remove
walnuts from the pan and set aside. In the same pan, heat 2 T. olive oil
and sauté kale for about 5 minutes.

Mix the kale with the cooked farro. Toss with the rest of the dressing.
Portion into serving bowls and top with the roasted vegetables.
Garnish farro-vegetable bowls with walnuts, lemon zest, and a dusting
of za'atar seasoning.

Recipe demonstration on March 21 at 12:10pm.
• Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen.
  Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.